INFORMATION TO HELP STUDENTS PREPARE FOR

THE GREAT AWAKENING V. THE ENLIGHTENMENT DEBATE

1. Definition of Deism

2. Hawke, David. *The Colonial Experience.* New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966, pp. 418-442

11. The American Mind in the Eighteenth Century

THE GREAT AWAKENING
- First Waves
- Floodtide
- Aftermath

THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT
- Natural Philosophy
- Enlightened Americans
- Town and Country

DAWN OF A NEW ERA
- Education
- Science
- Language and Literature
- The Arts

"The first drudgery of settling new colonies, which confines the attention of people to mere necessaries, is now pretty well over," Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1743; "and there are many in every province in circumstances that set them at ease, and afford leisure to cultivate the finer arts, and improve the common stock of knowledge." Franklin's remarks introduced a proposal "for promoting USEFUL KNOWLEDGE among *British Plantations* in *America,*" and out of the proposal eventually came the American Philosophical Society. Franklin and the society he helped to found exemplified one side of the American mind in the eighteenth century, the "enlightened" side, which held that men, by taking thought, could make the world a better place to live. The Great Awakening spoke for another side, that which appealed to men's emotions and held that

evil could be exorcized only through a regenerating religious experience. The American Enlightenment and the Great Awakening approached life differently: one appealed to the head; the other flew from "reason" and appealed to the heart. In the nineteenth century, these antipathetic qualities came into the open; American evangelical Protestantism turned against the spirit of the Enlightenment. But during the eighteenth century, goals shared in common by enlightened and awakened men minimized these differences: men of both groups favored religious freedom, fought for separation of church and state, promoted humanitarian reforms, and worked together to improve education. The enlightened encouraged church-going and the evangelists found nothing distressing in natural philosophy, as science was then called. Both relied for guidance upon experience rather than tradition or authority. Awakened and enlightened men worked together to put the seventeenth-century pattern of thought behind and to create the mold for a new one out of which the modern American mind would be born.

THE GREAT AWAKENING

The Great Awakening can be seen as part of a larger awakening that swept through eighteenth-century Britain, where it was known as Methodism; as part of a still larger religious revival that simultaneously struck Protestant Europe, where it was called Pietism; or—as it shall be here—an event that developed mainly out of the American experience. America endured a series of awakenings from 1720 to the Revolution, but *the* Great Awakening struck early in the 1740's. Once the floodtide had passed, men saw the foundations on which American churches had been built washed away and new ones constructed in their place. Perhaps no other event, save the Reformation, wrought greater changes on Protestantism. The Great Awakening would have left an indelible mark regardless of when it had come, but the timing deepened its influence. America, Richard Niebuhr has said, "cannot eradicate, if it would, the marks left upon its social memory, upon its institutions and habits, by an awakening to God that was simultaneous with its awakening to national consciousness."

First Waves

Things were not as they seemed on the religious scene in 1720. A diversity of sects, all antagonistic to one another, marred the landscape, but the divisions were more apparent than real. America remained much as it had been—nearly 99 per cent Protestant. More than that, the Reformed, or Calvinist, version of Protestantism prevailed. Of those within the

Calvinist fold, Congregationalists and Presbyterians accounted for approximately 70 per cent of the churchgoers, Baptists and Anglicans for about 25 per cent. Those without—Lutherans, Mennonites, Dunkers, and Moravians—added up to less than 5 per cent. In 1720 Congregationalists despised Baptists, Anglicans derided Presbyterians, and Quakers kept mainly to themselves. After the Great Awakening highlighted the theology the sects held in common, an eminent Presbyterian could say that Baptists differed from his sect "only in the point of infant baptism," a Congregationalist could become president of Presbyterian Princeton, and Quakers could join with others in humanitarian projects without feeling that they had soiled their consciences.

Outwardly, religious life in America appeared to have changed little from what it had been in Protestant Europe. Established churches persisted in nine of the thirteen colonies—Congregationalism dominated three of the New England colonies and Anglicanism prevailed throughout the South and in parts of New York. The American branch of the Church of England and all the Dutch- and German-speaking sects maintained tight ties with their mother churches across the ocean. A majority of the Presbyterian clergy had been trained in Britain. But here again all was not as it seemed to be. By 1720 Protestantism in America had eroded to a shadow of its old self, as it had existed in Europe since the Reformation. American churches had become voluntary or "gathered" groups that men joined only if they wished. The laity rather than the clergy dominated religious affairs. A minister, whether he was an Anglican, Congregationalist, Baptist, or Presbyterian, was "hired" much as a servant was, and he could be dismissed almost as easily; tenure depended on the congregation. There were no ecclesiastical superiors to please because virtually no ecclesiastical structure existed within the sects. The churches had come first, and by the time each sect got round to contemplating some sort of structure to unite their disparate congregations, local control of religious affairs had become a tradition too fixed to be easily uprooted.

A threat to the welfare of all the sects presented by the Church of England at the turn of the century revealed how deeply the roots of localism went. In 1701 the crown issued a charter to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The S.P.G. came to represent for Americans what a historian has called "British imperialism in ecclesiastical guise." Its purpose, according to one bishop, was to propagate Anglicanism "among our *own people*" in America, "then to proceed . . . towards the conversion of the natives." Missionaries, well supplied with funds, came to build churches and do what they could to dampen dissenters' fires. Royal governors like Lord Cornbury in New York and Lewis Morris in New Jersey used their offices to promote the

church's welfare. There was talk of sending over a bishop to direct the campaign. All this helped to prod the sects into action: in 1705 the ministers of Massachusetts urged the creation of consociations (rule by councils), which would have the power to implant a degree of order and uniformity on meetings throughout the colony. The legislature's and royal governor's refusal to accept the plan killed it, but self-created ministerial associations with power to license and ordain ministers cropped up in all parts of the colony. The urge to organize touched others, too. The first Baptist Association, consisting of five churches, materialized in Philadelphia in 1707. The next year a synod of Connecticut ministers adopted the Saybrook Platform, whereby a council of ministers and laymen in each county acquired power to discipline and supervise the meetings of their area. The legislature sanctioned the platform and Connecticut became what has been called a halfway house between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. The Presbyterians, whose numbers grew as the century aged, formed in 1716 the Synod of Philadelphia, which consisted of four presbyteries.

Once the sects organized, arguments over ecclesiastical policies pushed worries about the spreading virus of Anglicanism into the background; rifts appeared among the leadership of every sect. More often than not, the conflicts occurred between two generations, with the older clergy eager to have things as they were and the younger men arguing for change. Dissension developed with special bitterness among the Presbyterians. The older, European-educated ministers fought hard to keep the church much as it had been at home. They believed that doctrinal conformity rather than a regenerating experience offered the best rule for judging a candidate's qualifications for the ministry. They wanted to transfer the power to select and ordain ministers from the presbyteries back to the synod, as it was in Scotland and northern Ireland. They rejected the idea of an American-educated clergy. Most of the Presbyterian ministers failed to grasp the meaning of the American experience; they acted and thought as though they still lived in their homelands. The divisions that had materialized by 1720 among Presbyterians existed in all sects, and they would persist down to the Revolution; the Great Awakening hardened and widened the rifts, but it did not cause them.

