



The Great Awakening

Chapter 4 AP US History

Give Me Liberty! by Eric Foner

Reactions to Enlightenment Thoughts

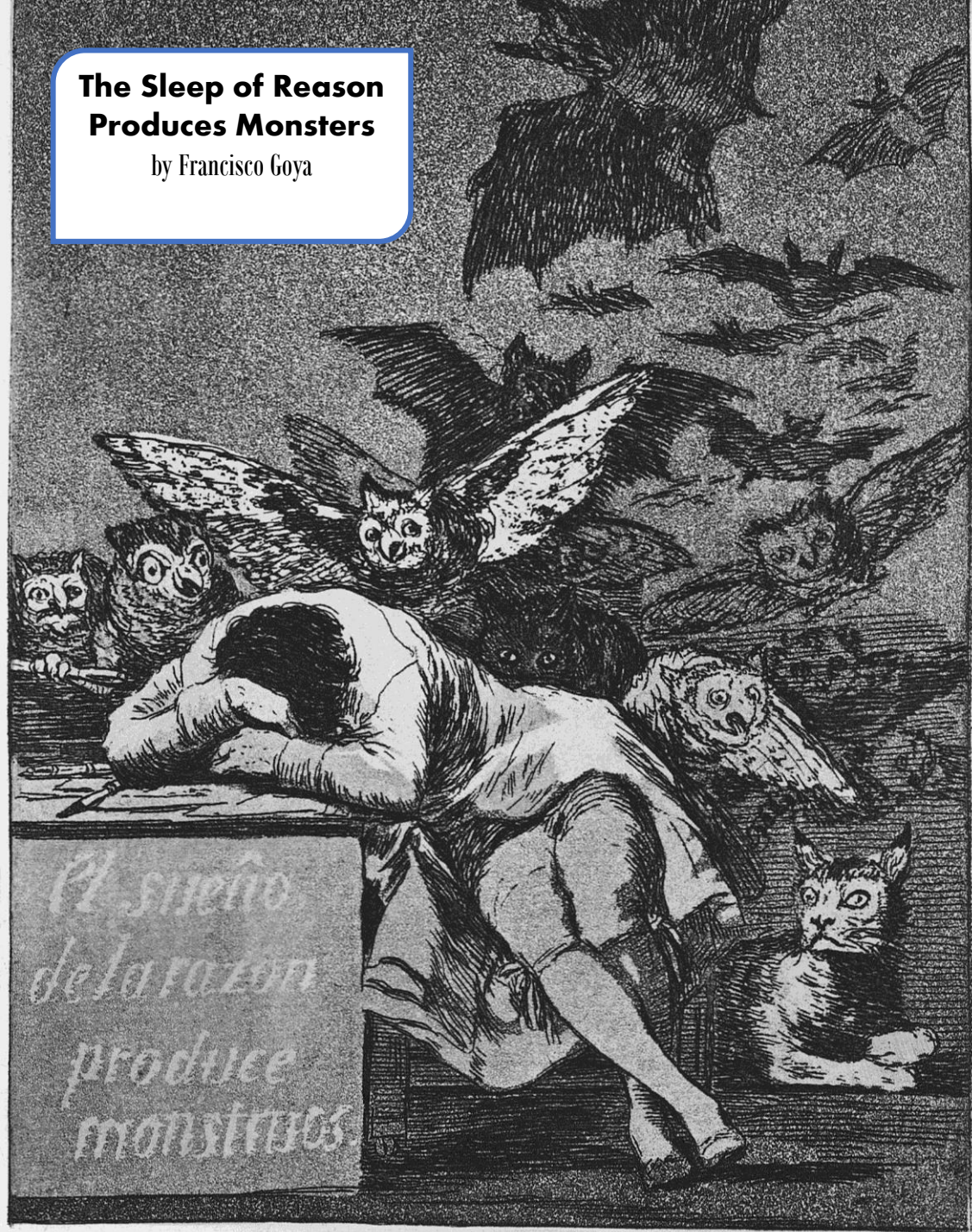
- *What is another freedom that will impact America?*
 - Freedom of religion!
- *Religion was central to 18th Century life!*
 - Sermons, theological treatises, and the Bible were the most printed materials in the colonies.
 - Religious conflict gained more attention than POLITICS!
- *What concerned the clergy (religious leaders)?*
 - Lax religious observance!
 - Colonists tended to be more concerned with worldly affairs.



