Are We Entering the Next Great Awakening?  Part 1

Two of the most significant events in United States history, the American Revolution and the Civil War, were each preceded by a “Great Awakening” - a spiritual revival based on individual freedom and a challenge to live more moral lives. These spiritual revivals set a standard for political individual freedom, democracy, and freedom for all people.

The First Great Awakening, sparked by powerful religious preachers, began in the 1730's and stressed individual responsibility for greater spiritual intimacy with God. This emphasis on the authority of individuals over the established religious authority created dissent with the religious and political hierarchy. This resulted in changing not only the religious framework but also the social and political landscape of the American Colonies.

Having experienced some democracy and equality in the churches, the common people began to demand democracy and equality in their political life as well. This desire for more freedom went directly against the goals of the British government’s desire for more money and control and became one of the basic causes of the American War for Independence.

The Second Great Awakening developed during the early 19th century (1790s-1840s) and was described as "... an expansion of religious feeling unknown in American history." (1) This burst of religious enthusiasm prompted a movement to believe in the possibility of creating a much better world. Many yearned for stability, decency, and goodness in the new and turbulent expanding American republic.

Social reform came largely out of this new devotion to religion and took the shape of social movements for temperance, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery, as well as reform to prisons and care for the handicapped and the mentally ill.

Many religious leaders believe America is now seeing the development of the next Great Awakening. In response to social and political challenges, they see Americans turning to our Judeo-Christian foundation for reaffirmation of the inalienable rights of each human being.

 Americans remember in 1976 Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Pope St. John Paul II, warned in his address in Philadelphia for the bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence:  "We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the Antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God’s Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously."

(ushistory.org; thought.com, 7/29/19; lifesitenews.com, 5/18/17; secondgreatawakeninghistory173.com(1); courses.lumenlearning.com; catholic online)