**The Great Awakening**

* Religion was central to 18th century American life
* Colonial printers produced more religious works than anything else
* 1730s religious revival among Presbyterians and Congregationalists
* Mostly a New England and middle colonies phenomenon
* Ministers emphasized the need for a “new birth” through religious conversion
* Jonathan Edwards (MA) one of the most well-known pastors of the era
* Edwards preached about God’s grace and eternal damnation



* George Whitefield created huge religious fervor in 1739
* British minister travelled the colonies preaching to large crowds over a 2 yr. period



* He turned churches into a type of theater
* Dramatic gestures, lots of emotion, etc.
* These performances were popular with all groups
* Thousands of “awakened souls” joined old churches or formed new ones
* Whitefield became a type of religious celebrity



Great Awakening Aftermath

* Many awakened church members criticized ministers
* Popular ministers began going from town to town
* Colonials became more divided along religious lines
* Baptists were the biggest champion of the Awakening
* Many Presbyterian and Baptists churches began in the South
* Americans were constantly at odds: religion, ethnic & racial divides
* Divides between coastal and backcountry cultures
* *Old Lights:* religious traditionalists
* *New Lights:* religious revivalists
* New church members became defenders of religious freedom
* This should not be restricted by the gov’t