CHAPTER 5

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution, 1700–1775

PART I: REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the demographic, ethnic, and social character of Britain’s colonies in the eighteenth century, and indicate how colonial society had changed since the seventeenth century.

2. Explain how the economic development of the colonies altered the patterns of social prestige and wealth, and brought growing class distinctions and class conflict to British North America.

3. Identify the major religious denominations of the eighteenth-century colonies, and indicate their role in early American society.

4. Explain the causes of the Great Awakening, and describe its effects on American religion, education, and politics.

5. Describe the origins and development of education, culture, and journalism in the colonies.

6. Describe the basic features of colonial politics, including the role of various official and informal political institutions.

7. Indicate the key qualities of daily existence in eighteenth-century colonial America, including forms of socialization and recreation.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. sect A small religious group that has broken away from some larger mainstream church, often claiming superior or exclusive possession of religious truth. (A denomination is a branch of the church—usually Protestant—but makes no such exclusive claims.) “They belonged to several different Protestant sects . . .”

2. agitators Persons who seek to excite or persuade the public on some issue. “Already experienced colonizers and agitators in Ireland, the Scots-Irish proved to be superb frontiersmen . . .”

3. stratification The visible arrangement of society into a hierarchical pattern, with distinct social groups layered one on top of the other. “. . . colonial society . . . was beginning to show signs of stratification . . .”

4. mobility The capacity to pass readily from one social or economic condition to another. (Social mobility may be upward, from a lower status to higher, or downward, from higher status to lower.) “. . . barriers to mobility . . . raised worries about the ‘Europeanization’ of America.”

5. elite A small, identifiable group at the top of a society or particular institution, usually possessing wealth, power, or special privileges. “. . . these elites now feathered their nests more finely.”

6. almshouse In the premodern era, a home for the poor, supported by charity or public funds. “Both Philadelphia and New York built almshouses in the 1730s . . .”

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7. **gentry** Landowners of substantial property, social standing, and leisure, but not titled nobility. “Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the largest slaveowners, widening the gap between the prosperous gentry and the ‘poor whites’ . . .”

8. **tenant farmer** One who rents rather than owns land. “… the ‘poor whites’ . . . were increasingly forced to become tenant farmers.”

9. **penal code** The body of criminal laws specifying offenses and prescribing punishments. “But many convicts were the unfortunate victims . . . of a viciously unfair English penal code. . . .”

10. **veto** The executive power to prevent acts passed by the legislature from becoming law. “Thomas Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, assailed the British vetoes. . . .”

11. **profession** An occupation traditionally characterized by specialized skill, mastery of a body of knowledge, and publicly defined privileges and responsibilities. “Most honored of the professions was the Christian ministry.”

12. **apprentice** A person who works under a master to acquire instruction and skill in a trade or profession. “Aspiring young doctors served for a while as apprentices to older practitioners. . . .”

13. **speculation** Buying land or anything else in the hope of profiting by an expected rise in price. “Commercial ventures and land speculation . . . were the surest avenues to speedy wealth.”

14. **revival** In religion, a movement of renewed enthusiasm and commitment, often accompanied by special meetings or evangelical activity. “The stage was thus set for a rousing religious revival.”

15. **secular** Belonging to the worldly sphere, as distinct from the specifically sacred or churchly. “A more secular approach was evident late in the eighteenth century. . . .”

**PART II: CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS**

**A. True-False**

Where the statement is true, circle T; where it is false, circle F.

1. T F Most of the spectacular growth of the colonial population came from immigration rather than natural increase.

2. T F The Scots-Irish were uprooted Scottish Protestants who largely settled in the Appalachian frontier and back country.

3. T F Compared with the seventeenth-century colonies, the eighteenth-century colonies were becoming more socially equal and democratic.

4. T F The lowest class of whites in the colonies consisted of the paupers and convicted criminals involuntarily shipped to America by British authorities.

5. T F When some North American colonists attempted to curtail the transatlantic slave trade, their efforts were thwarted by British government vetoes.

6. T F The most highly regarded professionals in the colonies were doctors and lawyers.

7. T F Besides agriculture, the most important colonial economic activities were fishing, shipping, and ocean-going trade.

8. T F The British government’s passage of the Molasses Act and other economic regulations effectively ended American merchants’ lucrative trade with the French West Indies.

9. T F The clergy of the established Anglican Church in the South and New York had a reputation for serious theology and high ethical standards.