Weimar's Courtyard of the Muses
by Theobald von Oer (a tribute to the Enlightenment)

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters

by Francisco Goya



Religious Revivals: Counter-Enlightenment Thought

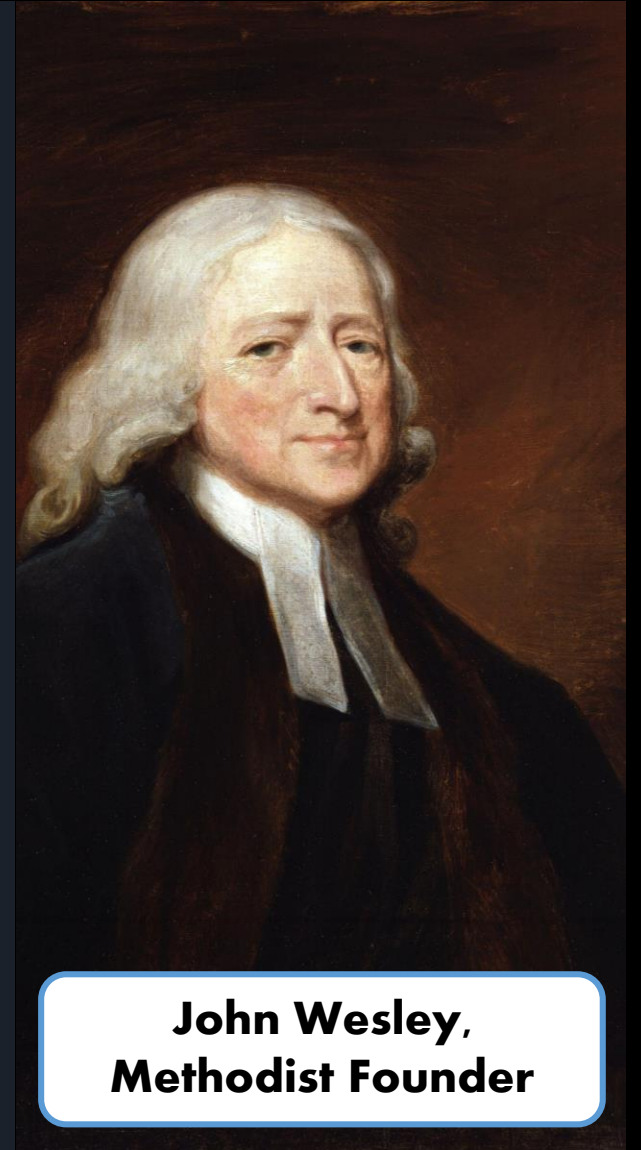
- *What caused concern for ministers in colonial America?*
 - Westward expansion
 - Commercial development
 - Enlightenment rationalism
 - Lack of engagement in church services
- *How did these ministers meet this challenge?*
 - The Great Awakening (1730s)
 - Religious revivals that swept through the colonies
- *What did this movement inspire?*
 - “religion of the heart” — a more emotional and personal Christian faith
- *How did these revivals impact the colonies?*
 - This movement completely changed the religious landscape of the colonies!



