
The Positives and Negatives of The Second Awakening in The Kingdom of Matthias

Introduction

The Kingdom of Matthias, a book written on nineteenth century America by Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, depicts the shaping of American lives through economic, social, and religious aspects. Moving through the book we begin to understand two important people, Robert Matthews and Elijah Pierson. Robert Matthews, a businessman and religious figure, later known as Matthias the Prophet, created a religious cult centered around the domination of Matthias. Elijah Pierson, a childhood raised perfectionist Presbyterian, took great part in the making of Matthias's Kingdom, known as "The Kingdom", by being one of his first followers. Matthias's benefits and downfalls directly relate to aspects of the market revolution, gender, and religion. The reader can see Matthias's downfalls through his religious mistakes and his discretion against women, but his benefits contribute to the market revolution through being a successful businessman and carpenter, which later became a downfall to him. These components addressed from Matthias are important and relate to the shaping of nineteenth century American lives. In the Kingdom of Matthias, the authors Johnson and Wilentz depict how the market revolution, gender, and religion contributed to the lives of American people. Through Matthias's view on religion, spiritual authority or salvation, and transformation we can conclude how the book relates religion to lectures in class and the American Yawp.

The Market Revolution

The market revolution affected American lives in multiple ways in the book. The most deminoshing way being that it affected the lower class. The laboring class would work for low wages and were then trapped by poverty. This is shown through both the book and lectures in class. The book states: 'Gradually, he recouped his losses, and after three years of working as a journeyman, he set up a business of his own, as a master builder and house joiner. But the Mathewses knew no end to misery, of a kind that was increasingly common among families in New York's poorer, crowded working-class neighborhoods.'

This quote relates to multiple people having the same issues with wages within the poor class. Even though there were many jobs being given out the wages for individuals were small and could barely stabilize families. From the lectures in class, an image was shown showing a man in a miserable state due to the economy stepping on the Bill of Rights. This image is called "The Panic of 1819." This image relates to the issues of the impoverished class because people with low wages would be forced to borrow money to keep up with families and would then be stuck in a never ending cycle of the economy taking the families money. This kept people in a miserable state that was hard to get out of. Other than going into debt Americans would have no other choice than to move and start over in another place, like Matthews did with his family multiple times due to the market revolution. The book explains: 'Like thousands of other American men, he had experienced the market revolution not as a liberating triumph, but as a faithful, agonizing descent into wage labor. Never again would he regain his economic independence.'

This shows that even though the market revolution changed multiple lives in a positive way, there were Americans who suffered in drastically and would never be able to regain back the stability that was there at one point. After having no money, his downfall started to happen. Matthews then started to become enraged and took it out on his family.

Gender

Another factor that affected Americans is gender. The book has challenged the social status of women, authority that people of color and women could have, and women's role in the family. Women during this time would have little to no rights in the family. Husbands could only spend the income, women had no say in what the money goes to. In the book it states: 'Matthews bellowed that she didn't understand him, that she was faithless. All she wanted was a new stove, or some new clothes, or a better apartment, or some other wordly comfort.'

This shows that women in a household had no control over buying things. Margaret, Matthews's wife, only wanted necessary things, sometimes a new pair of clothes or something needed around the house. While she asked for these things her husband would be buying himself things that he did not necessarily need, for example extravagant shirts. Other than where the money went women also had no say over what happened inside of the house. Husbands would end up taking rage out on the wife or children.

At home following the funeral, Robert told Margaret that he would never forget her selfless care during the boy's last days--but soon after he lost control as never before, and Margaret bore the brunt of his anguish. "I well recollect the night he first brought home the raw hide," she later wrote. The usual penalty was five or six strokes, for any imagined slight. "I often told him he would kill me," she recalled, "but he said he didn't care, that the gallows had no terrors for him."

This quote shows a situation where if men had nothing to take anger out on they would blame it on the people living in the household and did not care about who they hurt. People around them would here but did interfere with the situation, it seemed as if it was a regular occurring thing. The rage that Matthias encountered earlier with Margaret then contributed to the downfall of his kingdom. Women in his kingdom were swapped, abused, and had to be submissive to anything that Matthias wanted. On the positive side, women and people of color had some spiritual authority. The book, *The American Yawp* states: 'In the early nineteenth century, the dominant understanding of gender claimed that women were the guardians of virtue and the spiritual heads of the home. Women were expected to be pious, pure, submissive, and domestic, and to pass these virtues on to their children.'

Women would teach the men how to pray, it was one thing that was controlled by them. Along with prayer, women rose to new educational opportunities, this allowed wives to get out of the house, instead of doing only things inside the house.

Religion

Matthias's view on religion shifts throughout the book. At a young age Robert Matthews was taught religion through Calvinism. Calvinism is focuses on faith in predestination. Although Matthews family had other views that contributed to Calvinism. Matthews learned at a young age that women should be submissive to men. By learning this early Matthews never learned

another way of treating women. As Matthias gained more followers his religion became more tethered around him. He thought that the only way was to only pay attention to him, so he made sure to get rid of all the other preachers. Religion also had positive effects on people. Before Americans had strong faith in predestination, now society has shifted onto a lighter way of looking at predestination. Americans believed that salvation is attainable through transformation. Society could now change whether heaven is attainable or not.

Calvinists believed that all of humankind was marred by sin, and God predestined only some for salvation. These attitudes began to seem too pessimistic for many American Christians. Worshippers increasingly began to take responsibility for their own spiritual fates by embracing theologies that emphasized human action in effecting salvation, and revivalist preachers were quick to recognize the importance of these cultural shifts. Radical revivalist preachers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, put theological issues aside and evangelized by appealing to worshippers' hearts and emotions.

Religion's role in The Second Great Awakening had huge effects on authority, positions, and created new positive ways amongst society. Matthias's downfalls are the worst towards religion. He treated people like they were just servants to him, instead of living things. He used them for money by manipulating them into believing in him. If anyone got in the way of his work or fell out of line he felt that that person needed to be punished, just like Elijah Pierson. He was supposedly poisoned by Matthias for leaving him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, during the time of The Second Great Awakening, America had positives and negatives. Society was trying to find themselves through new ways of religion, inventions, goods, money, and through roles of each gender and race. Although the market revolution affected the lower class in a destructive way, there were positive effects in products being sold and alternating farming. Matthias's relationship with gender stays persistent in the society around his time. There were some positive effects like, women being able to get educated and having the power to teach prayer, but women were also treated like they were nothing. The reader finds out that religion affected Matthias's harshly, even though it was developing for the better amongst other areas in society. Society found a new life inside of religion, people could be saved and obtain salvation through transformation. The downfall of Matthias gave us a detailed idea of what contributed to The Second Great Awakening. Matthias's or Robert Matthews powerful religious kingdom fell down because of the market revolution, gender, and religion combined being used or viewed in a negative way.