In 1720 more unchurched people lived in America than in any country of the Western World. A deadness had settled upon religion the length of the continent. Bright young men like John Adams and Benjamin Rush, who went to college expecting eventually to enter the ministry, ended by becoming lawyers and doctors, and the pulpits were left more and more to second-rate talents who droned out their sermons and scolded rather than inspired their parishioners. Impiety became the fash-

ion. James Franklin's *New-England Courant,* first published in 1721, made a career during its six years of life of attacking the clergy. Old-timers who had known America when it had been a land of the devout said the people now "vomit up their spiritual milk with scoffs." Every year seemed to provide fresh signs of God's displeasure—an epidemic of smallpox or of the "throat distemper," an earthquake, a disastrous fire, "a blast upon the wheat"—but the people went their ways unperturbed. New England had tried to check the decline with the Half-Way Covenant. When that failed, Solomon Stoddard, the "pope" of the Connecticut Valley, flung open the doors to virtually all, allowing even the unregenerate to share in communion. But people still shunned joining the church; perhaps 75 per cent of New England—and probably more elsewhere on the continent—remained outside.

The decline in piety pleased no one. It disturbed an "enlightened" gentleman like Benjamin Franklin, who, though a deist, regularly paid his "annual subscription for the support of the only Presbyterian minister or meeting we had" and urged his daughter to "go constantly to church, whoever preaches." In a land where social controls over a scattered population were few, the church helped to inculcate civilized values. The weak, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, said Franklin, all "have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in practice of it till it become habitual, which is the great point for its security." Somehow the unchurched had to be reached and brought back to the fold. Because churches in America were "gathered," or voluntary, groups, this meant that they had to return of their own accord; new techniques had to be devised to call forth the ungathered. The situation, as Winthrop Hudson has put it, "called for a type of preaching that would prick the conscience, convict men of sin, and lead them through a crisis of individual decision into a personal experience of God's redeeming love." Given the needs of the day, no one should be puzzled as to why the evangelists of the Great Awakening, most of them intelligent and educated men, appealed with all the fervor at their command to the heart rather than to the head.

The first wave of the Great Awakening rolled in with the ship that brought Theodore Frelinghuysen from Holland in 1719. Frelinghuysen was assigned to four Dutch Reformed churches in New Jersey, and he proceeded at once to become a storm center. He had read widely in the works of seventeenth-century English and Dutch Puritans, and his evangelistic sermons emphasized piety over good works, a regenerating experience over an upright life. He discarded Dutch, to the old guard's distress, and preached in English. He argued against the Classis in Holland, which appointed ministers for America, and spoke out for a home-

educated clergy. (Queen's College, which is now Rutgers University, was established in 1766 for that purpose.) Slowly Frelinghuysen's congregations began to come alive and by 1726, despite strong opposition from the old-line clergy, the Dutch Reformed of New Jersey were in the midst of a revival. Frelinghuysen's success encouraged Gilbert Tennent, a friend and neighboring Presbyterian minister, and by 1729 Tennent's own congregations had also been awakened. Tennent, like Frelinghuysen, drew on seventeenth-century evangelical Puritanism for his theology. He sought to overcome the "presumptuous security" of his parishioners, who had come to believe that they could ease their way into heaven by leading an upright life.

The techniques that Frelinghuysen and Tennent used to call forth the ungathered fixed the pattern of the Great Awakening. Both, though well-educated men, shunned theological subtleties. They bleached out most of the distinctions and many of the traditions that had divided Protestants for two centuries and exchanged pulpits to emphasize how little value they attached to doctrinal differences among the sects. Both favored an educated clergy, but the current shortage of ministers led them to use lay preachers to keep congregations alive while they visited other pulpits on their circuits. To capture the hearts of their hearers they tossed out stale written sermons and spoke from their own hearts, either extemporaneously or only from notes. Contemporaries called their innovations crude, but judged by later standards they were sedate and mild; they used none of the nineteenth century's revival techniques—the "protracted meeting," which lasted weeks and won converts through exhaustion, or the "anxious bench," on which the sinful sat in public view until they had been humiliated into seeing the light. They worked within the traditional framework, preaching only at Sunday and mid-week service. Neither theirs nor other eighteenth-century revivals burst forth suddenly; they came only after months of awakening sermons and private ministrations among the people.

As the first wave of Frelinghuysen's and Tennent's awakening subsided in the early 1730's, a second wave appeared in New England, prompted by the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, then minister of the meeting in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards' later philosophical works reveal him as one of the great intellects of his time, but the people of New England knew him as one of the greatest preachers of the day. "Men no more regard warnings of future punishment because it don't seem real to them," he said, and to that end he saw to it, as Ola Elizabeth Winslow has remarked, that heaven and hell, God's wrath and eternal glory "lost their vague outlines and became visible, imminent realities." In 1735 Edwards' congregations, like those earlier in New Jer-

sey, came alive slowly, but by the following year, a full-scale revival was in progress. The wave of evangelism washed through the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts and on into Connecticut; in 1736, however, it died out.

The waves of revivalism in the Middle Colonies might have died out, too, but for the presence there of William Tennent, Sr. Tennent, who had been trained for the ministry at the University of Edinburgh, had come to America in 1718. He eventually settled at Neshaminy in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and there he educated four sons, Gilbert among them, for the ministry. In 1735 he began what opponents within Presbyterianism deprecatingly called the "Log College." Tennent hoped to relieve the shortage of ministers in the then rapidly expanding church, but his seemingly innocuous project raised the hackles of the Scotch-Irish divines who controlled the Philadelphia Synod and who, having tangled already with Tennent, knew the sort of ministers his "college" would turn out—those who would refuse to subscribe to the Westminster Confession, which had been drawn up in Cromwell's time and had ever since determined the doctrines of Presbyterianism. Men like Tennent, who preferred piety to doctrinal purity, were not to be trusted. Still, the Log College prospered in spite of the opposition; and because the presbyteries rather than the synod controlled ordination, Tennent-trained ministers were soon holding down pulpits wherever Presbyterianism had spread. By 1739 old rifts within the church had hardened into two factions—the "Old Side," which wished to keep the church as it had been in Great Britain, and the "New Side," which consisted mainly of native-born divines educated by Tennent. The Old Side controlled the synod and might have continued to do so but for the arrival in Pennsylvania in October 1739 of George Whitefield, the man who would turn the scattered revivals of the 1720's and 1730's into a Great Awakening.