Hasidism in Poland

C. 1800

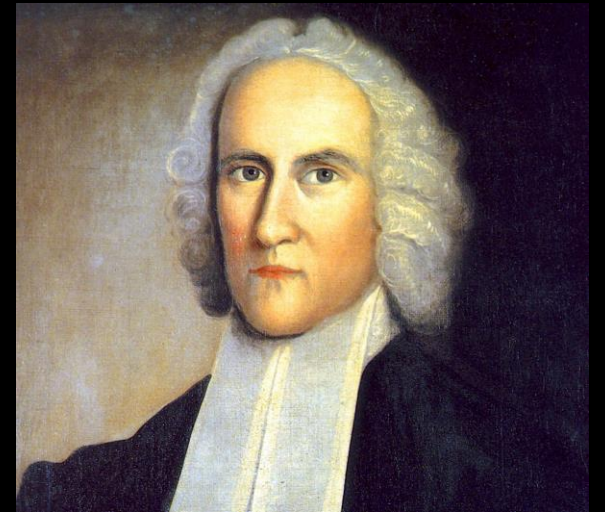
- ***Was colonial America the only place revival occurred?***
 - NO! Religious revival happened in MANY parts of the world!
 - This was a direct response to the Enlightenment
 - This was also a desire for religious purity!
- ***Was Christianity the only religion to experience revival at this time?*** This is a trans-Atlantic movement!
 - NO! Middle Eastern and Central Asian Islamic practices also saw revival (Wahhabism) — return to earliest practices
 - Eastern Europe: Hasidic Judaism emphasized the importance of faith and religious joy!
 - Methodism founded (among other protestant enthusiastic religions)
 - Desired to bring “salvation” by faith alone to the people
 - Methodists participated in “doing good” - giving the lower and middle class a sense of purpose
 - Strongly abolitionist!!!!

