

The First Great Awakening



Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent. Rev 2:4-5

A revival is a supernatural, sovereign act of the Holy Spirit, in which believers are convicted of their sin, emboldened to speak of the Lord

The First Great Awakening in America

1734 - 5

&

1741 - 2

Puritanism had collapsed into a cold,
religious, orthodoxy.

Religious and moral decline

- In the 1630's 70% of the taxpayers were church members
- By 1670's only 30% were
- Salem, Mass reported in 1692 only 30% were church members
- Immigration came from both England and Europe
- The Puritans came from England to escape religious persecution. The Europeans had different goals.
- Increase Mather claimed the whole generation of the pious had died off
- Cotton Mather called the Harvard Library "Satan's play ground" as it was filled with so many ungodly books
- Yale was started because Harvard was too liberal
- Only 1 in 20 now belonged to a church in New England.

Causes of spiritual decline

- The half way covenant
- Crisis, discontent and war: King Philip's War, (1674) 1 out of 12 fighting men died
- The Witch trials:
 - Salem where 19 were killed
 - Stamford CT dropped 2 women in the water who seemed to "float" but neither was declared guilty
- Rationalism, the Enlightenment and Deism was taking over
- The Great Earthquake of 1727

Deism and French Intellectualism

- Benjamin Franklin, who had been raised as a Puritan, became a deist as an adult
- He had rewritten the Apostle's Creed taking out everything supernatural
- He rejected the claim that the Bible was written by God. He admired Jesus' teachings but said "I have with most present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity".

Early waves of revival

- Theodore Frelinghuysen began to be convinced that his congregation in NJ was only acting out of formalism. They had a Dutch formalism more than real Christianity. He began to enforce protections on the Lord's Table, preach evangelistic sermons and require that their Christianity be more than outward formalism. Revivalism and or conversions came to many Dutch Reformed churches.

The Tennants

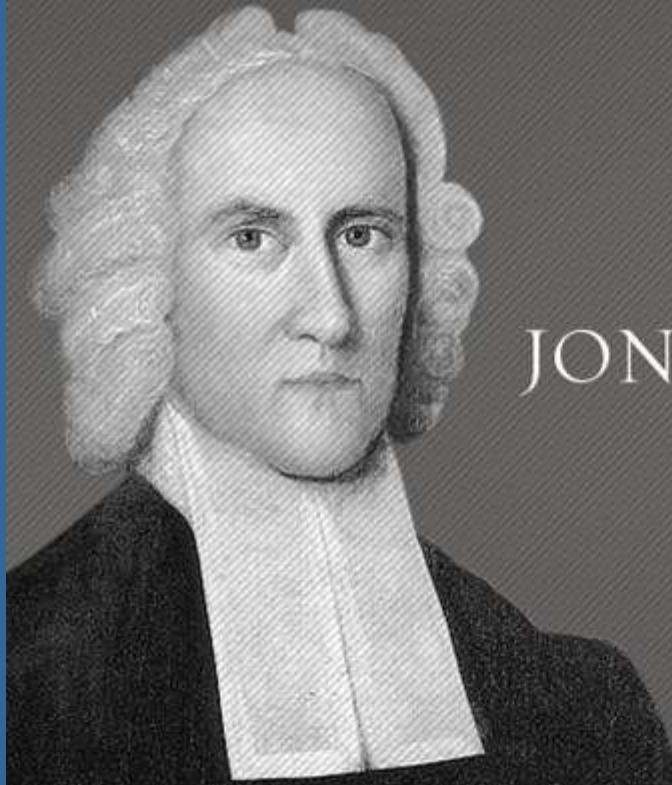
- William (1673-1746) and sons, William Jr., John and Gilbert. William was an educated scholar, trained at Edinburgh as a Presbyterian. He trained his own sons for the ministry.
- It is said that John experienced the first revivals in his church

Old Lights vs New Lights

- Old lights followed formalism & denomination authority
- They believed conversion was unnecessary
- They believed being part of a parish community was sufficient
- Tended to be much more rich, and were the main supporters of ministerial salaries
- They used that power on a regular basis to manipulate the minister
- They regularly brought charges against their ministers for doctrinal and personal errors
- Typically were Presbyterian from Europe, instead of Puritan from England

