

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity, Session 6, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, American Christianity, Session 6, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Roger Green's lecture, part of a series on American Christianity, focuses on **Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening**. He discusses Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and highlights Edwards as a significant American-born theologian and philosopher. The lecture then introduces other key figures in the Awakening, including **Theodore J. Frelinghuysen**, **Gilbert Tennant**, and **George Whitefield**, outlining their backgrounds, influential roles, and differing approaches to revivalism. Finally, Green examines the **reactions to and the theological and social results of the First Great Awakening**, noting both its unifying and divisive impacts on American religious and cultural life.

**2. 28 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Green, American Christianity, Session 6 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Church History → American Christianity).**



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3. Briefing Document: Green, American Christianity, Session 6, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening

Briefing Document: The First Great Awakening in America

Overview: This document summarizes the main themes and important ideas discussed by Dr. Roger Green in Session 6 of his "American Christianity" course, focusing on Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening. The session explores key figures, characteristics of the revival, reactions to it, and its lasting theological and social impacts on American culture.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Jonathan Edwards: Theologian and Evangelist

- **Known for "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God":** While Edwards penned numerous sermons, this fire-and-brimstone message remains his most famous. Dr. Green highlights the evangelistic appeal in the sermon's conclusion, quoting: *"And now you have an extraordinary opportunity. A day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners."* This emphasizes a sense of urgency and the availability of salvation.
- **Significance as an American-Born Thinker:** Edwards is presented as a crucial figure because he was an influential theologian and philosopher born in the American colonies. *"He is an American-born theologian and philosopher. So, he's not an import. He didn't come over, but here he was born in East Windsor, Connecticut. And so he's one of us in terms of the American church experience."* His work stemmed from and contributed to the unique American religious landscape.
- **Breadth of Knowledge in Service of Faith:** Edwards was not only a theologian but also a philosopher, natural scientist, and linguistic scholar, all of which he dedicated to the "service of the kingdom of God." He fearlessly stood up for his Christian beliefs.
- **Clash over Church Membership (Halfway Covenant):** Edwards held firm views against the "halfway covenant," which allowed individuals into the church without full conversion experiences. This led to conflict with his congregation, ultimately resulting in his dismissal. *"He did not allow a halfway covenant kind of*

matters; they were coming into the church by the people because there was a congregational church, but he was very unhappy with that... their congregation, though, has the right to vote them out, which they did."

- **The Edwardsians:** While followers admired Edwards, they diverged on certain theological points, particularly regarding freedom of the will and the nature of original sin. Despite these differences, they significantly impacted American life and culture for a generation or two as preachers, teachers, and writers.

2. Key Leaders of the First Great Awakening (Beyond Edwards):

- **Theodore J. Frelinghuysen:** A Dutch Reformed pastor in New Jersey who was instrumental in bringing revival to his denomination and influencing Presbyterians. He was an "itinerant preacher" who traveled across the middle colonies.
- **Gilbert Tennant:** A Presbyterian minister influenced by Frelinghuysen, who brought revival to Presbyterian churches in New Jersey. His father, William Tennant, founded the "log college" to properly train ministers, which later became Princeton University. *"Well, I just want to make sure we understand that William Tennant and his sons had the last laugh because the log college became Princeton University in 1746."*
- **George Whitefield: The "Grand Itinerant":** An Anglican clergyman known for his powerful open-air preaching and cross-denominational appeal. *"He was called the Grand Itinerant, the Grand Itinerant, because of his ministry, even though he was an Anglican clergyman... his ministry was, I guess today we'd call it cross-denominational."* He traveled to America seven times and is buried in Newburyport, Massachusetts. His preaching to massive crowds (estimated up to 8,000 people a day) and use of a portable "field pulpit" were distinctive features.