Floodtide

George Whitefield—he pronounced it "Whit-field"—was twenty-four when he arrived in Philadelphia in November 1739 on the second of what were to number seven trips to America, the last of which ended with his death in 1770 at Newburyport, Massachusetts. Whitefield planned to pause in Philadelphia only long enough to collect supplies for an orphanage he was building in Georgia, but William Tennent, Sr., came down from Neshaminy and persuaded him to make a preaching tour of the Middle Colonies. Whitefield had not arrived in Philadelphia an unknown entity; the colonial press for several months had carried accounts of his success as an evangelist throughout England. As a young man at Oxford, where he knew John and Charles Wesley, a long bout

with melancholy suddenly ended with deliverance "from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me." The regenerate Whitefield became an Anglican priest, but the fervency of his preaching offended many, and with few ministers willing to lend him their pulpits he was driven to preaching in the fields and public halls. Thousands came to hear him, and by the time Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia, he was one of the most famous men in England.

Whitefield stayed only nine days in Philadelphia, but that was long enough to put the sedate city into a frenzy. "It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manner of our inhabitants," said Benjamin Franklin, who had been sufficiently moved by one of Whitefield's sermons to empty his pockets when the collection plate was passed. "From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk thro' town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street." A typical Whitefield sermon left his audience exhausted: "Some were struck pale as Death," goes one report, "others wringing their hands, others lying on the ground, others sinking into the arms of their friends, and most lifting up their eyes toward heaven, and crying out to GOD." Whitefield gave "church-going America its first taste of theater under the flag of salvation," Ola Elizabeth Winslow has remarked, taking care to add, however, that theatrics alone did not explain his success: he arrived in America long after the seeds of the Great Awakening had been planted and "merely put in his sickle and claimed the harvest."

The harvest proved easy to reap because Whitefield's eloquence was tied to a faith nicely suited to Americans of the day. He arrived an Anglican tinged with the Arminianism of the Wesleys; Gilbert Tennent steered him toward Calvinism; but, as Whitefield's latest biographer, Stuart C. Henry, has observed, his views on predestination and of man's degeneracy were shot through with an appealing optimism. God, he hinted, could be encouraged to speed a man on his way to salvation. Theological inconsistencies did not disturb Whitefield, for he paid little attention to the doctrines of any church. "Father Abraham," he called out once during a sermon, "whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians?" Whitefield answered his own question "No!" then continued the question-and-answer dialogue. "Any Presbyterians? No! Any Independents or Methodists? No, no, no! Whom have you there? We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians. . . . Oh, this is the case? Then God help us to forget party names and to become Christians in deed and truth." Whitefield's appeal to end sectarianism hastened a process long at work in America.

Whitefield left Philadelphia in early November and preached his way

across New Jersey into New York, stirring up the countryside wherever he went. From New York he headed into New England, and wherever the word went that Whitefield was coming the dusty roads were crowded "with men and horses slipping along in the cloud-like shadows," and "every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of souls. . . ." In Boston he preached to five thousand one afternoon, to eight thousand the next day, to six thousand the day after that. His farewell sermon was heard by twenty-three thousand (a newspaper estimate) or thirty thousand (Whitefield's estimate). Whitefield had a simple explanation for his success: congregations have been dead, he said, "because dead men preach to them." His tour lasted only a month, but in that time, he jolted New England out of its religious lethargy.

More than that, he saw to it that the triumph did not wither away. On the way back from New England, he persuaded Gilbert Tennent—for Whitefield, that "son of thunder" who "went to the bottom indeed and did not daub with untempered mortar"—to make a tour of his own. Tennent liked to roar at his audience that "they were *damned, damned, damned,*" but according to a critic he fascinated them, for "in the most dreadful winter I ever saw, people wallowed in snow, night and day, for the benefit of his beastly brayings." On Tennent's heels came James Davenport, whose rash ways so infuriated the sedate of New England that the courts declared him *non compos mentis* and sent him back to Long Island. Davenport's rough treatment did nothing to slow the influx of itinerant preachers into New England and wherever else Whitefield traveled.

By the end of 1740, Whitefield had toured the South and once again both the Middle Colonies and New England. Thousands continued to turn out wherever he spoke, and invariably "the groans and outcries of the wounded were such that my voice could not be heard." Whitefield left for England at the start of 1741, but the Great Awakening continued at fever pitch throughout the land. Anglicans and Quakers and to some degree the Baptists—"those poor, bigoted, ignorant, prejudiced people," the evangelist Eleazar Wheelock called them—watched the frenzy from a distance, but few others remained calm. Even the pietist sects among the German-speaking people, though they held aloof from the Whitefield revival, did not escape altogether; their awakening was initiated by Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf, who sought (and failed) to unite the host of German sects into a single association. His efforts were somewhat thwarted by a simultaneous revival among German Lutherans led by Henry Muhlenberg. Nor did the South escape; New Side Presbyterians sent Henry Robinson into Virginia in 1742 to follow up Whitefield's

success. Samuel Davies, who in the last year of his life became president of the College of New Jersey, arrived in 1748 and began a decade of preaching so effective that Patrick Henry remembered him as the greatest orator he ever heard. Virginia's revival east of the mountains centered in Hanover County, whose local court—the same court that would later try the Parson's Cause—in 1750 gave the notorious James Davenport a license to preach. That prompted the Anglican governor to issue a proclamation "requiring all magistrates to suppress and prohibit, as far as they lawfully could, all itinerant preachers." The order died on the wind.

Revivals continued to flare up and then sputter out in every colony down to the Revolution, but the Great Awakening itself had ended by 1744. Whitefield continued to attract huge crowds wherever he went during each of his next five trips to America, but never again was he able to spark anything like the Great Awakening of 1740–1741. That awakening had been great, it has been said, because it knew no boundaries, social or geographical, urban or rural. And when the flood tide receded, the perceptive saw that traditional Protestantism, as it had existed since the Reformation, had been shattered. Tests for orthodoxy that had stood for two centuries had vanished in the storm. The religious life of Americans would never again be what it had been.

Aftermath

America listened with only half its heart when Whitefield returned in 1745. "Great talk about Whitefield's preaching," a New Englander remarked, "and the fleet at Cape Breton." But the end of the awakening did not mark the end of its effect. Of the multitudes that had poured into the churches, some, at least, remained within the fold—perhaps as much as 10 per cent of the total population in New England and the Middle Colonies. The newly gathered were not easily absorbed, and as the awakening subsided, meetings everywhere split into factions. Those who favored the revival—they were known as "New Lights" within Congregationalism, the "New Side" within Presbyterianism—sometimes found their reception so cold they departed to build meetinghouses of their own. The decision to separate came hard, for it often challenged loyalties of a lifetime. But the disputes provoked by the awakening cut too deeply to be compromised. The antirevivalists held that the awakening had not been the work of God but only a frenzy that temporarily put the people completely out of their minds. They held, too, and correctly, that the awakening challenged the traditional basis on which Protestantism had been built since the Reformation.

