# THE EQUIP INSTITUTE Theme: Christian Heritage Topic: Reason and Revival (1650-1800) 3rd Semester / Fall 2024 Introduction The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. The topic this week is Reason and Revival, which covers the years 1650-1800. The Enlightenment The Enlightenment led many European intellectuals to argue for the superiority of reason over revelation, which they hoped would liberate Western Culture from all alleged superstitions. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and English Civil War (1642-1653) had both led to widespread death and political turmoil, even though all the combatants were various types of professing Christians. Some of the leading Enlightenment thinkers included David Hume, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Voltaire, and Immanuel Kant. While the Enlightenment had many positive effects on political theory, for our purposes the movement represented a significant challenge to Christianity because it revised or rejected virtually every cardinal doctrine of the faith. As a general rule, Enlightenment thinkers ruled out the possibility of miracles, including the incarnation and resurrection. In France, the French Revolution (1789-1799) led to widespread repression of Catholicism, which had previously been the state religion. In English-speaking lands, it became fashionable for intellectuals and cultural elites to become either **Deists** or **Unitarians**. Many American Founding Fathers such as John Adams (Congregationalist), Benjamin Franklin (Anglican), and Thomas Jefferson (Anglican) were Deists or Unitarians. In England, a majority of the pastors in denominations such as the General Baptists and the Presbyterians became Unitarians. Even among Trinitarian Protestants in England



Central Europe remained divided between Lutheran and Catholic states. The Lutherans were in the minority, and a

and North America, Universalism was very popular.



growing number of Lutheran pastors were convinced their tradition was spiritually stagnant. The Pietists sought renewal through focusing on personal holiness, practicing spiritual disciplines, and Christian activism. Philipp Jakob Spener launched the movement in 1675 with a tract called *Pia Desideria* ("Pious Desires"), which argued for personal devotions, small group Bible studies, and congregational polity. Spener believed the only way to renew dead churches was to form "churches within the church": small groups of like-minded believers.

Spener's protégé was a nobleman named August Hermann Francke, who founded the University of Halle (1695). Halle became the epicenter of the Pietist movement. Francke also founded an orphanage and a printing press. The latter published Pietist material that was distributed all over the continent. Francke provided two pastors to a group of "underground" Pietists in the Catholic state of Silesia when revival broke out among the Silesians in 1707. The Silesian Revival was widely reported in English and American newspapers, and many Congregationalists such as Solomon Stoddard in Connecticut and Isaac Watts in London began praying for a similar movement in their contexts.

Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf was another Pietist nobleman whose parents were friends with Spener. Zinzendorf inherited a large estate called Hernhutt, and in 1722 he opened his property to Pietist and other Protestant refugees from Catholic states. Around 1730, revival broke out among the Moravians, a group of Pietists who had sought refuge at Hernhutt. By 1735, Zinzendorf had sent Moravian missionaries to Greenland, the East and West Indies, Georgia, and North Carolina. In 1741, Zinzendorf established Bethlehem, Pennsylvania as an outpost to evangelize the Iroquois and try to persuade Lutherans to embrace Moravian Pietism. Zinzendorf impacted John Wesley and George Whitefield, both of whom considered him a spiritual role model.

## Early American Awakenings

What we call the "First Great Awakening" was actually a series of revivals in North America that occurred off and on from 1727 to 1787. The earliest revivals occurred in New Jersey, under the leadership of Gilbert Tennant (Presbyterian) and Theodore Freylinghuysen (Dutch Reformed). Freylinghuysen was influenced by Dutch Pietists who sent him to America to work as a missionary


priest. Tennant taught at the "Log College," an informal school that trained revival-minded Presbyterians for pastoral ministry and was the forerunner to Princeton. Both men were controversial because they claimed most clergy in New Jersey were unconverted and urged revived parishioners to "shop around" for the best church.

In 1734–1735, a Connecticut church pastored by Jonathan Edwards (Congregationalist) experienced revival. In a little over six months, over three hundred converts were added to the membership of Edwards' church. The revival affected several dozen churches in the Connecticut Valley. Edwards wrote about the revival in A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, which became a bestseller in England and was translated into German and circulated among the Moravians. Edwards wrote many other works about revival and related themes, including Thoughts on Revival, which was a defense of revival, and Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, which was an attempt to discern the difference between authentic conversion and passing spiritual decisions.

Edwards was also a gifted theologian. He wrote many important works, including books about sanctification, the Trinity, original sin, the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and eschatology. He edited the *Diary of David Brainerd*, which has never gone out of print and has inspired countless believers to become foreign missionaries. Edwards is perhaps best known for preaching one of the most famous sermons in American history: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Edwards is widely considered the most influential theologian in American history. He died prematurely in 1758 from a smallpox vaccination just one month after becoming the third president of Princeton College.

