



# Review

- Separatists (“The Pilgrims”) expelled dissenters from Plymouth Colony.
- John Winthrop’s vision of a community knit together as one in Massachusetts Bay.

# Breakdown of the NE Godly Society

- Dissenters: Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, Baptists (including Henry Dunster, founder of Harvard, exiled to Plymouth) , Quakers (3 executed).
- Church splits.
- Toleration of Church of England congregations after 1686 revocation of charters.

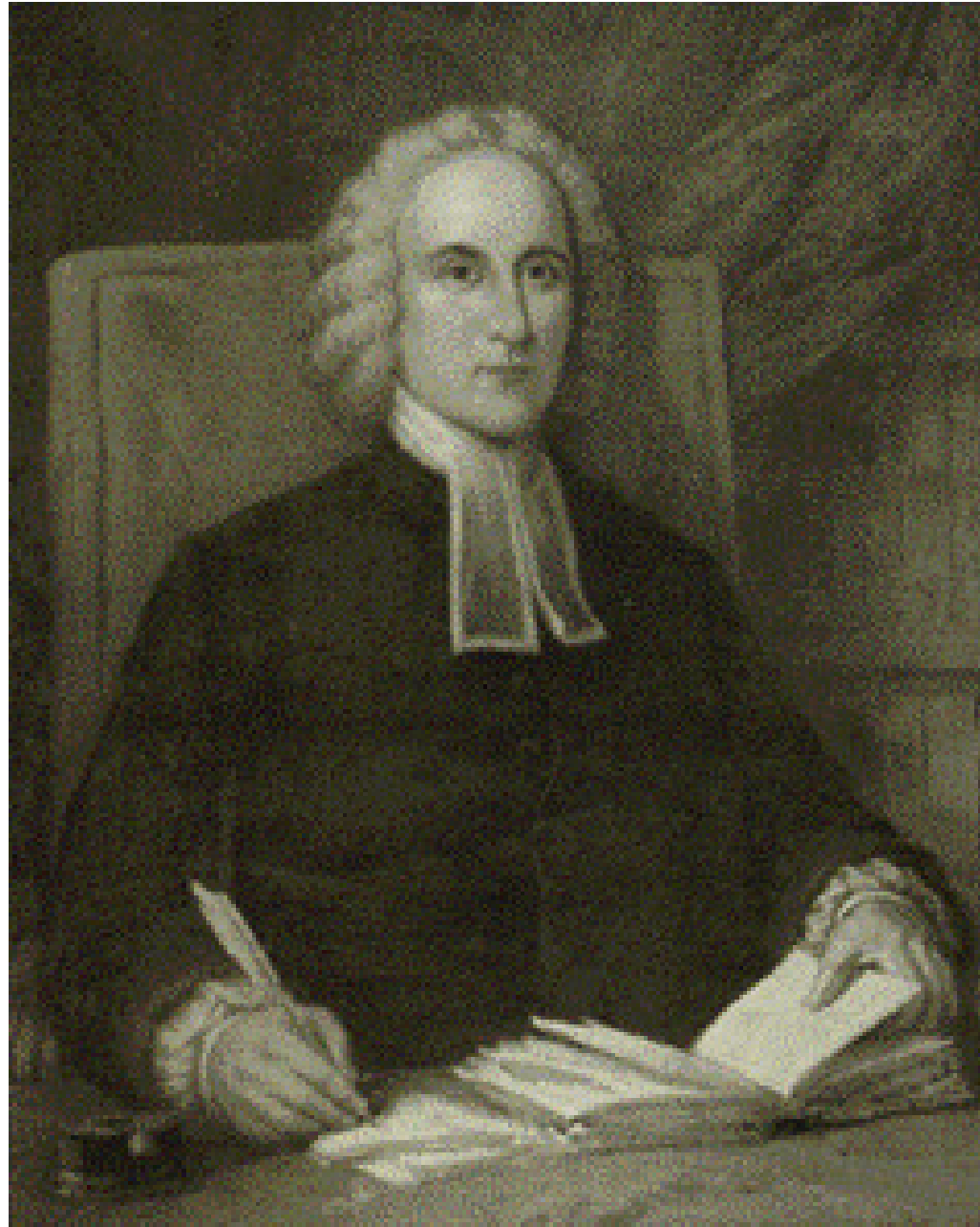
# Colonial Religious Diversity

- Virginia: weak establishment.
- Maryland: haven for Catholics at first, then persecution of Catholics.
- Pennsylvania: Quakers.
- Judaism: first Jew in English colonies was Elias Legarde (Jamestown, 1621).
- Islam: up to 20% of African slaves were Muslim.
- Native religions

# From Puritanism to Evangelicalism

“Great Awakening,” beginning in 1730s.

# Jonathan Edwards, Northampton



# Jonathan Edwards

- “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”  
(1741)

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked."

# “A Divine and Supernatural Light” (1734)

Thus there is a difference between having an *opinion*, that God is holy and gracious, and having a *sense* of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. ... There is a wide difference between mere speculative rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty. The former rests only in the head, speculation only is concerned in it; but the heart is concerned in the latter.