3. Characteristics of Revival During the First Great Awakening:

- **Early Revival (Edwards, Frelinghuysen, Tennant):** Generally more "controlled," with conversions leading to church membership, similar to a "Billy Graham revival."
- **George Whitefield's Revivals:** More prone to "extremes" due to his open-air preaching style.

- **Definition of Preaching:** Dr. Green reiterates the definition: "Preaching is God's truth coming through personality," contrasting the reserved style of Edwards with the more expressive approach of Whitefield.

4. George Whitefield's Preaching Style and Impact:

- **Open-Air Preaching:** Whitefield believed in preaching outside of church buildings to reach larger audiences. *"George Whitefield was convinced that he should be preaching in the open air. He was convinced he just didn't want to preach in churches; he wanted to preach on the Boston Common."*
- **Language of the People:** He used common, everyday language to make the Gospel understandable and relevant. *"He preached in the language of the people... he tried to preach in the language of the people to make the gospel relevant to their lives and understandable in their lives."*
- **Appeal to the Heart and Emotions:** His preaching focused on the personal experience and emotions of the listeners. *"A third thing is his appeal, which is to the heart, to the experience of people, to their hearts, to their emotions."*
- **Inspiration for Future Preaching:** Whitefield's methods influenced later revivalist movements, including the Second Great Awakening.
- **Political Influence:** The techniques used by Whitefield – open-air speaking, accessible language, emotional appeal – had a broader impact, influencing political discourse in American culture. *"If you look at those four things... what you can say is that those four things were used politically in the broader culture."* He became a widely known figure in American culture, second only to the President.

5. Reactions to the First Great Awakening:

- **Divisions Among Denominations (Presbyterians):** The Presbyterian church saw the emergence of the "New Side Party" (pro-revival) and the "Old Side Party" (more traditional and critical of the revival's excesses).
- **Opposition from Intellectual and Established Religious Leaders (Charles Chauncey):** Charles Chauncey, a pastor of Boston's First Church Congregational, strongly opposed the First Great Awakening, viewing it as a "total botch" and a "total disgrace to the church." He eventually became a Unitarian.
- **Opposition within Universities (Harvard and Yale):** Some universities, including Harvard and Yale, initially viewed the revival as "anti-intellectual" and "anti-

rational." Interestingly, Yale later became a center for the Second Great Awakening.

- **Concerns about Excesses:** The emotional displays and unconventional behaviors associated with some revivals, such as people "yowl[ing] like dogs" during services in England, were a source of criticism.

6. Results of the First Great Awakening:

- **Theological Results: Resurgence of Calvinism:** The leading figures of the revival were Calvinists, leading to a renewed emphasis on Calvinistic theology.
- **Revival of Experiential Piety:** Christian faith became more focused on personal experience and the inner life, not just intellectual assent to doctrine. *"The Christian religion has something to do with the heart. It has something to do with your own experience. It has something to do with your own inner life."*
- **Personal Conversion as the Major Test of Religious Life:** The focus shifted to whether individuals had a personal conversion experience. *"A major test for religious life becomes a personal conversion."*
- **Stimulated Concern for Higher Education:** Several colleges were founded during or shortly after the First Great Awakening, often by specific denominations to train ministers (e.g., Princeton, Brown, Rutgers, Dartmouth).
- **Social Results: Elevation of the Common Person:** The revival emphasized the spiritual equality of all individuals, regardless of social status or education, as their personal religious experience became paramount. It also led to opportunities for lay people to speak and participate more actively in church life. *"However, the common person is elevated because his or her religious experience is as important as someone of wealth and influence... now the common person... that person is on the same religious level as the priest, the pastor, the minister."*
- **Stressed Lay Activity:** The revival fostered new leadership roles for lay people within the church.
- **Personal Independence in Religious Life:** The emphasis on personal choice in faith contributed to a growing sense of independence that extended to political life. *"Religious life is a personal free choice... It pointed to independence in political life."*
- **Separation of Church and State:** The principles of religious freedom and the desire to protect the church from state control, previously advocated by groups

like Baptists, gained further momentum and influenced political thought. *"The separation of church and state come into political life as well because we don't want the state telling the church what to do."*

Conclusion:

Dr. Green's session provides a comprehensive overview of Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening, highlighting the key figures, their theological contributions, the diverse reactions to the movement, and its profound and lasting impact on both the religious landscape and the broader social and political culture of America. The emphasis on personal experience, accessible communication, and the elevation of the common person were particularly transformative aspects of this pivotal period in American history.

