



From Authority to Individualism

Intellectual Thought, Society, and
Changes in Colonial Society



17th Century America

Cultural/Intellectual Trends

- “Puritan Tradition”
 - The Bible a model
 - Compact with God
 - Covenant Theology
 - “City upon a hill...”
 - Direct connections between Biblical events and their own lives
 - Writings: plain and explored connections to God.
 - Diaries and histories most common writings
 - Valued a literate citizenry
 - Communal responsibility vs. individual freedom



Transition to 18th Century: Snapshot of Colonial Life

- Regional societies had developed
- Economic development flourishing
- Colonists begin to move “west”
 - Pushing to the “frontier” lands
 - Bordered by Appalachian Mountains
- New social values being forged
 - Influx of new settlers bring new ideas
 - Moving westward brought new concerns to daily life.



18th Century America

New Shift in Cultural/Intellectual Thought

- The First Great Awakening

- A “revitalization of religious piety” that swept throughout the colonies—revivals

- An **evangelical** movement

- Christian belief in

- the sole authority and inerrancy of the Bible

- salvation only through regeneration (re-birth)

- a spiritually transformed personal life

- A movement that tended away from New England

- “New Lights”

- People who had doctrinal differences with older, established religions, such as the Congregationalists (Puritans)



A Sample

- Jonathan Edwards
 - “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXOOPsgvC94>



Why Did it Happen?

- **Why would these dramatic revivals happen?**
 - **Historians say:**
 - **Extraordinary upheaval and crisis for people**
 - **Many European homelands rocked by political instability**
 - **Drove people to British North America**
 - **Shift of population to South and West**
 - **Frontier**
 - **Harsh living conditions**
 - **Indian attacks**
 - **Families fragmented**
 - **Women forced into new “head” roles**
 - **Death constant**
 - **VO’s Historical Truism:**
 - **Social instability leads to “safe” behaviors**



Discussion

- **Some say that the Great Awakening “shaped the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century and created the values appropriate to the coming revolution and the establishment of a new nation.”**
 - **What do you say?**



So...

- Is the 1st G. A. a precursor to the Revolution?
- “THEY” say:
 - It cut across spectrum of society
 - Loosened dependence on church rituals for salvation
 - Created idea of equal access to salvation
 - Gave people a sense of belonging to society
 - Shows a willingness (New Lighters) to confront established authority
 - How would these things lead to political change?



Finally, Enlightenment:

- How does the Enlightenment relate to things like Leisler's Rebellion, reaction to Dominion of New England, or the First Great Awakening?
- Also called: Age of Rationalism
 - People arrive at truth by using reason
 - Not authority of the past or religion
 - God created universe, but does not interfere with workings
 - World operates according to God's rules (Natural Law)
 - Rules can be discovered through reason
 - Worship God best by helping other people to be happy (God wants us to be happy)
 - Society can be perfected.
 - Secular—focused on "this world;" not religious.
 - "Deism"



Finally:

- The title of your classwork was “From Authority to Individualism”
 - Why did the authors of the lesson give it that title?