R. 1800.4  
A Faithful

**NARRATIVE**  
OF THE  
**Surprizing Work of GOD**  
IN THE  
**CONVERSION**  
OF

Many HUNDRED SOULS in *Northampton*,  
and the Neighbouring Towns and  
Villages of *New-Hampshire* in *New-England*.

In a LETTER to the Rev<sup>d</sup>. Dr. BENJAMIN  
COLMAN of *Boston*.

Written by the Rev<sup>d</sup>. Mr. EDWARDS, Minister of  
*Northampton*, on Nov. 6. 1736.

17  
1780

And Published,  
With a Large PREFACE,  
By Dr. WATTS and Dr. GUYSE.

Library of Congress  
1867

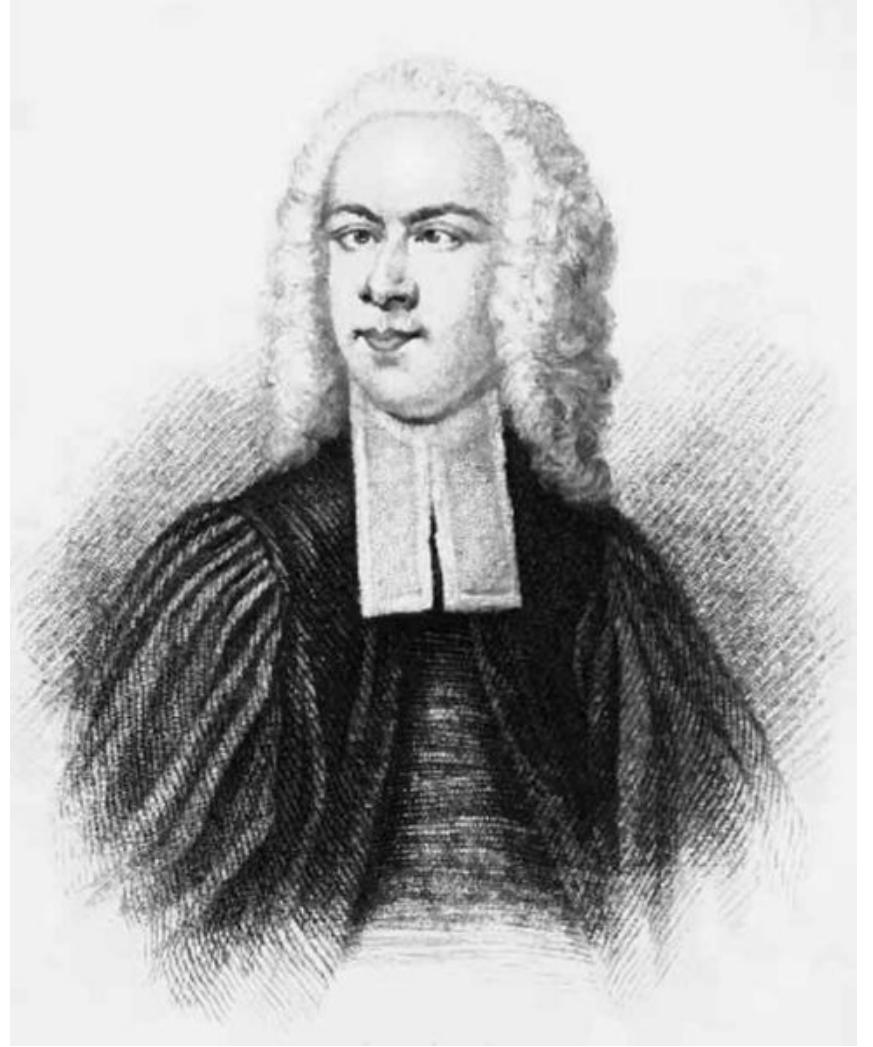
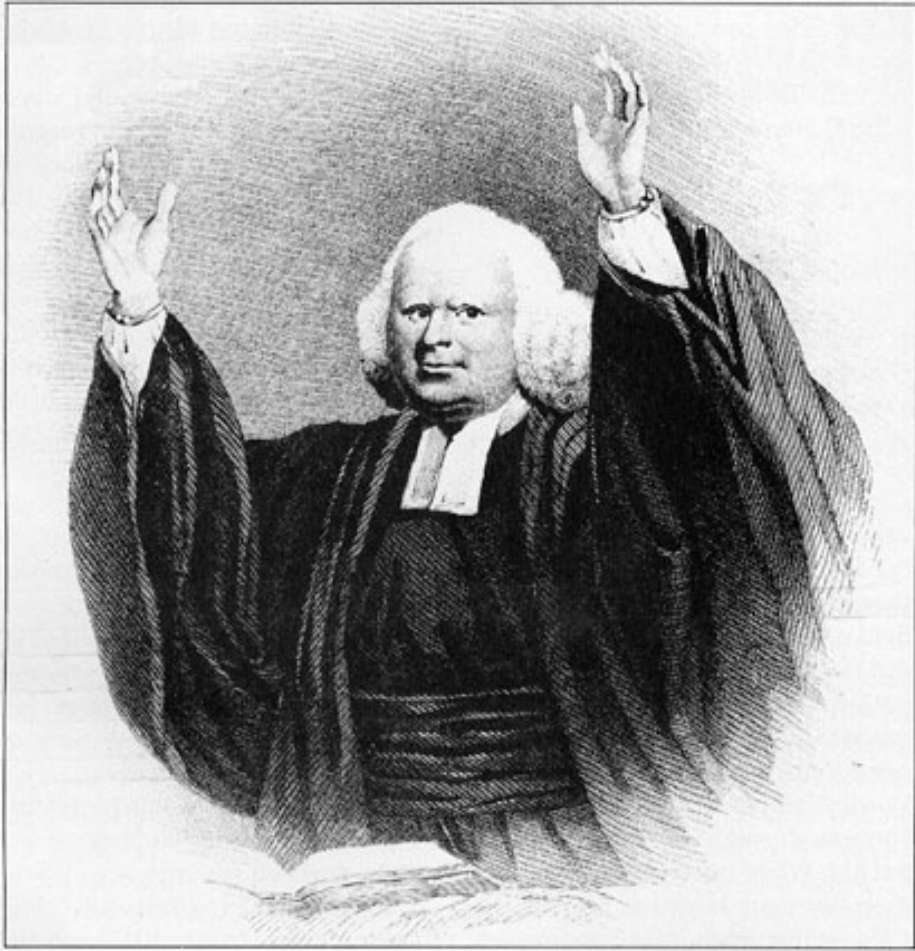
L O N D O N  
Printed for JOHN OSWALD, at the *Rose and Cross*, in  
the *Poultry*, near *Stocks-Market*. M.DCC.XXXVII.