4. Study Guide: Green, American Christianity, Session 6, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening

Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening: A Study Guide

Key Figures:

- **Jonathan Edwards:** American-born theologian, philosopher, natural scientist, and preacher, known for his powerful sermons during the First Great Awakening.
- **Theodore J. Frelinghuysen:** Dutch Reformed pastor in New Jersey who emphasized revival and influenced Presbyterians.
- **Gilbert Tennant:** Presbyterian minister who promoted revival in New Jersey and whose father founded the "log college" that became Princeton University.
- **George Whitefield:** Anglican clergyman known as the "Grand Itinerant" for his extensive open-air preaching across denominations.
- **William Tennant:** Presbyterian minister and father of Gilbert Tennant, who founded the log college for ministerial training.
- **Charles Chauncey:** Pastor of Boston's First Church Congregational who vehemently opposed the First Great Awakening.

Quiz:

1. What is the title of the sermon Jonathan Edwards is most famous for, and what is one key theme present in the excerpt provided?
2. According to Dr. Green, what were two significant characteristics of Jonathan Edwards as a theologian and philosopher born in America?
3. Who were the Edwardsians, and what was one key theological point on which they differed from Jonathan Edwards?
4. Why was Theodore J. Frelinghuysen significant to the First Great Awakening, and what other denomination did he notably influence?
5. What was the "log college," who founded it, and what significant institution did it eventually become?
6. What earned George Whitefield the title "Grand Itinerant," and how many times did he travel to America?

7. Describe one notable aspect of George Whitefield's preaching style that differentiated him from earlier revivalists like Edwards and Tennant.
8. What were the "New Side" and "Old Side" parties within the Presbyterian denomination, and what was the main point of contention between them regarding the First Great Awakening?
9. Who was Charles Chauncey, and what was his primary stance on the First Great Awakening?
10. According to Dr. Green, what were two key theological results of the First Great Awakening in American church life?

Answer Key:

1. Jonathan Edwards's most famous sermon is "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." A key theme in the excerpt is the "extraordinary opportunity" for salvation being offered and the dire consequences of being "left behind."
2. Two significant characteristics of Jonathan Edwards were that he was an American-born theologian and philosopher (not an import) and that he brought his tremendous breadth of knowledge to the service of the kingdom of God fearlessly.
3. The Edwardsians were followers of Jonathan Edwards who generally respected his theology but had points of departure. One key theological difference was their view on original sin, with some later Edwardsians believing it was only Adam's sin and not directly transferred.
4. Theodore J. Frelinghuysen was significant because he was a Dutch Reformed pastor who brought revival to his churches and also acted as an itinerant preacher, influencing the Presbyterian denomination significantly by inspiring their ministers with his revivalism.
5. The "log college" was a small building where William Tennant trained his sons for the Presbyterian ministry, a practice initially mocked by others. This log college eventually became Princeton University in 1746.
6. George Whitefield earned the title "Grand Itinerant" due to his extensive travels and open-air preaching across different denominations. He sailed to America seven times.

