FIGURE 8.1 Number of Church Congregations by Denomination, 1780 and 1860
Chapter 8, America’s History, Eighth Edition and America: A Concise History, Sixth Edition
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The Second Great Awakening

“Spiritual Reform From Within”
[Religious Revivalism]

Social Reforms & Redefining the Ideal of Equality

- Temperance
- Asylum & Penal Reform
- Abolitionism
- Education
- Women’s Rights
In France, I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America, I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country... Religion was the foremost of the political institutions of the United States.

-- Alexis de Tocqueville, 1832
IV. Protestant Christianity as a Social Force

B. The Second Great Awakening
   1. A New Religious Landscape
      - Methodist and Baptist
      - Use Revivals from First Great Awakening

2. Black Christianity
   - While stopped by planters initially, most eventually allow spread to Slaves.
   - Black Methodist and Baptist churches form
The 2nd Great Awakening
Second Great Awakening

- As a result of the Second Great Awakening (a series of revivals in the 1790s-early 1800s), the dominant form of Christianity in America became evangelical Protestantism.
  - Membership in the major Protestant churches—Congregational, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist—soared.
  - By 1840 an estimated half of the adult population was connected to some church, with the Methodists emerging as the largest denomination in both the North and the South.
Denominational Growth, 1780–1860

As this bar graph makes clear, the early nineteenth century was a time of explosive religious growth. What were the decades that saw the greatest growth? Which denominations expanded most quickly and which most slowly?
Revivalism and the Social Order

- Society during the Jacksonian era was undergoing deep and rapid change
  - The revolution in markets brought both economic expansion and periodic depressions.

- To combat this uncertainty reformers sought stability and order in religion
  - Religion provided a means of social control in a disordered society
  - Churchgoers embraced the values of hard work, punctuality, and sobriety
  - Revivals brought unity and strength and a sense of peace
Charles Finney

- Charles Finney conducted his own revivals in the mid 1820s and early 1830s
- He rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination
  - adopted ideas of free will and salvation to all
- Really popularized the new form of revival
Charles Finney and the Conversion Experience

• New form of revival
  – Meeting night after night to build excitement
  – Speaking bluntly
  – Praying for sinners by name
  – Encouraging women to testify in public
  – Placing those struggling with conversion on the “anxious bench” at the front of the church
Burned Over District

- Burned over district in Western NY got its name from a “wild fire of new religions”
  - Gave birth to Seventh Day Adventists
    - The Millerites believed the 2nd coming of Christ would occur on October 22, 1843
    - Members sold belonging, bought white robes for the ascension into heaven
    - Believers formed new church on October 23rd
The Rise of African American Churches

- Revivalism also spread to the African American community

- The Second Great Awakening has been called the "central and defining event in the development of Afro-Christianity"

- During these revivals Baptists and Methodists converted large numbers of blacks
The Rise of African American Churches

- This led to the formation of all-black Methodist and Baptist churches, primarily in the North
- African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) had over 17,000 members by 1846
IV. Protestant Christianity as a Social Force

D. Women’s New Religious Roles

1. A Growing Public Presence
   1. Just like First Great Awakening and Puritans, Women play a huge role
   2. Charity by churches
   3. Men and women worship and pray together

2. Spiritual authority vs. political power
   But stays in church and doesn’t = political power