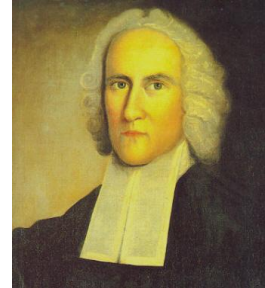


The First Great Awakening

1730–1760

The First Great Awakening ushered in new periods of religious activity. It began in 1730 in England and moved to English colonies in North America. The Great Awakening had a different effect on all types of people including Congregationalists in New England and Presbyterians in the middle and Southern colonies. One of the most influential leaders of the First Great Awakening was Jonathan Edwards. He was a Congregationalist minister from Massachusetts. His goal was to show everyone the importance of religion. Edwards' sermons attracted great attention, in particular "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."



The First Great Awakening helped people to become more involved in religion. Ministers would use new and innovative styles of preaching. These styles were calm and informal, but strong enough to be clear. The ministers who used the new styles of teaching were called "New Lights." However, there were some preachers who continued to talk about the same subjects and not change with the times. These types of ministers were referred to as the "Old Lights." People in communities also were interested in different topics of the Bible, so they began to read it more at home.

Many have also speculated the First Great Awakening helped to change the political and social mindsets of colonists before the American Revolution. Edwards and Calvinism, many think, were responsible for preaching many new concepts to the colonists. This gave the colonists the motivation to declare their independence. Preachers during the First Great Awakening were determined to preach the plan God had for America. This plan would talk about how all the corruption took place in England. Preachers also stated if the colonists were to break away from England, their independent country would be God's kingdom. The structure of many of these Great Awakening churches was more de-centralized than the hierarchical Church of England. They tended to be independent congregations that often hired their own ministers.



The First Great Awakening also had people contemplate all the wrongs they had done in their lives. They would then come up with a plan to achieve salvation through religion. In a sense, people were experiencing God, each in his own way. However,

controversy arose in the New England colonies. Traditionalist preachers favored using various doctrines and rituals. The new groups that were part of the Great Awakening tended to resist traditional doctrines and rituals. Many religious groups were altered during this period, including Presbyterians and Dutch Reformed denominations. England's George Whitehead eventually continued the movement, utilizing an emotional preaching style.