New Lights

- They saw the need for personal conversion, believed that the churches were cold and dead
- They encouraged itinerant ministers to travel and preach the gospel in and outside the local church



JONATHAN EDWARDS

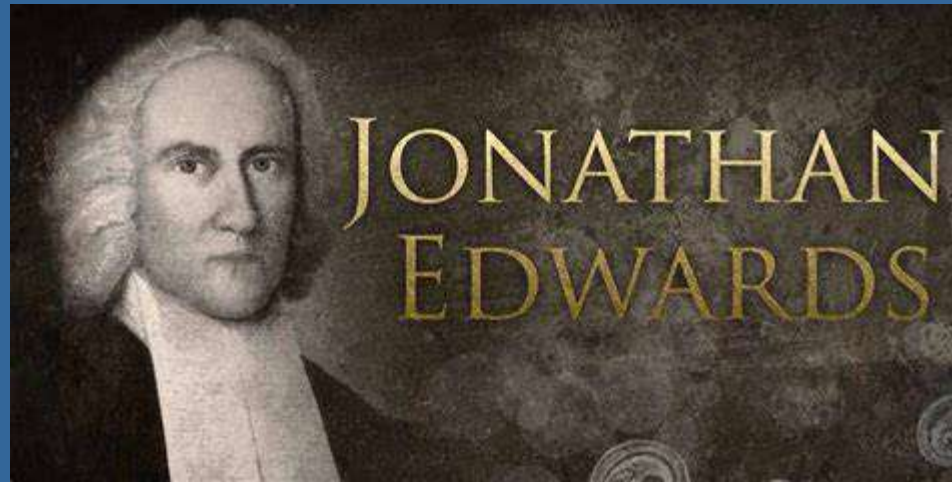
1703-1758

Jonathan Edwards

- He came to work with his Grand Father Solomon Stoddard at age 27
- He was deeply grieved by the sins of the youth of the town
- *“Many of them were very much addicted to night walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices. It was their manner very frequently to get together in contentions of both sexes for mirth and jollity, which they called frolics, and they would often spend the greater part of the night in them. Many were indecent in their carriages at meeting”* (Winthrop Hudson 65).

- He preached a series of sermons in 1734 on “Justification by faith alone”
 - Many were convicted and encouraged
 - A young woman of questionable morals was converted and others stirred by her example
 - He said that by 1735 *“the town was full of the presence of God”*. *Families were having devotions together. There were salvations in almost every family, and much joy.*
- *By 1736 the revival had spread throughout the Connecticut valley. Edwards traveled and spoke in many churches.*
- But by 1737, the revival was over
- A second wave of the Revival broke out (1741-1742)

Edwards writing about the Revivals



- (1737) A faithful narrative of the surprising work of God in the conversion of many Hundreds of Souls in Northampton.
- It was published in London and both Wesley and Whitefield read it.

- “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741)
- The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (1741)
- Some Thoughts concerning the Present Revival of Religion (1742)
- Religious Affections (1746)

- *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and the Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth, pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Time.* “
(1746)

George Whitefield



George Whitefield

- He visited Georgia briefly 1738
- He came in 1739 (25 yrs old, booming voice, considered very handsome, preached in the open)
- It was said he could bring people to tears by how he pronounced “Mesopotamia” (Hudson, 67)

- The Penn. Gazette, owned by Benjamin Franklin, highly favored Whitefield and the revival.
 - 75% of the editions had an article about him, 8 times the front page was devoted to him, had special subscription series on his sermons, and connected him to other publishers and papers.
- He preached his way from Philadelphia, to Georgia, then back to Philadelphia. He came to RI in Sept. 1740 with his arrival being well publicized.
- In 73 days he traveled 800 miles and preached 130 sermons.

- He was met everywhere by great throngs of people
- In 1740 & 1741 every church averaged over 30 new converts per year
- The universities Princeton, Brown, Rutgers & Dartmouth all began
- Benjamin Franklin helped Whitefield build a new meeting hall

Aftermath

- 50,000 were added to the church memberships
- The Evangelical movement began
- The soul of the nation was changed
- Soul liberty and religious tolerance became the order of the day
- Freedom became an ethic of a spiritual people