Separatism struck hardest among the Congregationalists of New Eng-

land, but the movement lived only briefly. New Light separatists were deprived of political offices, particularly in Connecticut, where government stayed in the hands of the orthodox. In many cases marriages by separatist ministers were disallowed, their sons were expelled from college, and they were taxed to support the established church as well as their own meetings. The fanatics and cranks, "soreheads and grumbletonians," who bulked large in every separatist meeting did little to improve its standing within the community. By the eve of the Revolution, most of the separatists had either rejoined their old meetings or become Baptists.

The Baptists made astonishing gains after the Great Awakening. Their congregations throughout America numbered perhaps a dozen in 1740 but nearly five hundred in 1775. In New England, the Baptists had endured nearly a century of oppression. Because they favored separation of church and state and because the regenerative experience had always been basic to their sect, they offered a natural home to those New Lights who could not endure the idea of returning to their old meetings. In the Middle Colonies, where the stronger organization of the Presbyterians held defections to a minimum, the Baptists made few gains, but their willingness to tolerate lay exhorters and their indifference to an educated ministry helped them after 1760 to outdistance Presbyterianism throughout the South and in the backcountry.

The Congregationalists splintered into a multitude of separate churches, the Presbyterians split into two synods. The Presbyterian break came in the early summer of 1741, not long after Gilbert Tennent had returned from a tour of New England, where he had preached a controversial sermon on *The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry.* The Philadelphia Synod ejected Tennent and his followers, who thereupon erected the New York Synod as a home base for the New Side clergy; the split ended in 1758 when the two sides reunited. By then, New Side Presbyterians had established their own college—the College of New Jersey, which later became Princeton University—and were turning out American-educated ministers whose outlook was totally American. The predominance of New Side ministers gave them control of the church machinery.

The schisms that appeared among the Congregationalists and Presbyterians and to a lesser degree among other sects were the debris of an outworn mold, shattered by the Great Awakening; they cluttered the landscape only for a short while. By the eve of the Revolution, the debris had been reassembled into a pattern that gave a new unity to American Protestantism. Sects vanished in the awakening and denominations sprouted in their place. A sect by definition sets itself apart and assumes

that it alone manifests the true form and spirit of Christianity. The denomination, less arrogant, less certain of God's mind, considers itself only a denominated group within the Protestant Church. As Winthrop Hudson explains it: "No denomination claims that all other churches are false churches. Each denomination is regarded as constituting a different 'mode' of expressing the outward forms of worship and organization of that larger life of the Church in which they all share." The denominational theory was first fully developed by dissenting sects of seventeenth-century England, who searched for a common ground on which to unite against the establishment. Roger Williams expounded it first in the colonies. It seeped into the American experience through the seventeenth century, but not until the Great Awakening, when Whitefield, an Anglican priest, and the diverse itinerants who followed in his wake chose to preach wherever doors were open to them, did the denominational theory achieve status and become an accepted part of American Protestantism. The transformation of the theory into practice was America's great gift to Protestantism. Religious groups who for over two centuries had bickered and fought one another had at last found a way to live side by side in relative peace.

Denominationalism as it emerged from the Great Awakening eased sectarian antagonisms, but in the process the cleavage between emotion and intellect widened. The seventeenth-century brand of Protestantism brought to the colonies from England appealed both to the head and the heart. But the awakeners, though generally educated men, aware of theological subtleties, willingly discarded the intellectual structure of Protestantism in their eagerness to gather in the unchurched. Charles Chauncy, minister of the First Church in Boston, saw that the awakening's emotional appeal for converts opened the way for a fervent anti-intellectualism within the churches. Chauncy argued warmly with Jonathan Edwards in sermons and pamphlets against the awakening. In their notable debate, Chauncy has been pictured as the embodiment of the Enlightenment's ideals, which he was, and thus the awakening in turn has been pictured as antithetical to the ideals of the Enlightenment, which it was—*ultimately*. Anti-intellectualism did in time come to dominate American Protestantism, but in the eighteenth century, awakeners and enlightened for the most part consciously overlooked or failed to notice their divergent views toward life and worked together toward goals they shared in common.

The Great Awakening, it has been said, "tended to emphasize individualism, to shatter the neat seventeenth-century society into members, but not into classes," and so, too, did the American version of the Enlightenment. Both, reflecting the conditions of eighteenth-century Amer-

ica, appealed to people regardless of their social status, for by the 1740's the fixed order of society as it was known in Europe had vanished in the colonies. Such words as "liberty" and "freedom," favored by the enlightened, turned up in the awakeners' sermons: God left men free to choose or reject salvation, and they were at liberty to select the church or minister they wanted. Ironically, the awakeners were among the first to suffer from their gospel. When Jonathan Edwards reprimanded his parishioners' children for reading a sex-thriller of the day—*The Midwife Rightly Instructed*—the congregation rose up and turned him out. "Shall the master of a ship not inquire when he knows the ship is running on rocks?" Edwards had asked, and the congregation had in effect answered, "No, not when he usurps our rights as parents."

The Great Awakening and the American Enlightenment worked together to promote higher education in the colonies. Four of the colleges in today's Ivy League—Brown, Princeton, Dartmouth, and the University of Pennsylvania—were direct products of the Great Awakening, as was Rutgers, too. The schools, though founded to educate ministers, did not flout the Enlightenment. They showed little antagonism to the new science, and by the Revolution all had hired professors of natural philosophy. Enlightened and awakened also joined together to promote the separation of church and state: both groups agreed that in America no denomination should be singled out for preferment. The clergy saw that it harmed rather than helped to involve their churches in political affairs, for favoritism from the government only provoked attacks from the unfavored. Ministers saw, too, the truth of the argument Roger Williams made over a century earlier, that ties with the state corrupt the church. "I am a spectator indeed of events, but intermeddle not with politics," Reverend Stiles said in 1773. "We cannot become the dupes of politicians without alliances, concessions and connections dangerous to evangelical truth and spiritual liberty."

The quickened effort to cut the churches adrift from the state helped to direct religious energies into a new channel. Voluntary organizations came to be the favored way of promoting programs that had once been carried out for the churches by the state. Such projects as orphanages, missions for Indians, and the antislavery cause owed as much to Whitefield and other leaders of the awakening as to the enlightened gentlemen who shared in them.

In the long run the effect of the Great Awakening on America may have been pernicious; for in giving control of the churches to the evangelical wing of Protestantism, it drove a wedge between the plain people and the intellectuals that has remained to the present. The immediate effects of the awakening, however, were to tighten

rather than break the ties between the two groups. The awakening turned the churches into the mainstream of the Enlightenment, and the alliance between the awakened and enlightened continued down through the Revolution. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the alliance did much not only to promote the Revolution but to make it successful.

THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT

Throughout the eighteenth century, Americans continued to draw much of their intellectual sustenance from England, but America's Enlightenment did not duplicate England's. The colonists imported enlightened ideas, modified them to suit their own needs, then, to an astonishing degree, put them to use. Fewer, less deeply rooted traditions encrusted society in America, and this made it easier to practice enlightened reforms that in England seldom escaped the bounds of table talk. The Enlightenment in America differed, too, in that the colonists often drew on English thought and theory to justify current practices or Americans' conception of themselves. The truth of a phrase like "all men are created equal" seemed more self-evident to men reared in the open society of the colonies than to Englishmen who still lived surrounded by vestiges of the medieval world.

Natural Philosophy

Men of Western civilization have always searched for laws that governed nature, for a universal scheme of order underlying the universe. The Middle Ages identified those laws of nature with the law of God; men looked at nature mainly to throw light on some theological problem. By the sixteenth century, however, a few had begun to examine nature not necessarily as it illuminated religion but as it provided a sufficiently satisfying study in itself. But more than their attitude toward nature had changed: they now searched for laws governing the universe by asking questions that could be answered by experiments based on observation; they then attempted to express the results of their observations in mathematical abstractions; each of these abstractions became for them a law of nature.

The church did not object to, in fact it encouraged, this new approach to the study of nature. In the seventeenth century Galileo met trouble only when he insisted that Copernicus' theory of the earth revolving about the sun as well as rotating on its axis was true. The church had willingly accepted the theory as a convenient fiction for making calculations, such as those on which the Gregorian calendar was based. The church refused to accept the theory as fact, for this would put fact in

conflict with revelation. Did not Psalm 93 say: "The world also is established, that it cannot be moved?" Did not proof that the sun moves appear in Joshua's command on the evening of the battle of Gibeon: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon; and the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies"? The church demanded that, unless science absolutely proved the Scriptures wrong, reason must give way to revelation. Galileo eventually endured a humiliating retreat in which he publicly accepted the Copernican theory as "a poetical conceit," to use his own bitter phrase.

Galileo's mortification did not stem the rise of natural philosophy. Johannes Kepler's observations revealed that the planets moved in ellipses, not the perfect circles theologians had assumed, and that they moved at varying rates of speed through their orbits. Kepler said that the universe was "something like a clock work in which a single weight drives all the gears." Isaac Newton found the "single weight." He capped a multitude of seventeenth-century observations with a single postulate—*all* celestial bodies "attract each other by a force of universal strength that diminishes as the square of the distance between them increases." He had used the tools of natural philosophy to find what men had always assumed—complete order in God's universe—and as quickly as his ideas could be popularized, they became accepted.

With Newton's discoveries, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, natural philosophy—that is, a philosophy derived from a study of nature—superseded religion in prestige. A new vocabulary began to dominate men's thoughts. The fashionable words—"nature," "natural law," "balance," "machine," "engine," and above all, "reason"—now were drawn from science. Soon men were lifting the new vocabulary out of context and using it to expand the "bounds of moral philosophy," assuming that "our duty towards Him, as well as that towards one another, will appear to us by the light of Nature." If the use of reason could uncover the scheme of the universe, surely it would expose similar laws when applied to the affairs of men. Once the rules of the game had been revealed, what could block man from perfectability? Pope expressed the confidence of the age in a couplet that quickly became *the* cliché of the eighteenth century:

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.
> God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was light.

Confidence that man verged on solving all God's riddles was the keynote of the age. The eighteenth century came to believe, with the arrogance of the innocent, not only that it was enlightened compared to past epochs, but that it verged on complete enlightenment.

Newtonianism, as it came to be called, "substituted a natural for a supernatural explanation of phenomena." It was natural, then, to subject religion to the rules of reason. John Locke, a young English physician who was a friend of Newton's and had been trained in the methods of experimental science by the chemist Robert Boyle, "proved" that God existed, in his book *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Locke's work raised hardly a ripple in the contemporary stream of thought, for the slow accretion of scientific findings through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had given devout men time to adjust. Moreover, any divergence between the world of Biblical tradition and the world of science was not even dreamed of at the time. Newton himself believed that his findings reinforced rather than destroyed the foundations of Christianity, for "this most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being." Not only did his findings verify assumptions once taken on faith, but they undermined *none* of the old beliefs. The Scriptures taught that God had created the universe in six days, and nothing Newton discovered destroyed that truth. Indeed, his findings verified the Biblical picture of a static world completely made and not still in the making. Nor did his laws undercut the view of a personal God, for as Newton saw it, God could still step in any time He wished to work a miracle. (A miracle now became something that momentarily defied natural law.) The universe might be a Great Machine, but the operator remained God, a personal God who kept his hand on the throttle.

Locke extended his application of the technique of natural philosophy in *An Essay on Human Understanding,* wherein he "proved" that men's actions are not predetermined by God nor handicapped by the blot of original sin. God, said Locke, had stamped no truths, no innate ideas on men's minds, but had furnished them only with the ability to know. Knowledge itself emerged from experience, and experience was to a large extent determined not by God's will but by man's environment. Locke's great achievement here, in Carl Becker's words, was to make it seem "possible for men, 'barely by the use of their natural faculties,' to bring their ideas and their conduct, and hence the institutions by which they lived, into harmony with the universal natural order."

In another essay, written shortly before the Glorious Revolution, Locke developed a "right of rebellion" theory based on natural law. What, Locke asked, is government's right to authority? Divine right, most contemporaries would have answered: God had given the king the right to rule, and the people had to accept God's dictum. What resources do the people have if the ruler turns out to be bad? God would punish him, went the litany. What would the people do in the meantime? They would suf-

fer, unless someone thought of an acceptable way to dispose of the king. Locke devised a new set of answers to those questions. Men were born free, he said, unhampered by government, and with certain "self-evident" natural rights, among which were the rights to life, liberty, and property. Now, the state of nature is difficult to maintain, for evil exists in the world and there are times when the individual cannot cope with it successfully. To protect their rights, men voluntarily band together and make a compact whereby one of their own is chosen to rule over them. This ruler and the government he creates exist only to protect men's natural rights. If the original compact is broken, the people then have the right to rebel, for they, not God, have chosen their ruler and can depose him.

Locke invited men to test the world around them by the yardstick of reason. For him, traditional Christianity was reasonable, as were such institutions as primogeniture, entail, the established church, and British regulations of trade. Men like Franklin and Jefferson, of a different century and a different country, would find different answers for what met the test of reason. When Locke argued for a minimal state, his seventeenth-century conception of what was the least government failed to jibe with that of eighteenth-century Americans, but it was the generalization rather than its specific application that mattered. America would take from Locke and others who promoted the Enlightenment in England only what it wanted and then adapt and modify it to fit the American environment.

