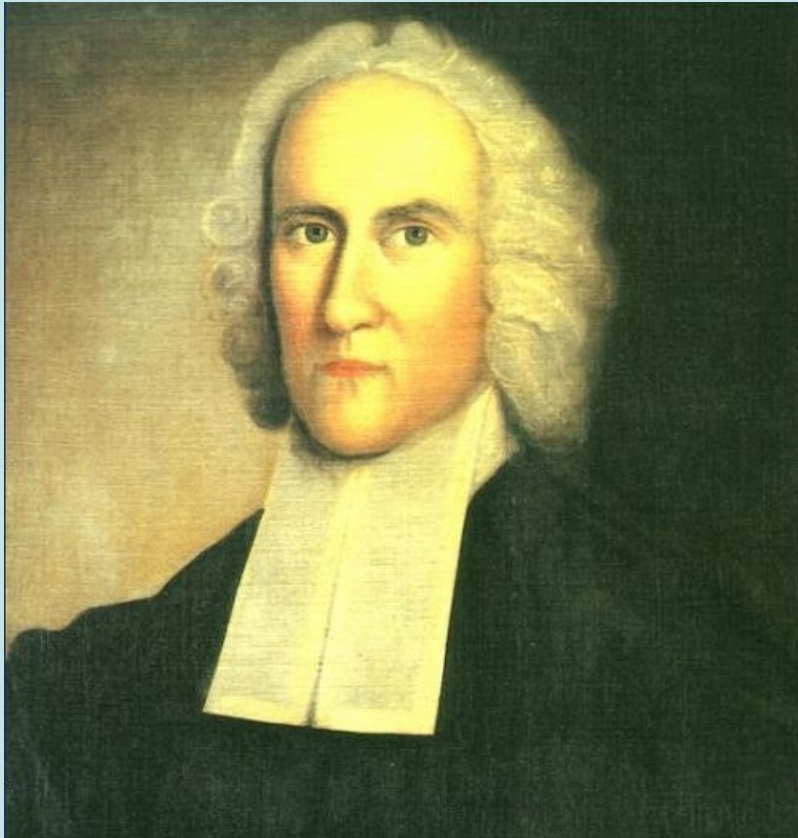


Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin



1703-1758



1706-1790

Similarities

- Contemporaries, born in the early 18th Century, within 3 years of each other
- Hard-working, studious, self-denying as young men
- Both wrote personal narratives, in which they tell of boyhood incidents (“errata”) and of their adult striving for moral perfection
- Both struggled especially with cultivating the virtue of humility

Yet...



- Each represents a different century in his thought and outlook.
- Edwards hearkens back to the Seventeenth Century, to his Puritan forbears.
- Franklin looks forward to the Eighteenth Century; can be seen as a model representative of the Age of Reason

Differences

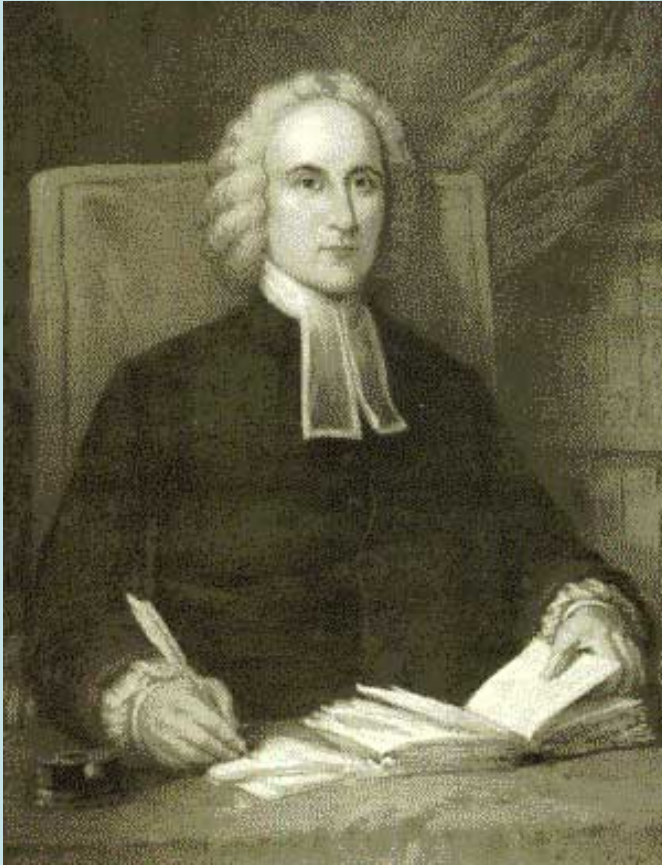
- Edwards

- Sought moral perfection to be a good Christian
- Relied on revelation
- Like Puritans, believed in a God who was everywhere in everyday life (God's Providence)