Price stitch'd 1 s. Bound in Calf-Leather, 1 s. 6 d.

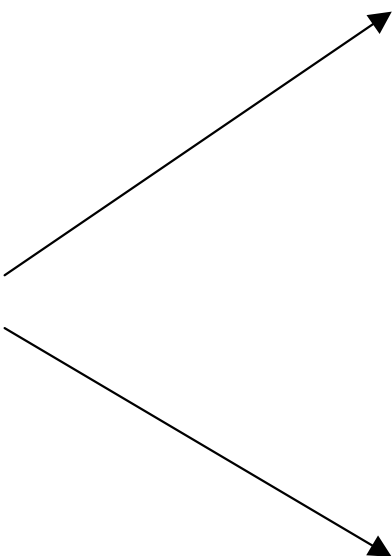
F

# George Whitefield





Puritans



Old Light  
(revival opponents)

New Light  
(revival  
Supporters)

# The Great Awakening: Long-Term Significance

1. Greater religious diversity.

# The Great Awakening: Long-Term Significance

1. Greater religious diversity.
2. Questioning of authority beyond the church?

# Religion and the American Founding

Option #1: The United States was founded as a Christian nation.

Option #2: The “Founding Fathers” were deists who enshrined the principle of separation of church and state.

Option #3: **It’s complicated.**

# A Christian Founding: What would that mean?

1. Establishment of Christianity?
2. That the “founders” were Christians?
3. That early Americans largely acted like Christians?



# Declaration of Independence

- We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
- And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

# Deism

- God as watchmaker.
- Privilege of morality and ethics over revelation and supernaturalism.
- Distinction between “radical Deism” of Thomas Paine and “Christian Deism” of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

# Religion and the U.S. Constitution?

# Religion and the U.S. Constitution

- “no religious tests” for national office.

# First Amendment (1791)

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...



# Barbary Wars – 1797 Tripoli Treaty

"As the government of the U S of A is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion, -- as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen, -- and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

# Jefferson's Danbury Letter (1802)

**Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.**



# But...

- Acts of Continental Congress.
- Washington's declaration of Thanksgiving.

# Conclusion:

- The founders did not create a nation with an explicitly Christian government.
- The Constitution did not interfere with state establishments.

# A Christian Founding: What would that mean?

1. Establishment of Christianity?
2. That the “founders” were Christians?

# The “Founding Fathers” and Religion

- Most of the founders were *not* “orthodox” or evangelical Protestants. This includes Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. These men, however, thought of themselves as Christians.
- A few (John Jay) were more conventional in their Christianity.

# A Christian Founding: What would that mean?

1. Establishment of Christianity?
2. That the “founders” were Christians?
3. That early Americans largely acted like Christians?

Did early American society reflect  
“Christian values?”

# Counterpoint: State Establishments

- Most states had religious establishments as of 1776 & 1787.
- Era of disestablishment. Massachusetts last state with established Protestantism until 1833.

# It's Complicated

- The founding left us with a necessarily enduring debate about the relationship between Christianity and American public life.
- The United States was indisputably a Protestant nation in the 1800s. Both Protestants and religious minorities understood this fundamental aspect of American culture.