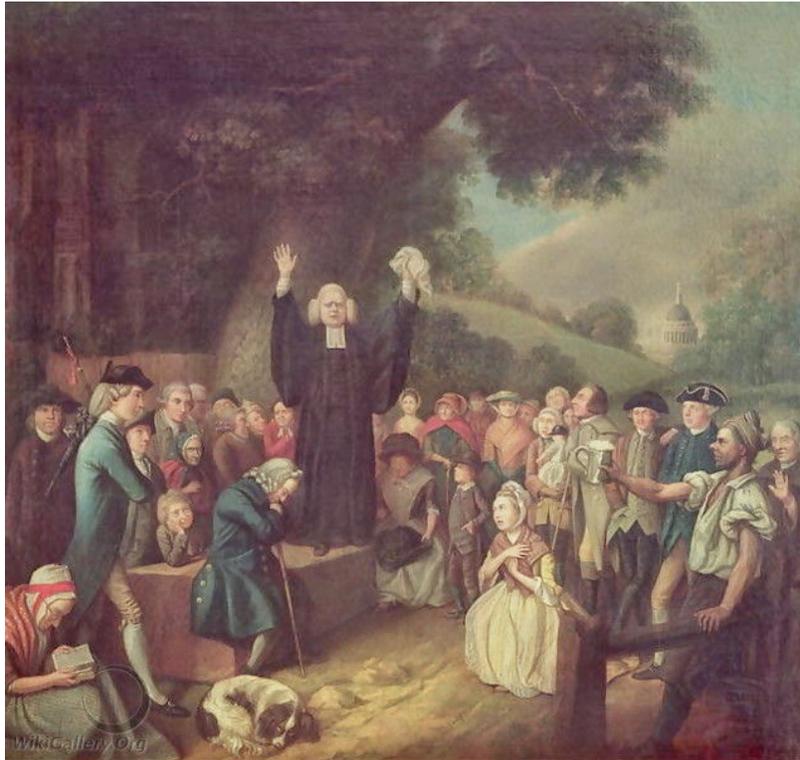


## Results of the First Great Awakening

- #1. Separate Baptists grew more than any other group or denomination. Whitefield distinguishes between the more negative response that he received from the more staid “Charleston Tradition” churches which were older and dominated the first Baptist churches on the coastline and the more positive response of the Separatists. Before the Awakening there were only 42 Baptist churches, but after there were nearly a thousand with over 67,000 members.
- #2. Splits between the “New Light” awakening believers vs. the “Old Light” traditionalists. Typical of this was the enormous numbers of Congregationalist, led by popular leaders like Isaac Backus, joined the Baptists. The New Lights in every denomination grew.
- #3. New churches were started, especially by the Separate Baptists.
- #4. New missionary zeal as young men like David Brainerd (son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards) volunteered to do work among the Indians and in pioneer areas.
- #5. New spirituality among the people that often led to changes in entire towns. Ben Franklin was very impressed with the impact that the new converts were having all over the country.
- #6. A new unity between the colonies that previously did not exist. Each colony had different origins in the previous century. Although English had quickly become the language of all the colonies, there was little travel between colonies by most people. Whitefield especially made an impact here by telling stories of converts in other areas everywhere he went.
- #7. A new respect for evangelical Christianity that impacted the Founding Fathers.
- #8. Due to a variety of religious experience, and denominations involved, there was more sentiment toward the disestablishment of any one particular denomination.
- #9. Methodists, born in the Awakening in England under John Wesley, counted among their number George Whitefield. Methodists in their early days were much like the Puritans of the previous century--- an interpretation of Anglicanism. A separate formal structure comes much later. But many Methodist preachers have a dynamic impact during the Great Awakening. The Methodists were the second largest to grow.
- #10. Presbyterians, led by Scotch-Irish immigrant William Tennant along with his brother Gilbert, saw the third largest growth. Gilbert’s famous sermon entitled “The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry” (1740) sought to uncover those in the ministry for the wrong reasons, and lead to their conversion. It caused furor with the Old School.

## Great Awakening Results: New Light Versus Old Light



Acts 2:42 - *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

In *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), Jonathan Edwards described his congregants' vivid experiences with grace as causing a "**new light**" in their perspective on sin and atonement.

Old Lights and New Lights generally referred to **Congregationalists** and **Baptists** in New England and **Presbyterians** in Pennsylvania and further south who took different positions on the Awakening from the traditional branches of their denominations.

New Lights embraced the revivals that spread through the colonies, while Old Lights were suspicious of the revivals (and their seeming threat to authority).

By about 1742, debate over the Great Awakening had split the New England clergy and many colonists into **two groups**.

Preachers and followers who adopted the new ideas brought forth by the Great Awakening became known as "new lights."

Often many "new light" Congregationalists who had been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield left that connection to become "new light" Baptists when they found no **evidence of infant baptism** in the **apostolic church**.

**Those who embraced the old-fashioned, traditional church ways were called "old lights."**

One of the leading voices of opposition was **Charles Chauncy**, a minister in Boston. Chauncy was especially critical of Whitefield's preaching and instead supported a more traditional, formal style of religion.

That may sound good to us, but "traditional" means something different in each generation, so let's not jump to conclusions.

The church of the original colonies was various versions of entrenched **Puritanism, underpinned by Calvinism.**

The Puritan colonies were **societies of status and subordination**, with the ranks of men arranged in strict hierarchies.

**Lower classes were subservient and obedient** to a class of spiritual and governing elite, made up of upper-class gentlemen and scholars.

The church saw this hierarchy as a **status** that was **fixed at birth**, and the doctrinal emphasis was placed on the **depravity of (common) man**, and the **sovereignty of God** as **represented** by his **church leadership.**

"New Lights" had an **emphasis on individual piety and religious inquiry.**

Part of the reason for this change in emphasis was that there were clearly social changes at work, including a rising **commercial** and **capitalist** economy, as well as **increased diversity** and **individualism.** Status was no longer based on heredity or class; it was based on merit and what the individual could provide or accomplish.

The question was asked, "If God bestows his grace on an individual, why did that gift have to be ratified by a church official?"

Such a question would anger the traditional hierarchy of the church, who pridefully relied on their status. As a result, hostilities and antagonism arose in the church.

People were taking individual responsibility for their spiritual growth, which is a sign of maturity.

The movement also prompted a **rise in evangelicalism**, which united believers under the umbrella of **like-minded Christians**, regardless of denomination, for whom the path to salvation was the acknowledgment that **Jesus Christ died for our sins.**

While a **great unifier** among the people living in the American colonies, this wave of religious revivalism did have its opponents.

Traditional clergy asserted that it fomented **fanaticism** and that the emphasis on **extemporaneous preaching** would increase the number of **uneducated preachers** and downright **charlatans (imposters; see #10).**

- It pushed individual religious experience over established church doctrine, thereby decreasing the importance and weight of the clergy and the church in many instances.
- New denominations arose or **grew in numbers** as a result of the emphasis on individual faith and salvation (see #1, #9, and #10).
- It unified the American colonies as it spread through numerous preachers and revivals. This **unification was greater than had ever been** achieved previously in the colonies (#6).