- Franklin

- Sought moral perfection to be a good Citizen
- Relied on reason, scientific method
- Like Jefferson and Paine, believed in a more Deist God, one who set the world in motion, but didn't take an active role in man's everyday affairs

Edwards



- Born in Connecticut in 1703
- Came from a family of ministers
- Only son out of 11 children
- An early writer, entered Yale at age 13
- In 1720 went to Northampton, Mass. to assist his famous grandfather, Solomon Stoddard in his church
- Married in 1727, had five children
- Succeeded Stoddard in 1729; spent 24 years as minister of Northampton congregation.

Edwards' Writing and Preaching

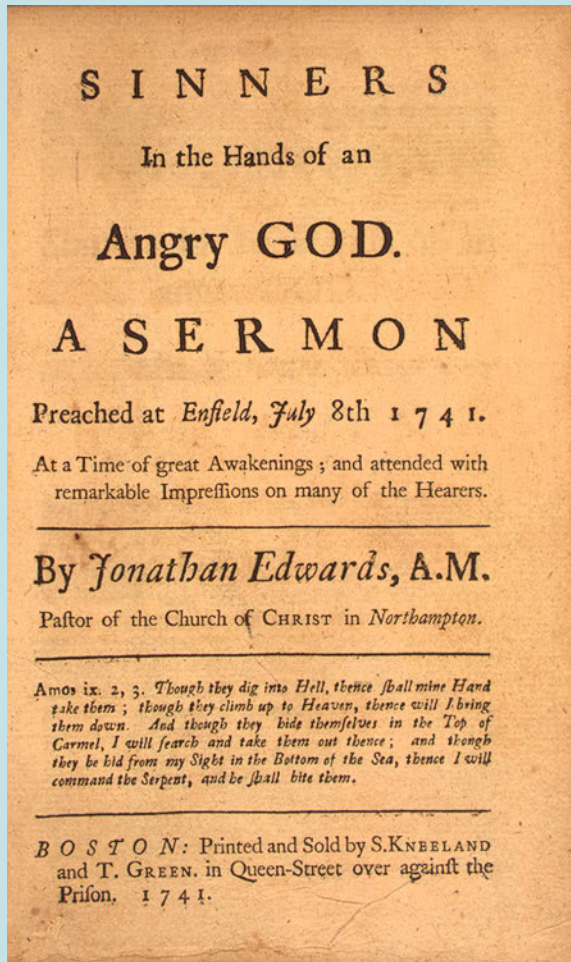
- Tried to restore original sense of religious commitment he felt had been lost since early Puritan days. Religious fervor disappearing because of:
 - Rise of sectarianism
 - Doctrines of Arminianism (emphasized free will, good works as a means to salvation)
 - Death of first generation of Puritan zealots
 - Rise of skepticism and worship of reason in 18th Century
 - Growing spirit of democracy and a belief in the political equality of human beings

Great Awakening



- Beginning in 1734 and lasting through the 1740's, a spirit of revivalism that swept along the Eastern seaboard
- Edwards major figure, wanted his parishioners to experience Christianity in an intense, emotional way (“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”)

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”