10. T F The Great Awakening was a revival of fervent religion after a period of religious decline caused by clerical dullness and overintellectualism and lay liberalism in doctrine.
Great Awakening revivalists like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield tried to replace the older Puritan ideas of conversion and salvation with more rational and less emotional beliefs.

The Great Awakening was the first mass movement across the thirteen colonies to create a strong sense of common American identity and shared destiny.

By the late eighteenth century, the nine American colleges were comparable to the best university education offered in Europe.

The conviction of newspaper printer John Peter Zenger for seditious libel of a colonial governor stirred Americans' opposition to British censorship of the press.

The central point of conflict in colonial politics was the relation between the democratically elected lower house of the assembly and the governors appointed by the king or colonial proprietor.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. The primary reason for the spectacular growth of America's population in the eighteenth century was
   a. the conquering of new territories.
   b. the natural fertility of the population.
   c. the increased importation of white indentured servants and black slaves.
   d. new immigration from Europe.
   e. increased longevity due to better diet and health care.

2. German settlement in the colonies was especially heavy in
   a. Massachusetts.
   b. Maryland.
   c. New York.
   d. Pennsylvania.
   e. North Carolina.

3. Which of the following is not true of the colonial Scots-Irish?
   a. They were not really Irish, but Scottish Presbyterians who had temporarily migrated to Ireland.
   b. They tended to settle in the Appalachian frontier, mountains, and valleys from Pennsylvania southward.
   c. They hated the British government and frequently rebelled against colonial authorities.
   d. Their hostility to Indians and encroachment on Indian land often sparked frontier warfare.
   e. They fervently practiced their Calvinist religion, which forbade dancing, gambling, and liquor consumption.

4. The two largest non-English white ethnic groups in the colonies were the
   a. French and the Dutch.
   b. Germans and the Scots-Irish.
   c. Arabs and the Jews.
   d. Welsh and the Irish.
   e. Swedes and the Germans.

5. One way in which Indians and Africans were similar to whites in eighteenth-century North America was they
   a. were committed to the Christian religion as their basic belief system.
   b. increasingly mingled and intermarried with people from beyond their original ethnic group or tribe.
   c. fundamentally disliked violence and looked to government to establish law and order.
   d. increasingly found greater opportunities for freedom and upward mobility.
   e. tended to prefer stable, homogenous communities.

6. Compared to the seventeenth century, American colonial society in the eighteenth century showed
   a. greater domination by small farmers and artisans.
   b. greater equality of wealth and status.
   c. greater gaps in wealth and status between rich and poor.
   d. greater opportunity for convicts and indentured servants to climb to the top.
   e. growing divisions by race and ethnicity rather than social class.
7. The most honored professional in colonial America was the
   a. lawyer.
   b. college professor.
   c. doctor.
   d. journalist.
   e. clergyman.

8. The primary source of livelihood for most colonial Americans was
   a. manufacturing.
   b. agriculture.
   c. lumbering.
   d. commerce and trade.
   e. fishing.

9. Which of the following was not among the generally small-scale manufacturing enterprises in colonial America?
   a. Carriage manufacturing
   b. Liquor distilling
   c. Beaver hat making
   d. Iron making
   e. Spinning and weaving

10. An unfortunate group of involuntary immigrants who ranked even below indentured servants on the American social scale were
    a. the younger sons of English gentry.
    b. French-Canadians forcibly removed from Quebec.
    c. convicts and paupers.
    d. prostitutes.
    e. impressed sailors and seamen.

11. The triangular trade involved the sale of rum, molasses, and slaves among the ports of
    a. Virginia, Canada, and Britain.
    b. the West Indies, France, and South America.
    e. South Carolina, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea.

12. The passage of increasing British restrictions on trade encouraged colonial merchants to
    a. organize political resistance in the British Parliament.
    b. find ways to smuggle and otherwise evade the law by trading with other countries.
    c. turn to domestic trade within the colonies.
    d. turn from trading to such other enterprises as fishing and manufacturing.
    e. establish branch offices in London that were not covered by the restrictions.

13. Besides offering rest, refreshment, and entertainment, colonial taverns served an important function as centers of
    a. news and political opinion.
    b. trade and business.
    c. medicine and law.
    d. religious revival.
    e. dating and social relations with the opposite sex.

