SSUSH2: DESCRIBE THE EARLY ENGLISH COLONIAL SOCIETY AND INVESTIGATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS GOVERNANCE
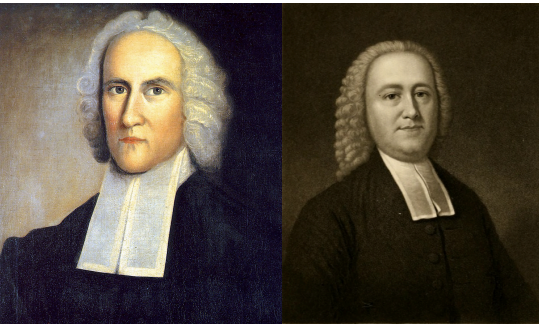

Element D: Explain the role of the Great Awakening in creating unity in the colonies and challenging traditional authority.

The First Great Awakening's Creation of Colonial Unity

❑ The First Great Awakening was a religious movement influenced by the revivals that were sweeping through England, Scotland, and Germany in the 1730s.

- ▪ It spread from Europe to the colonies in the following decade and continued until the eve of the American Revolution.

- ▪ The revival placed an emphasis on individual religious experience rather than religious experience through church doctrine.

- ▪ The First Great Awakening challenged established authorities as the colonists questioned the need to follow not only the Church of England but also the orders of the English monarchy and its authorities.

- ▪ The First Great Awakening allowed for the creation of Evangelicalism as a predominant American denomination.

- ▪ The idea of the shared struggle that Awakening ministers had spoken of was easily transferred to the shared struggle for independence that was beginning to unify the colonies.

The 1st Great Awakening's Creation of Colonial Unity & Individualism

❑ The First Great Awakening was in part a reaction to the Enlightenment, which emphasized logic and reason and stressed the power of the individual to understand the universe based on scientific laws.

- ▪ Similarly, individuals grew to rely more on a personal approach to salvation than church dogma and doctrine through a personal understanding of scriptures.
- ▪ Although the Enlightenment was really a movement of the intellectual elite, the Great Awakening had stronger appeal across all cross sections of society in each of the thirteen colonies.

❑ Ministers such as Jonathan Edwards, William Tennent, and George Whitefield began to urge Christians to adopt a more emotional involvement in Christianity through fervent prayer and personal study of the Bible.

- ▪ Their sermons were emotional, appealing to the heart not just the head.
- ▪ New denominations such as Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians gained members and challenged some of the old established colonial denominations such as the Congregationalist Puritans in New England and the Anglicans in the South.
- ▪ Practicing religion became an emotional experience in addition to an intellectual experience and emphasized an individualism.

The First Great Awakening

SINNERS

In the Hands of an

Angry GOD.

A SERMON

Preached at *Enfield*, *July* 8th 1741.

At a Time of great Awakenings; and attended with remarkable Impreffions on many of the Hearers.

By *Jonathan Edwards*, A.M.

Paftor of the Church of CHRIST in *Northampton*.

Amos ix. 2, 3. *Though they dig into Hell, thence fhall mine Hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themfelves in the Top of Carmel, I will fearch and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my Sight in the Bottom of the Sea, thence I will command the Serpent, and he fhall bite them.*

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by S. KNEELAND and T. GREEN. in Queen-Street over againft the Prifon, 1741.

- ❑ One of the most famous sermons that typifies the religious fervor and emotional nature of the Great Awakening was Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."
  - The sermon urged the congregation to repent and not provoke God who is all knowing.
- ❑ The American colonies, especially those in New England, had been founded on the idea that government ruled on the basis of a covenant relationship with God and the people (e.g., The Mayflower Compact).
  - The governance structure of the new churches reflected this idea as churches appointed their own ministers and administered their own churches.
  - This sense of independence was soon reinforced by the political ideas of John Locke's social contract and Thomas Paine's emotional appeal for independence.