First Great Awakening vs. Enlightenment

What ideas generated by the American Enlightenment and the Great Awakening prompted challenges to religious, social, and political authorities in the British colonies?
Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God by Jonathon Edwards

- What kind of emotions are stirred up by the style and content of this sermon?
- What kind of colonial environment could have inspired Jonathon Edwards to write such a sermon?
The (First) Great Awakening

- 1720-1730s
- Arose because of a lack of individual engagement in church services
- Revival style of bombastic preaching aimed a “commitment of the heart.”
  - A more personal, and emotional Christianity
- Edwards and George Whitefield among leaders of this movement
The decline of Puritanism

- First generation Puritans began losing their religious zeal as time went on.
- Puritan population moved out of town away from control of church.
- Too much religious intolerance

- Children of non-converted members could not be baptized.
- "Half-Way Covenant", 1662: sought to attract more members by giving partial membership
- Puritan churches baptized anyone and distinction between the "elect" and other members of society subsided.
- Salem Witch Trials, 1692 -- The decline of Puritan clergy
Half-Way Covenant

- 1st generation’s Puritan zeal diluted over time
- Problem of declining church membership
- 1662: Half-Way Covenant – partial membership to those not yet converted (usually children/ grandchildren of members)
- Eventually all welcomed to church, erased distinction of “elect”
The Salem Witch Trials took place in Salem, Massachusetts from March to September 1693, was one of the most notorious episodes in early American history.

Based on the accusations of two young girls, Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams.

Under British law and Puritan society those who were accused of consorting with the devil were considered felons, having committed a crime against their government. The punishment was hanging.
19 hung, 1 pressed, 55 confessed as witches and 150 awaited trial.

- Shows the strictness of Puritan society
- Shows how a rumor can cause hysteria even to illogical thinking.
- Later, many people involved admitted the trials & executions had been mistake.

**Causes**

- disapproval of Reverend Parris
- land disputes between families,
  - Indian taught witchcraft to girls.
- Girls caught dancing, began to throw fits and accuse people of bewitching (To put under one's power by magic or cast a spell over) them to not get in trouble.
The Great Awakening was a spiritual renewal that swept the American Colonies, particularly New England, during the first half of the 18th Century. It began in England before catching fire across the Atlantic.

Unlike the somber, largely Puritan spirituality of the early 1700s, the revivalism ushered in by the Awakening brought people back to "spiritual life" as they felt a greater intimacy with God.
The Great Awakening

- Began in Mass. with Jonathan Edwards (regarded as greatest American theologian)
  - Rejected salvation by works, affirmed need for complete dependence on grace of God (“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”)
- Orator George Whitefield followed, touring colonies, led revivals, countless conversions, inspired imitators
# The Great Awakening

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<th>Background</th>
<th>Puritan ministers lost authority <em>(Visible Saints)</em></th>
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<td>Decay of family <em>(Halfway Covenant)</em></td>
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<td>Deism, God existed/created the world, but afterwards left it to run by natural laws. Denied God communicated to man or in any way influenced his life...get to heaven if you are good. <em>(Old Lights)</em></td>
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<th>Great Awakening</th>
<th>1740s, Puritanism declined by the 1730s and people were upset about the decline in religious piety. <em>(devotion to God)</em></th>
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<td>New Denominations</td>
<td>“New Lights”: Heaven by salvation by grace through Jesus Christ. <em>Formed</em>: Baptist, Methodists</td>
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<td>Led to founding of colleges</td>
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<td>Crossed class barriers; emphasized equality of all</td>
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<td>Unified Americans as a single people</td>
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<td>Missionaries for Blacks and Indians</td>
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Higher Education

- Harvard, 1636—First colonial college; trained candidates for ministry
- College of William and Mary, 1694 (Anglican)
- Yale, 1701 (Congregational)
- **Great Awakening** influences creation of 5 new colleges in mid-1700s
  - College of New Jersey *(Princeton)*, 1746 (Presbyterian)
  - King’s College *(Columbia)*, 1754 (Anglican)
  - Rhode Island College *(Brown)*, 1764 (Baptist)
  - Queens College *(Rutgers)*, 1766 (Dutch Reformed)
  - **Dartmouth College**, 1769, (Congregational)
New colleges founded after the Great Awakening.
The Awakening's biggest significance was the way it prepared America for its War of Independence. In the decades before the war, revivalism taught people that they could be bold when confronting religious authority, and that when churches weren't living up to the believers' expectations, the people could break off and form new ones.
Through the Awakening, the Colonists realized that religious power resided in their own hands, rather than in the hands of the Church of England, or any other religious authority.

After a generation or two passed with this kind of mindset, the Colonists came to realize that political power did not reside in the hands of the English monarch, but in their own will for self-governance.
Enlightenment

• What do you remember about the Enlightenment era from World History?
• Why would Enlightenment and the Great Awakening seem like opposites in some cases?
Zenger decision was a landmark case which paved the way for the eventual freedom of the press.

Zenger Case, 1734-5: New York newspaper assailed corrupt local governor, charged with libel, defended by Alexander Hamilton
John Peter Zenger, a New York publisher charged with libel against the colonial governor

Zenger’s lawyer argues that what he wrote was true, so it can’t be libel

English law says it doesn’t matter if it’s true or not

Jury acquits Zenger anyway

Not total freedom of the press, but newspapers now took greater risks in criticism of political figures.