14. The Anglican Church suffered in colonial America because of
    a. its strict doctrines and hierarchical church order.
    b. its poorly qualified clergy and close ties with British authorities.
    c. its inability to adjust to conditions of life in New England.
    d. its reputation for fostering fanatical revivalism.
    e. the succession of corrupt and incompetent bishops who ran the church.

15. The two denominations that enjoyed the status of established churches in various colonies were the
    a. Quakers and Dutch Reformed.
b. Baptists and Lutherans.
c. Mennonites and Church of the Brethren.
d. Roman Catholics and Presbyterians.
e. Anglicans and Congregationalists.

16. Among the many important results of the Great Awakening was that it
   a. broke down sectional boundaries and created a greater sense of common American identity.
   b. contributed to greater religious liberalism and toleration in the churches.
   c. caused a decline in colonial concern for education.
   d. moved Americans closer to a single religious outlook.
   e. made Americans suspicious of eloquent preachers and traveling evangelists.

17. A primary weapon used by colonial legislatures in their conflicts with royal governors was
   a. extending the franchise to include almost all adult white citizens.
   b. passing laws prohibiting the governors from owning land or industries.
   c. voting them out of office.
   d. using their power of the purse to withhold the governor’s salary.
   e. appealing over the heads of the governors to the British Parliament.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

1. _________ Corruption of a German word used as a term for German immigrants in Pennsylvania

2. _________ Ethnic group that had already relocated once before immigrating to America and settling largely on the western frontier of the middle and southern colonies

3. _________ Rebellious movement of North Carolina frontiersmen against eastern domination that included future President Andrew Jackson

4. _________ Popular term for convicted criminals dumped on colonies by British authorities

5. _________ Dread disease that afflicted one out of every five colonial Americans, including George Washington

6. _________ Lucrative profession, especially prevalent in New England, that marketed its product to the Catholic nations of southern Europe

7. _________ Small but profitable trade route that linked New England, Africa, and the West Indies

8. _________ Popular colonial centers of recreation, gossip, and political debate

9. _________ Term for tax-supported condition of Congregational and Anglican churches, but not of Baptists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics

10. _________ Spectacular, emotional religious revival of the 1730s and 1740s

11. _________ Ministers who supported the Great Awakening against the old light clergy who rejected it

12. _________ Followers of a Dutch theologian who challenged traditional Calvinist doctrine by arguing for free will and the dispensation of divine grace beyond a few elect

13. _________ The case that established the precedent that true statements about public officials could not be prosecuted as libel

14. _________ The first American college not to be sponsored by a religious denomination, strongly supported by Benjamin Franklin

15. _________ Benjamin Franklin’s highly popular collection of information, parables, and advice
D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

1. ___ Philadelphia  
2. ___ African Americans  
3. ___ Scots-Irish  
4. ___ Paxton Boys and Regulators  
5. ___ Patrick Henry  
6. ___ Molasses Act  
7. ___ Anglican church  
8. ___ Jonathan Edwards  
9. ___ George Whitefield  
10. ___ Phillis Wheatley  
11. ___ Benjamin Franklin  
12. ___ John Peter Zenger  
13. ___ Quakers  
14. ___ Baptists  
15. ___ John Singleton Copley  

   a. Itinerant British evangelist who spread the Great Awakening throughout the colonies  
   b. Colonial printer whose case helped begin freedom of the press  
   c. Colonial painter who studied and worked in Britain  
   d. Leading city of the colonies; home of Benjamin Franklin  
   e. Largest non-English group in the colonies  
   f. Dominant religious group in colonial Pennsylvania, criticized by others for their attitudes toward Indians  
   g. Former slave who became a poet at an early age  
   h. Scots-Irish frontiersmen who protested against colonial elites of Pennsylvania and North Carolina  
   i. Attempt by British authorities to squelch colonial trade with French West Indies  
   j. Brilliant New England theologian who instigated the Great Awakening  
   k. Group that settled the frontier, made whiskey, and hated the British and other governmental authorities  
   l. Nonestablished religious group that benefited from the Great Awakening  
   m. Author, scientist, printer; “the first civilized American”  
   n. Eloquent lawyer-orator who argued in defense of colonial rights  
   o. Established religion in southern colonies and New York; weakened by lackadaisical clergy and too-close ties with British crown

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them 1 to 10.

1. _______ Epochal freedom of the press case is settled.  
2. _______ First southern college to train Anglican clergy is founded.  
3. _______ Britain vetoes colonial effort to halt slave importation.