## Early British Awakenings

Around the same time Jonathan Edwards was shepherding his church through revival, a Welshman named Howell Harris (Anglican) was converted and began to preach itinerantly. Before long, his fellow Anglicans Griffith Jones, Daniel Rowland, and William Williams were also preaching all over Wales. Many churches in Wales experienced revival during the 1730s. These churches became part of a movement known as Welsh Calvinistic Methodism, which was a renewal movement in the Anglican Church of Wales before becoming a separate


denomination in 1811. **Selina Hastings**, the Countess of Huntington, was a wealthy noble woman who became a financial patron for the Welsh revivalists and many other revival leaders in eighteenth-century Britain.

In 1738, **John Wesley** (Anglican) had just returned from a failed mission in Savannah, Georgia. Wesley had been raised in the home of a renewal-minded Anglican priest and had been a good student at Oxford. He had also helped to start a "Holy Club" on campus for students who were earnest about pursuing godliness. After his graduation and ordination, he was sent as a missionary to Georgia. During his almost two years in Savannah, Wesley saw almost no converts, struggled with assurance of his own salvation, and was finally run out of the colony for practicing church discipline on a young woman who spurned his affections and married another man. One of his few encouragements during this time came from the Moravian missionaries in Georgia.

Wesley received assurance of his salvation on May 24, 1738, while attending a Moravian Bible study in Aldersgate Street in London. Most Anglican churches refused to allow Wesley to preach because he emphasized repentance and regeneration, so he began to preach evangelistic sermons outdoors. Following the Moravians, Wesley gathered his followers into "bands," small groups that worked to renew the Church of England from within. The Methodists were committed to evangelism, discipleship, and social ministries. Wesley differed from most of the other revival leaders of this era because he advocated Arminianism rather than Calvinism. His brother Charles was also a key revival leader, though he is most famous today for his hymns. Wesley's followers in America were called **Methodists**, though in England the term was more generic and was a synonym for evangelicalism.

### George Whitefield

In 1740–1742, a second revival broke out in New England and spread all over the Eastern Seaboard. The key catalyst was **George Whitefield** (Anglican), an itinerant preacher from England who was the most influential figure during the eighteenth-century revivals. Whitefield grew up wanting to be a stage actor, and after he was converted he used his public speaking skills to great effect as a revivalist. After graduating from Oxford, Whitefield followed Wesley as a missionary priest to Georgia before returning to England in 1737. It was Whitefield who


encouraged Wesley to preach outdoors when the Anglican churches refused to allow the revivalists to preach from their pulpits. Whitefield also worked with the aforementioned Welsh revivalists, helping to found the Calvinistic Methodist denomination. Unfortunately, Whitefield and Wesley had a falling out over the doctrine of predestination.

In 1740, Whitefield returned to American and preached all over the East Coast. He collaborated frequently with Gilbert Tennant, and he preached one Sunday in Jonathan Edwards' pulpit. Whitefield preached in all thirteen colonies and was probably the most well-known man in America in the generation before George Washington. Unfortunately, Whitefield's popularity and the weird behavior of some lesser revivalists led to a backlash against revival, especially among some New England pastors. This prompted Edwards to write in defense of revival, arguing for a balanced middle between dead orthodoxy and reckless religious fanaticism. Historians estimate that Whitefield preached over 18,000 sermons in his lifetime. Sometimes, he preached as many as three sermons a day.

After 1740, many denominations in America divided into pro-revival and anti-revival factions. Some of the pro-revival Congregationalists, called the Separates, embraced believer's baptism in the late-1740s. These Separate Baptists migrated from New England to Virginia before landing in Sandy Creek, North Carolina in 1755. Led by two Whitefield converts named Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall, the Separate Baptists planted dozens of churches all over Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. The Separate Baptists eventually merged with the older Baptist groups who predated the revivals. By 1800, virtually all Baptists in the South were pro-revival, broadly Calvinistic, and fiercely committed to evangelism and church planting. These were the Baptists who later formed the Southern Baptist Convention in1845.

### The Modern Missions Movement

The revivals led directly to the birth of the modern missions movement. Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Protestant missions had been relatively hit and miss while Roman Catholics spread rapidly to lands such as South America and Asia. Some of the earliest Protestant missionaries were the Moravians, who established several mission outposts in the 1730s and 1740s. Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley preached frequently about missions, and


many denominations were committed to evangelizing Native American tribes. Some persecuted ex-slaves left North America for Jamaica and East Africa, establishing churches in their new lands. Nevertheless, no English-speaking Protestants took the step of intentionally relocating to other nations to serve as missionaries until the end of the eighteenth century.

The first denomination to engage in intentional foreign missions was the British Particular Baptists. For much of the 18th century, the Particular Baptists had mostly ignored the revivals because they were influenced by a theology called hyper-Calvinism. In the 1780s, the fog of false doctrine began to lift. Several pastors, most notably Andrew Fuller, read Jonathan Edwards' books and embraced his revival-friendly evangelical Calvinism. In1792, Fuller and William Carey led a group of Particular Baptists to form the Baptist Missionary Society. The next year, Carey relocated to India, where he spent the next forty years evangelizing, translating Scripture, founding a university, and fighting against social evils. By the 1810s, most Protestant denominations in Britain and America had formed mission societies and sent out missionaries to places such as India, China, and East Africa.

·	 