7. A notable aspect of George Whitefield's preaching style was his preference for open-air preaching to large crowds, often using a portable pulpit, which contrasted with the more controlled, church-based revivals of Edwards, Frelinghuysen, and Tennant.
8. The "New Side" party within the Presbyterian denomination embraced revivalism and a more experiential piety, sometimes accepting lay preaching, while the "Old Side" party was more traditional, conservative, and critical of the excesses and perceived anti-intellectualism of the First Great Awakening.
9. Charles Chauncey was the pastor of Boston's First Church Congregational who was a very vocal and sophisticated opponent of the First Great Awakening, believing it was a disgrace to the church and disagreeing with its theology.
10. Two key theological results of the First Great Awakening were a resurgence of Calvinism in American church and public life, as the four main leaders were Calvinists, and a revival of experiential piety, emphasizing the importance of personal conversion and the inner life in Christian faith.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the distinct approaches to ministry and revival employed by Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, discussing their theological underpinnings and their impact on the First Great Awakening.
2. Evaluate the significance of the First Great Awakening in shaping the religious landscape of colonial America, considering both its unifying and divisive effects on different denominations and institutions.
3. Discuss the social contributions of the First Great Awakening, explaining how it led to the elevation of the common person and influenced concepts of personal and political independence in the colonies.
4. Compare and contrast the reactions to the First Great Awakening, considering the perspectives of those who supported it and those who opposed it, and analyzing the reasons behind their respective stances.
5. Assess the long-term impact of the First Great Awakening on American religious life, considering its theological legacies, its influence on subsequent religious movements, and its relationship to broader cultural and political developments.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **First Great Awakening:** A period of religious revivalism in the American colonies during the 1730s and 1740s, characterized by passionate preaching, emotional conversions, and the emergence of new denominations and theological perspectives.
- **Calvinism:** A theological system emphasizing the sovereignty of God, predestination, the total depravity of humanity, and salvation by grace alone, which was central to the theology of many leaders in the First Great Awakening.
- **Experiential Piety:** An emphasis on the personal experience of God and the emotional and heartfelt aspects of religious faith, rather than solely relying on intellectual understanding of doctrine.
- **Itinerant Preacher:** A preacher who travels from place to place to preach, rather than being attached to a specific church or congregation, exemplified by George Whitefield and Theodore J. Frelinghuysen.
- **Revivalism:** Religious gatherings and movements focused on inspiring spiritual renewal and conversions within a population or congregation, often characterized by enthusiastic preaching and emotional responses.
- **Predestination:** The theological doctrine that God has eternally chosen who will be saved and who will not, a key tenet of Calvinism that was debated during the First Great Awakening.
- **Original Sin:** The Christian doctrine that humanity inherited sinfulness and guilt from Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, a concept that Jonathan Edwards affirmed but some of his followers later questioned.
- **Halfway Covenant:** A practice in some New England Congregational churches allowing partial membership and baptism for the children of unconverted members, which Jonathan Edwards opposed.
- **Congregationalism:** A Protestant church governance system where each local church is independent and self-governing, playing a role in the context of Jonathan Edwards's dismissal.
- **Unitarianism:** A theological movement that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, emphasizing the oneness of God and often stressing human reason and moral living, which some opponents of the First Great Awakening eventually embraced.

5. FAQs Green, American Christianity, Session 6, Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Jonathan Edwards and the First Great Awakening

1. Who was Jonathan Edwards and why is he significant in the context of American Christianity? Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was an American-born theologian and philosopher who played a pivotal role in the First Great Awakening. He was a brilliant and fearless thinker who brought his vast knowledge, spanning philosophy, theology, natural science, and linguistics, to the service of Christianity. Edwards is considered a significant figure in American church history for his profound theological contributions, his powerful preaching (most notably "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"), and his leadership during a period of intense religious revival in the American colonies.

2. What was the First Great Awakening and who were some of its key leaders besides Jonathan Edwards? The First Great Awakening was a significant religious revival that swept through the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. It was a period of intense spiritual fervor characterized by powerful preaching, emotional conversions, and a renewed emphasis on personal piety. Besides Jonathan Edwards, key leaders included Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, a Dutch Reformed pastor in New Jersey who emphasized the need for revival in his denomination and influenced Presbyterians; Gilbert Tennant, a Presbyterian minister who was inspired by Frelinghuysen and brought revival to Presbyterian churches, notably in New Jersey; and George Whitefield, an Anglican clergyman known as the "Grand Itinerant" for his extensive travels and powerful open-air preaching across denominations.