Enlightened Americans

Newton's orderly picture of the universe was open to contradictory interpretations. Read one way, it gave men no more cause to hope for a better world than Calvinism did. Calvinism, as Alfred North Whitehead has pointed out, "exhibited man as helpless to cooperate with Irresistible Grace; the contemporary scheme of science exhibited man as helpless to cooperate with the irresistible mechanism of nature." But men of the eighteenth century preferred for the most part to interpret Newton as leaving the way open to improvement. "The greater our insight into Nature and its laws," Ezra Stiles said, "the greater will be our power over its laws, in altering, suspending, or counteracting them, and the more enlarged will be our sphere of activity."

The second, more optimistic, reading of Newton's picture was also open to various interpretations. Tom Paine immersed himself in Newtonianism and came up a radical in politics and religion. John Adams, about Paine's age, followed a similar intellectual trail, reading the same books, using the same vocabulary; he emerged, as far as labels can be

accurately applied, a conservative. Thomas Jefferson, coming along a few years later but exposed to the same books and ideas, came out somewhere between his two friends. Natural philosophy provided the intellectual touchstone for most thinking men in eighteenth-century America, but they absorbed it within the context of beliefs that stemmed from their individual backgrounds. They would use natural philosophy to clarify vague ruminations about the world around them, to justify a mode of action, to explain an intuitive belief—but always in relation to their own experiences, their own "country," be that country Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, or Virginia. What might seem natural and reasonable to an Englishman like Paine, who had known hardship and failure most of his adult life, or to a New Englander like John Adams, would often seem unnatural to Thomas Jefferson.

Yet despite their diverse readings of Newtonianism, enlightened Americans held certain characteristics in common. Few led cloistered lives; they were men of the world. None were estranged from their times, as were such nineteenth-century intellectuals as Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau. Benjamin Franklin was a printer; John Adams a lawyer; Benjamin Rush a doctor; James Logan, an accomplished mathematician and one of the few Americans to read the *Principia Mathematica* in the original rather than in a popularized version, was a skilled politician and a ruthless merchant. Credulity, however, did not vanish with the onset of the Enlightenment. Men continued to believe that a horse could be crossed with a cow, that mermaids existed, that bloodletting hastened a man back to health, and that God refused to allow any species to become extinct within the Great Chain of Being He had created. But they sought constantly to check their credulity by reason and observation: they had a passion for experiments both within and without the laboratory; they were orderly men who loved statistics and believed that if enough facts were collected and correctly ordered a natural law of some sort would emerge. These men believed in progress, but their conception was fixed within the framework of the world as it existed. They did not conceive of drastic alterations in the environment, but hoped only to refine out the grosser evils of the world. They were reformers, not utopians.

Lives, like facts, were ordered as if living were an experiment, too. Here is the way one of these men planned his time:

> *Tuesday, Sept.* 2. By a sparingness in diet and eating as much as may be, what is light and easy of digestion, I shall doubtless be able to think more clearly, and shall gain time; 1. By lengthening out my life; 2. Shall need less time for digestion, after meals; 3. Shall be able to study more closely, without injury to my health; 4. Shall need less time for sleep; 5. Shall more seldom be troubled with the headache.

Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams all constructed similar schedules. (This one happens to be by Jonathan Edwards.) Moderation in all things underscored their lives. They praised common sense because the solutions it suggested were invariably moderate ones. For them, reasonable men were temperate men.

Yet these enlightened Americans were as aware of the evil in man as any Calvinist; experience in daily affairs restrained them from a wild-eyed optimism. They sought to change men's environment rather than men, for they saw the limits of free will. (Jefferson prefaced his Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia with the remark "that the opinions and beliefs of men depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their minds.") They steered their barks, as Jefferson put it, toward the end of a long life, "with hope in the head, leaving fear astern." Hopes "indeed sometimes fail," Jefferson added, "but not oftener than the forebodings of the gloomy."

Natural philosophy, pulling the English version of the Enlightenment along in its wake, had swept swiftly across the ocean to America. Cotton Mather had been among the first to welcome it. Mather, who cherished the Puritan tradition of New England's past, offers, it has been said, "a nice illustration of how a man's mind *begins* to make its way from one pole of thought to another." He embraced much of the Enlightenment without discarding the fervent orthodoxy of his ancestors. He called Newton our "perfect dictator," and his fascination with science led, among other things, to a membership in the Royal Society. In *The Christian Philosopher* (1721), he used the latest findings of natural philosophy to strengthen the eroded underpinnings of Puritanism.

The clergy's prompt and wholehearted acceptance of the Enlightenment was striking. Their tolerance of ideas that ultimately would undermine traditional Christianity came about partly because the Enlightenment seemed to buttress rather than attack orthodoxy and partly because they had been so quickly accepted by clerical colleagues in England. These English colleagues were invariably dissenters from the establishment and located on the left in politics.

Ministers, like other men, found what they went fishing for in the new stream of ideas. John Wise told his congregation that the end of government was to "promote the happiness of all" and that "it seems most agreeable with the light of nature that if there be any of the regular government settled in the church of God, it must needs be democracy." Jonathan Edwards, who read Newton and Locke as a youngster at Yale, used enlightened ideas to reinforce his inherited Calvinism. Newton showed him that man cannot master life but must, like the planets, submit to it, accepting the orbit or station that God had predestined him to.

Locke taught Edwards to exalt experience over reason. Man receives God's grace through the senses not through reason; as a man perceives, so he will conduct his life. If he perceives with a corrupt heart, as most men do, he will live corruptly, and only a regenerating religious experience will alter his perception of the world.

The danger Edwards sensed in exalting reason over experience eventually led to an antiseptic version of Christianity known as deism. The deist believed in an impersonal God who, once He had created the universe, left it alone. Doubting the divinity of Jesus Christ, he was skeptical of the Bible as divine revelation; Christianity offered man an excellent set of ethics but little more. The American deist was a milder man than his French counterpart; he privately deprecated organized religion but publicly supported it. Franklin and Jefferson, for instance, regularly attended church because they felt it set a good example. Deism was confined mainly to the educated classes, and they made no effort to propagate their views among the plain people. (An argument can be made that much of the vilification heaped upon Paine for publishing *The Age of Reason* came from the elite who felt that he spread heresy to the people and thus betrayed his class.)

Americans used ideas of the Enlightenment to promote modifications and reforms in society, not revolution. Their temperance to some extent was shaped by the pervading influence of classical thought in eighteenth-century America. (A visiting Spaniard who admired a statue of Pitt in Charleston thought it "a strange idea" he should be dressed in a Roman toga.) Locke gave William Livingston the arguments for an essay in 1753 ". . . on the Origin, Nature, Use and Abuse of Civil Government," but Roman history provided the illustrations on "the sweets of liberty" and "the wretched condition of slaves." Notes the youthful Jefferson made suggest the deep impression the classical authors left on him. He learned from Euripides that "moderation is everywhere beautiful and assures good repute among men." Cicero told him that "it behooves a man . . . to take care that reason shall have the command over that part which is bound to practice obedience." Long acquaintance with the classics taught Jefferson and those of his contemporaries who were to share in leading America through the Revolution that liberty did not give a man a natural right to indulge the acquisitive instinct but must be checked by a man's sense of duty to himself and to society, that happiness came not with the satisfaction of animal or material desires but was the ultimate result of moral virtue.