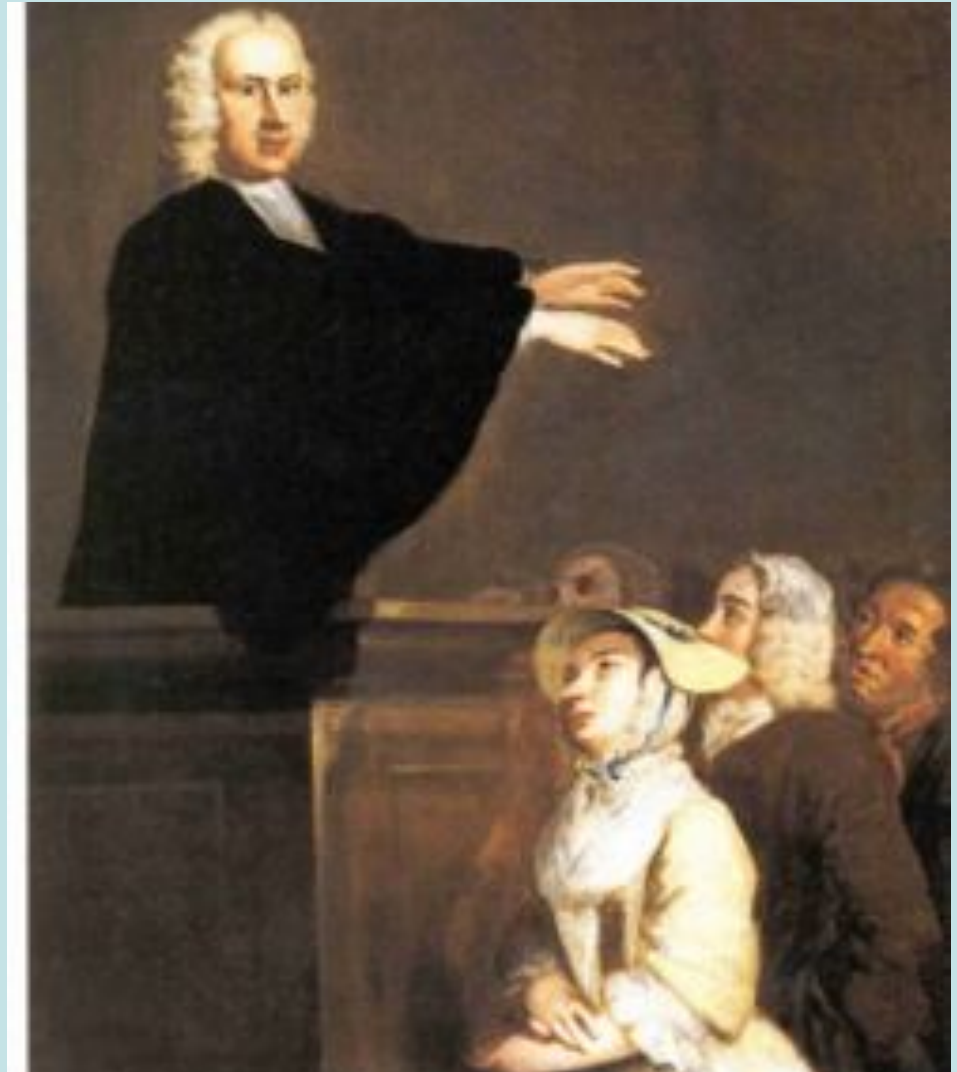
- From a contemporary report:
“[Edwards] preached a most awakening Sermon. . . And before [the] Sermon was done there was a great moaning and crying out throughout the whole house: *what Shall I do to be Saved--or I am going to Hell or what Shall I do for Christ*, etc. The Shreiks and crys were piercing and Amazing.”

Discussion Questions

- General reaction to “Sinners”?
- Why do you think he numbers his points? What’s the effect of this numbering?
- What are some of the most effective images that Edwards uses? How is God’s wrath depicted? What about human beings?
 - Whirlwind/storm (p. 195, 199)
 - Flood (p. 196, 199)
 - God as an archer/swordsman (p. 195, 196, 199)
 - Humans as spiders or insects (p. 200)
- How does he make his sermon very personal (p. 203)?

End of Great Awakening

- Ultimately alienated his congregation; kicked out of his own church
- Led to later doctrinal disputes, a split into Edwardian-influenced Western New England and more liberal Boston area (Congregationalism there would eventually develop into Unitarianism)



“Personal Narrative”