3. What was distinctive about George Whitefield's preaching and how did it differ from that of Jonathan Edwards and other revivalists? George Whitefield's preaching was characterized by its open-air setting, its use of the common language of the people, and its direct appeal to the heart and emotions of his listeners. Unlike Jonathan Edwards, who preached in a more reasoned and intellectual style within church buildings, Whitefield intentionally sought out large public gatherings, often preaching to thousands in fields and on town commons. He even invented a portable field pulpit to facilitate this. His dramatic and passionate delivery, combined with the sheer scale of his audiences, set him apart from other revivalists and made him a widely known figure in the colonies.

4. What were the reactions to the First Great Awakening and who were some of its notable opponents? The First Great Awakening was not universally embraced and faced significant opposition. Within denominations, like the Presbyterians, divisions arose between the "New Side," who favored revivalism, and the "Old Side," who were more traditional and critical of the emotional excesses and perceived disorder. Prominent opponents included Charles Chauncey, the pastor of Boston's First Church Congregational, who vehemently preached against the Awakening, viewing it as a disgrace to the church and eventually moving towards Unitarianism. Opposition also arose within universities like Harvard and Yale, which initially viewed the Awakening as anti-intellectual and irrational.

5. Who were the "Edwardseans" and what were some of their key theological differences with Jonathan Edwards? The "Edwardseans" were followers of Jonathan Edwards who continued to be influential in American life and culture for a generation or two after his death, serving as preachers, teachers, and writers. While they respected Edwards and built upon his theological framework, they also had points of departure. Notably, there was a "bit of a rift" regarding the freedom of the will. Additionally, some Edwardseans, particularly one of the four mentioned in the source, diverged from Edwards' belief in original sin, arguing that Adam's sin was his alone and not directly transferred to humanity, though they still acknowledged human beings are sinful like Adam.

6. What were some of the theological contributions or outcomes of the First Great Awakening? The First Great Awakening led to several significant theological developments. It spurred a resurgence of Calvinism in American religious life, as the key leaders were predominantly Calvinist in their theological orientation. It also fostered a revival of experiential piety, emphasizing the importance of personal religious experience and the affections of the heart alongside doctrinal knowledge. Furthermore, personal conversion became a central test for genuine religious life. The Awakening also stimulated the founding of several institutions of higher education, such as Princeton (originally the Log College), Brown, Rutgers (Queens College), and Dartmouth, often with the aim of training ministers in specific theological traditions.

7. What were some of the social contributions or impacts of the First Great Awakening on American society?

The First Great Awakening had profound social consequences. It led to the elevation of the common person, as their religious experience was now considered as significant as that of the wealthy and influential, fostering a sense of spiritual equality. Lay activity was stressed, leading to new leadership roles for ordinary church members beyond ordained clergy. The emphasis on personal independence in religious life, the freedom to say "yes" or "no" to God, arguably contributed to a growing sense of independence in political thought, suggesting a similar freedom in relation to the British government. The Awakening also contributed to the increasing prominence of the separation of church and state as a principle in American life, building upon earlier arguments against state control of religion.

8. Why did Jonathan Edwards clash with his congregation and what does this reveal about his principles?

Jonathan Edwards clashed with his congregation over his opposition to the "halfway covenant," a practice in some Congregational churches that allowed individuals who had not had a personal conversion experience but had been baptized as children to have some privileges within the church and have their children baptized. Edwards saw this as unbiblical and a scandalous lowering of the standards for church membership. His refusal to yield on this issue, despite the potential for conflict with his congregation (which ultimately led to his dismissal), reveals his deeply held theological convictions, his commitment to what he believed were biblical principles for church life, and his unwavering integrity as a pastor.