In the end, however, it was the ideas of the Enlightenment rather than those of the classics that worked with peculiar force on the minds of eighteenth-century Americans. Liberty of conscience, which had come to

be a practical necessity in the colonies, was justified on the high ground that it was "right and reasonable." A group of New York Quakers said in 1768 that they were "fully of the mind that Negroes as rational creatures are by Nature born free." Jefferson as a young lawyer argued for a Negro's freedom on the principle that "under the law of nature all men are born free." Within a few years men would argue that the right to vote should be broadened because, as one man put it, Locke had shown "that all power originates from the people." The men who were to lead America into and through the Revolution used the Enlightenment "to complete, formalize, systematize, and symbolize what previously had been only partially realized, confused, and disputed matters of fact," Bernard Bailyn has said. "This completion, this rationalization, this symbolization, this lifting into consciousness and endowing with high moral purpose inchoate, confused elements of social and political change—this was the American Revolution."

Town and Country

The gap between town and country was not then what it is now. Reverend Ezra Stiles of Newport milked his own cow, smoked and salted his own meat, made his own soap, grew most of his own vegetables. Hogs roamed wild through the streets of Boston and New York. Philadelphia in 1776 still sufficiently resembled Penn's dream of a "green country town" that when a resident advertised among the thirty thousand or so inhabitants for his lost red-and-white cow he considered it enough to note that she "had two small hind teats and a star in her forehead."

Despite these bucolic overtones, a new breed of American—the city dweller—had come into being since the seventeenth century. "Don't call me a country girl, Debby Norris," wrote a young lady named Sally Wister from the confinement of a Bucks County farm. "Please observe that I pride myself upon being a Philadelphian, and that a residence of some twenty months has not at all diminished the love I have for that dear place." Miss Wister, who was reared a Quaker, passed her time in the country reading such books as Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and flirting with soldiers. ("When we were alone our dress and lips were put in order for conquest," she says at one point, and at another, of a handsome army captain, "ain't he pretty, to be sure.") She missed her city friends and, equally, "the rattling of carriages over the streets—harsh music, tho' preferable to croaking frogs and screeching owls."

The eighteenth-century town or city encompassed several sides of America. A stranger could amuse himself "looking at some Indians, who were shooting with bows and arrows before the State House" and the next moment meet "a man with a blue Scotch bonnet on his head, a sight I

have not seen a long time and which made me smile." In the space of an hour a visitor to Philadelphia might meet a bearded Amish farmer arguing in German with a shopkeeper, talk to a Jew, visit a Catholic mass, or hear a plainly dressed Quaker asking if "thee is well." The man so inclined might sink himself unobtrusively in sin, mild or otherwise. Every town had its "obscure inn," where patrons "poured down the fiery beverage, and valiant in the novel feeling of intoxication, sallied forth in quest of adventures." And every town had its prostitutes. (New York's prostitutes patrolled the Battery after sunset, and there a visitor might find "a good choice of pretty lasses among them, both English and Dutch.")

Outwardly, cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; coastal towns like Salem, New Haven, and Norfolk; and inland towns like Hartford, Lancaster, and Williamsburg resembled English provincial cities and towns. Furnishings in the homes of the well-to-do either came from England or were Americanized versions of English patterns. Women of style took their cues from the latest in English fashions. The tavern tended to duplicate the English tavern, sometimes even to the name, as in Philadelphia's London Coffee House, where, of course, a brew stronger than coffee was served. Cultural life, too, drew heavily upon England. People read books by English authors and saw mainly English plays, usually performed by a traveling troupe of English actors. Their newspapers were packed with material lifted from English journals, and the news usually carried a European dateline. Yet despite the obviously English influence, any visitor from the mother country knew at once these were American towns and cities. They displayed, as no English provincial town or city did, what Carl Bridenbaugh has called "the unfolding, working out, and institutionalizing of the ideals and aspirations of the Age of Enlightenment."

Take, for example, Philadelphia. No other city in British history had grown more rapidly than Philadelphia—from approximately four thousand at the turn of the century to thirty thousand plus in 1775—and none had coped better with the problems of growth. The streets for the most part were paved and flanked by raised brick sidewalks. Lamps lighted the city at night, except when the moon was full, a provision that pleased the thrifty. The walks were shaded with towering elms and Italian poplars, and every hundred feet or so stood public water pumps—some five hundred in all scattered throughout the city. No other city in the world handled fires more effectively or with more dispatch. Criminals were housed in a "monster of a large strong prison," the poor in the Bettering House, and the sick in the only hospital on the American continent. The city by 1775 had a theater, a college, a medical school, a museum, a public library, a scientific society; it also had an educated public that supported and enjoyed these institutions.

Philadelphia's achievements exemplified what to a lesser extent was going on in towns and cities throughout the land. But often, efforts to improve the quality of urban life failed. (Not too many years after the Pennsylvania Hospital had opened, a visiting doctor found it pervaded by "a strong smell of sores and nastiness [that] rendered it insupportable even to me, who have been pretty much used to such places." Sanitary conditions remained primitive. Flies blackened uncovered food, and bedbugs, mosquitoes, and roaches were a constant torment. Inoculation, which America had been the first to try on a large scale, had limited the deadliness of smallpox but epidemics of yellow fever, typhus, and diphtheria continued to ravage the population. Prisons did little to cut the rising crime rate.) What distinguished American cities was not that they solved their problems but that they sought to solve them, whereas in England, where cities were encrusted with centuries of tradition and men were "moved only by the wheels of custom," the problems accumulated and increased.

A second distinction was the way Americans sought to solve the problems an urban existence imposed on them. Philadelphia was encumbered with an antiquated charter like that given to English provincial cities. Government was controlled by a closed, self-perpetuating corporation of aldermen and councilmen with a high resistance to all pleas for civic improvements. The corporation could be circumvented by appealing to the assembly—it was the assembly that authorized a board of elected wardens to oversee street lighting, public wells, and the night watch in the city—but when both assembly and corporation balked at needed reforms, civic leaders invented a new approach: the voluntary society. ("Borrowed" might be a better word, for Americans appear to have taken their cue from dissenters in England who, faced with a belligerently Anglican government and church, had found that through self-created voluntary organizations they could carry out projects that church and state refused either to support or to allow dissenters a hand in.) In 1736 Benjamin Franklin sought to improve fire protection by organizing a group of his neighbors into the Union Fire Company. These volunteers raised money on their own to purchase engines and to build their own firehouse in order to assure adequate protection for at least their part of the city. By 1775 the city had seventeen such fire companies. And by that date, the voluntary organization had become a standard way to deal with any civic problem the government refused to face. The Pennsylvania Hospital had been financed almost entirely by private contributions. The Bettering House—where the poor were put to spinning, sewing, and other forms of gainful employment, and which contained a maternity ward and a school for orphans—was run by a board chosen by the private contributors that supported it. The public library, the College of Philadelphia,

the American Philosophical Society—all were organized and financed by private individuals.