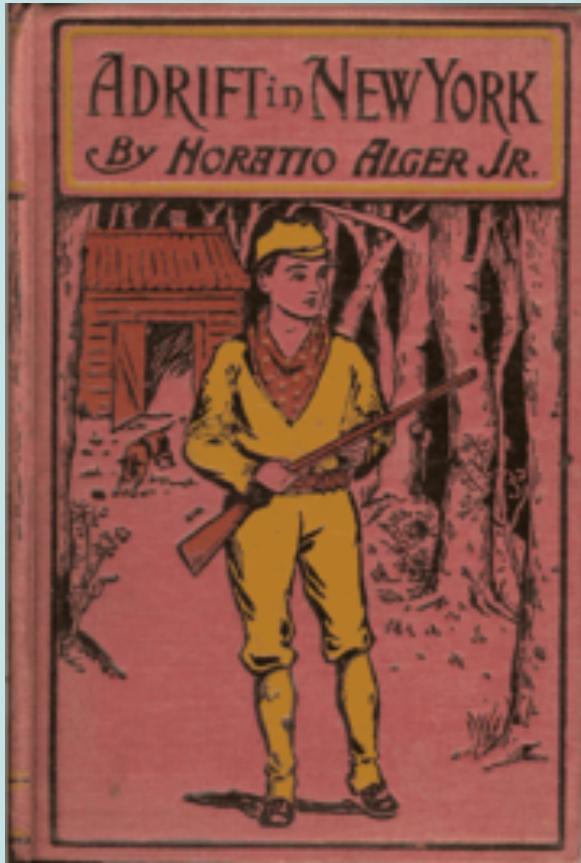
- Emphasis on delights of faith rather than terror of damnation
- Word “sweet” used 45 times!
- Details 3 different conversion experiences
- Doubted doctrine of predestination (Norton, 171)
- Lasting conversion **must** combine delight/sweetness with acceptance of God’s majesty, power, Sovereignty (Norton, 172) and knowledge of one’s own vast wickedness (180)

Franklin



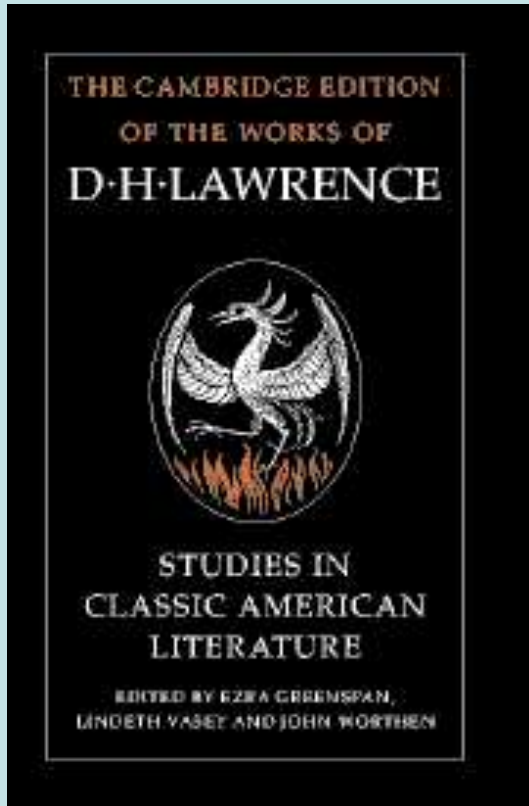
- Illustrates changes in 18th Century American religion
 - From emphasis on dogma, authoritarianism, and theocracy
 - To emphasis on optimism, humanitarianism, tolerance, and reason

Rags-To-Riches



- Some see the *Autobiography* as an example of the rags-to-riches literature that offered an optimistic American ideal and became a staple of 19th Century literature
- i.e, Horatio Alger stories of mid-to-late 19th C

D.H. Lawrence and Franklin



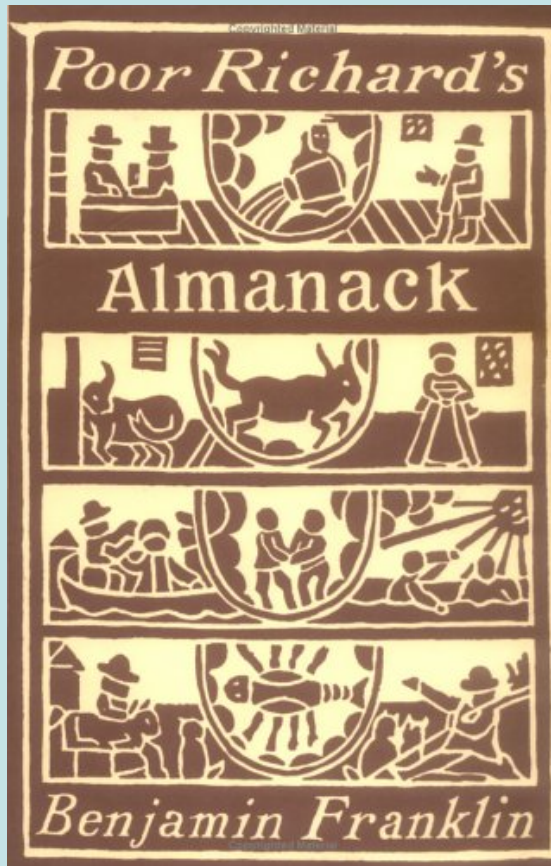
Studies in Classic
American Literature,
1923