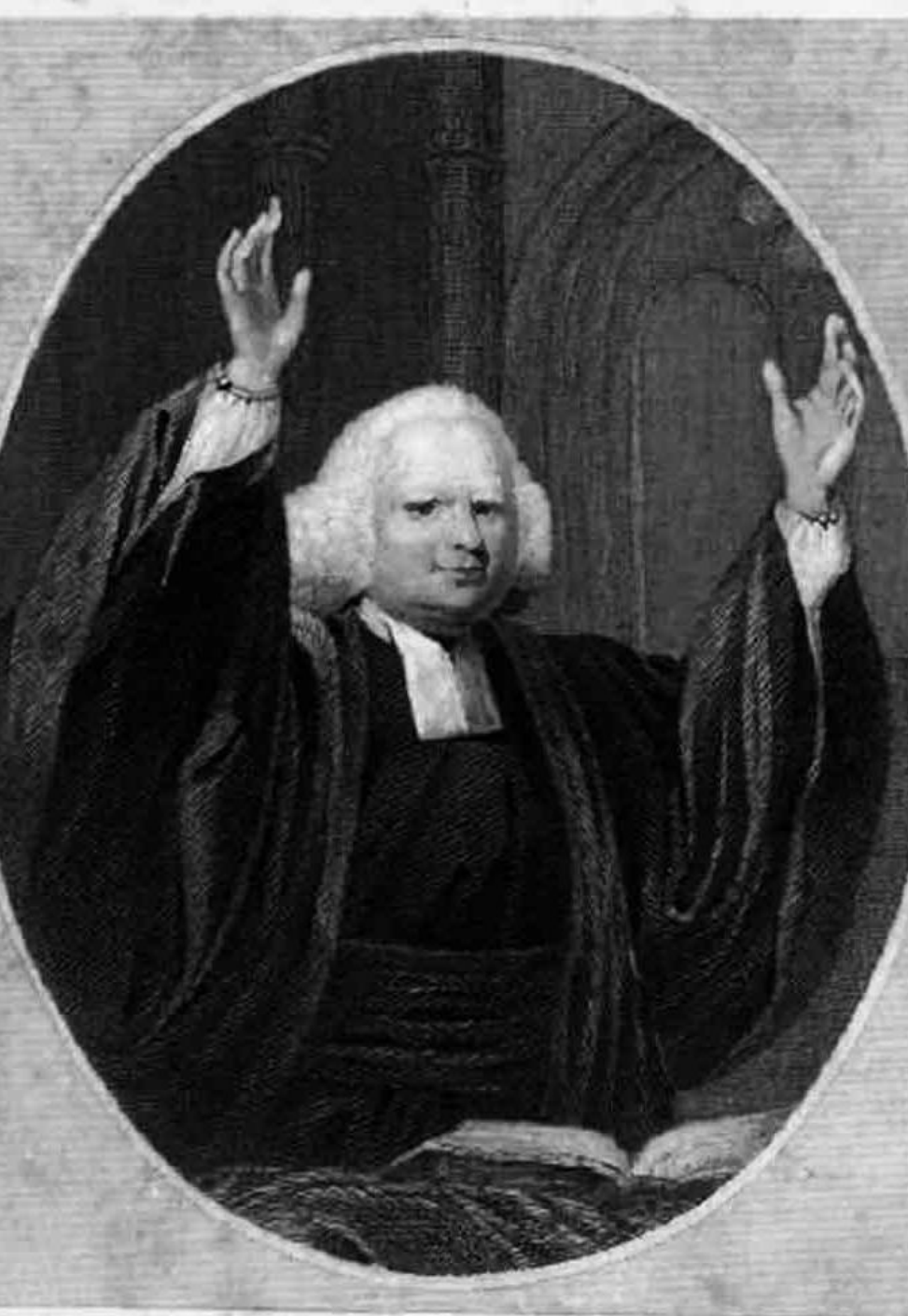


**John Wesley,
Methodist Founder**

The Great Awakening in America

- ***Where does this movement really begin in the colonies?*** New England!
 - 1720s and 1730s: Theodore Frelinghuysen (New Jersey Dutch Reformed Church leader), William and Gilbert Tennent (Presbyterian leaders), and Massachusetts Congregationalist preacher Jonathan Edwards.
 - This was EMOTIONAL preaching!
- ***Who is Jonathan Edwards?***
 - Jonathan Edwards was a preacher with fiery preaching methods, emotionally moving many listeners to tears while talking of the eternal damnation that nonbelievers would face after death.
 - He began preaching in 1734, and his methods sparked debate among his peers.
 - His most famous sermon was “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” describing a man dangling a spider over a blazing fire, able to drop the spider in at any time — just as God could do to man.
 - His famous metaphor: “The road to hell is paved with the skulls of unbaptized children.”





The Preaching of Whitefield

- *Are there other ministers impacting this event?*
 - YES! George Whitefield: an itinerant English preacher who used different preaching methods than Edwards increased the religious movement.
 - Traveled the colonies from Georgia to New England!
 - Whitefield's message was one of human helplessness and divine omnipotence.
 - Whitefield brought Jonathan Edwards to tears and persuaded always skeptical Ben Franklin to empty his pockets into the collection plate.
 - Imitators copied his emotional sermons and his heaping of blame on sinners.
- *These new preachers were met with skepticism by the “old lights” the orthodox clergy.*
- *The Great Awakening led to the founding of “new light” centers like Princeton, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth.*
- *The Great Awakening was the first religious experience shared by all Americans as a group.*



Critics of the Great Awakening

- ***What is the response to the Great Awakening:***
 - Tens of thousands of people wanted to hear Whitefield preach! Including Ben Franklin!
 - Like the Enlightenment movement, there were critics of this movement
- ***The “Old Lights” Criticism:***
 - Revivalist preachers lacked theological training!
 - Revivalists were encouraging disrespect for the established church & ministers
 - Revivalist preachers were causing disorder and chaos!
- ***Connecticut’s Reaction:***
 - Laws punishing disruptive preaching
- ***1760s: the Great Awakening begins to subside!***

The Awakening's Impact

- ***Was the Great Awakening only a spiritual event? NOT REALLY!***
 - Reflected the existing social tensions
 - Questioned forms of authority in the colonies
 - Inspired criticism of colonial social structures
- ***What was a common criticism of revivalist preachers?***
 - Commercial society — increased the debt of the people
 - Greed was seen as unchristian!
 - Baptist and Methodist ministers criticized the wealthy planters
 - Some preachers condemned slavery (Methodism was ardently abolitionist)
- ***What other impacts are seen from the Awakening?***
 - Some black ministers emerged
 - Female “exhorters” emerged — shattering the male only preaching field
 - More denominations were found in the colonies
 - Newspapers expanded circulation — thanks to the “pamphlet wars”
 - Trusting individual ideas became more common
 - Independent thought would have SIGNIFICANT consequences in 1776!