The inadequacy of local and provincial government did not alone popularize these voluntary societies. Religious groups turned to them when government fell into alien hands. An Anglican governor and his clique of Anglican appointees caused the Congregationalists of Boston to develop voluntary societies as a means to maintain some control over the city's affairs. Sydney James has shown that the Quakers of Philadelphia, who retired from politics with the French and Indian War, found "in organizations to do good a solution to the problem of retaining the kinds of leadership in society which they wanted and thought it their right to exert." In the beginning these societies were usually tied to a single religious group. Franklin's Union Fire Company, for instance, was composed mainly of Quakers, and other companies that followed were made up of Presbyterians or Anglicans. Each religious group tended to care for its own sick and its own poor. But sectarian exclusiveness tended to relax after the Great Awakening and so, too, did the societies'. The awakening's emphasis on a practical and practicing Christianity also tended to increase the number of societies engaged in humanitarian projects. By the 1770's a civic unity had been created in every city by these voluntary groups, which had come to represent the people rather than a particular denomination or national group.

The voluntary society flourished in the eighteenth-century American city more than in Great Britain, partly because the colonists dared to arouse and use public opinion. This does not mean that American leaders were bolder or more democratic-minded but only that they had less to fear from the people. Englishmen lived in terror of mob violence, for the bulk of their cities were composed of the "poorer sort"—unemployed laborers, vagabonds, beggars—who needed only the slightest prodding to start them on a rampage. Mobs did appear occasionally in America, but more often than not they consisted of "gentlemen rakes" out on a lark. No large laboring class dominated the cities. Except for sailors and those who worked along the wharves, most urban dwellers were of the "better sort"—merchants, lawyers, clergy—and the "middling sort"—self-employed craftsmen, shopkeepers, tradesmen. Probably never before or since was poverty less of an urban problem that it was in eighteenth-century America.

The prosperity that sprang from the expanding towns and cities kept down the number of poor, and it also for the first time gave the colonies a leisure class. In the seventeenth century, when there were "all things to do, as in the beginning of the world," few besides the clergy had the time to read and reflect. But the clergy lost its near monopoly on learning

in the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin was seventeen when he arrived in Philadelphia, virtually penniless and with only his energy and intelligence to recommend him. At the age of forty-two he retired from business and lived the rest of his life off the income from investments. John Adams, the son of a farmer, left the soil for law and became, among other things, America's profoundest student of political philosophy. Thomas Jefferson, another farmer's son, spent six years in Williamsburg, free of practical concerns, absorbing eighteenth-century thought under the eyes of several sophisticated mentors. These gentlemen, and numerous others less renowned, used the leisure that prosperity had granted them to promote in practical ways the ideals of the Enlightenment as they understood them.

These men of leisure were for the most part city bred. But this is not to say that the Enlightenment was confined to the city. Rather it was, as Daniel Boorstin puts it, "city-filtered," the cities serving as "so many separate funnels through which the bookish culture of Britain poured into the inland areas." It flowed through a variety of funnels. Newspapers carried much of the new thought. Hawkers and peddlers dispersed it in the books that weighed down their carts. The leading lights of country towns picked it up when they went to the city on business. Young city-trained men like James Wilson carried it out. Wilson, who had read deeply in Scottish and English political philosophy, studied law in John Dickinson's Philadelphia office, then traveled westward to settle among the Scotch-Irish of Carlisle. Every inland town of Pennsylvania—of every colony, for that matter—had its version of the well-read James Wilson, whose political and social views had been shaped in the seaboard cities.

Still, for all the funnels into the countryside, the Enlightenment failed to penetrate deeply, even where its findings might have been of use. Experiments in England had led to new ideas about the breeding of cattle to improve their quality, the rotation of crops to reduce soil deterioration, and the plowing of fields to boost yields. Books and newspaper essays spread the results of these experiments throughout the country, but the American farmers continued to treat the land carelessly—because, said a visiting European, "their eyes are fixed upon the present gain, and they are blind to the future"; because, said George Washington, their aim is "not to make the most they can from the land, which is, or has been cheap, but the most of the labour, which is dear. . . ." Country people remained set in their ways. Their minds clung to the seventeenth century long after city dwellers had advanced into a new era. By 1763, Carl Bridenbaugh has said, "the rivalry of the city slicker and the hayseed, so persistent a theme in American life, had made a lasting appearance."

There were, then, two colonial minds: one that tended to cling to the

past and eyed change suspiciously, another that accepted the present and was willing to experiment with new methods to solve the problems it raised. The country dweller lived rooted to the soil, and his horizon seldom swept beyond the view that rimmed his farm. The city dweller lived amid change, which he could resist if he wished but could not ignore. His contacts with the world stretched far beyond the boundaries of his towns. The ships that tied up at the wharves brought Europe to his doorstep. The post office, which had been created by an act of Parliament in 1710 but which remained an ineffective organization until Franklin became deputy postmaster in 1753, put New York only thirty-three hours away from Philadelphia; where it had once taken at least three weeks to get a letter from Boston to Philadelphia, it now took only six days. Merchants and craftsmen traveled regularly between cities. Newspapers kept inhabitants posted on developments in other cities. When Boston in 1761 sought to combat a business slump by organizing a Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce with the Province of Massachusetts Bay, merchants elsewhere heard of the project and had soon created similar organizations. Common interests and problems, Bridenbaugh has observed, "served to forge these communities into an integrated society—the only segment of colonial population so fused."

DAWN OF A NEW ERA

Outwardly, Americans in the eighteenth century lived much as they had in the past. Enemies had diminished but not vanished. ("Dr. John Mitchell is returned from Virginia," Linnaeus reports in 1746, "where he has been closely occupied for six years in collecting plants; but he was plundered in his voyage home by Spanish pirates, to the great misfortune of botany.") No signs of the industrial revolution had appeared to alter the environment. Men sowed seeds and harvested crops as they had always done. Techniques for building a house, making an iron pot, spinning wool into thread and thread into cloth remained as they had been. And the Englishness of the colonies seemed to have increased rather than diminished, for men in all colonies looked to England to set the fashion in education, science, literature, and the arts.

Inwardly, though, Americans had changed a great deal. They vested authority in personalities rather than, as in England, in institutions or traditions. As a people, they lived virtually stripped of traditions. Pomp and ceremony had been washed from their lives and plainness had been elevated into a virtue. The rigid class structure of England had degenerated into a cliché observed in form but not practice. Leadership was open to anyone who had the wit and ability to assert it. The poor no