- Yet some critics dislike Franklin for just this quality
- D.H. Lawrence (British modernist writer, critic) said that Franklin, at best, represented the mundane, grasping, middle-class businessman intent on making good.



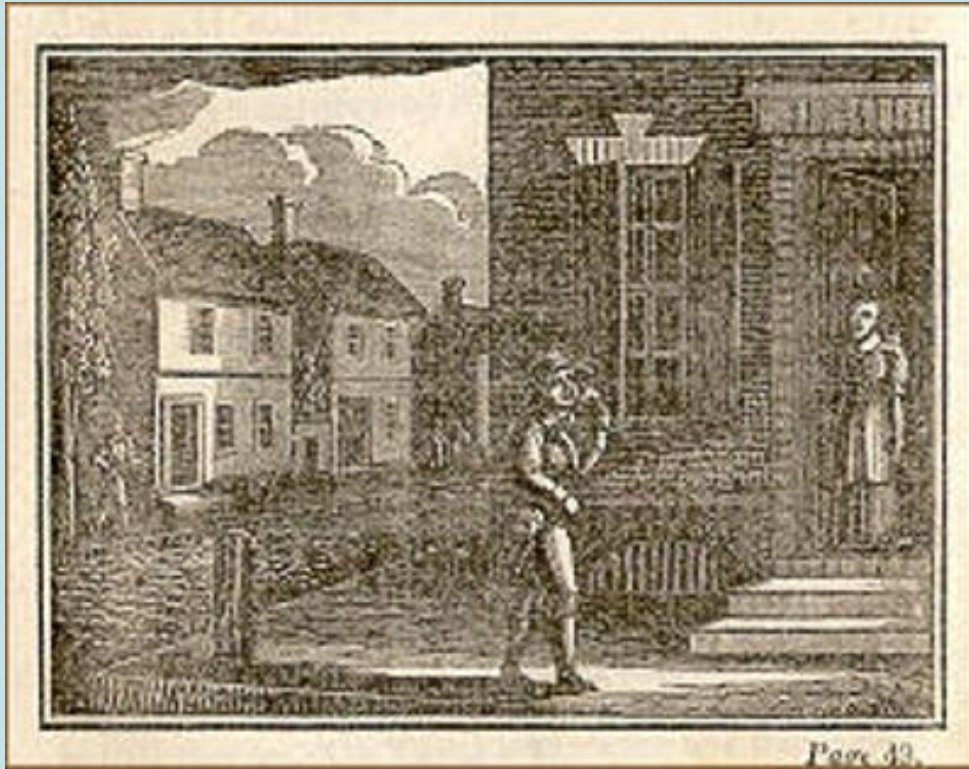
D.H. Lawrence

Self-Fashioning



- Often used masks or personae
 - Silence Dogood
 - Poor Richard
 - Pose of the wise father offering advice to his young son in the *Autobiography*
- Famous as a self-made man, but also for self-fashioning, for creating a literary or fictional self

Entry into Philadelphia



1845 Engraving

--What portrait of himself (what portrait of a good citizen in general) does Franklin create for posterity in his description of his entry into Philadelphia?

. . . He gave me accordingly three great Puffy Rolls. I was surpriz'd at the Quantity, but took it, and having no room in my Pockets, walk'd off, with a Roll under each Arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street as far as fourth Street, passing by the Door of Mr. Read, my future Wife's Father, when she standing at the Door saw me, and thought I made as I certainly did a most awkward ridiculous Appearance. Then I turn'd. . . I went for a Draught of the River Water, and being fill'd with one of my Rolls, gave the other two to a Woman and her Child that came down the River in the Boat with us and were waiting to go farther. Thus refresh'd I walk'd again up the Street, which by this time had many clean dress'd People in it who were all walking the same Way; I join'd them, and thereby was led into the great Meeting House of the Quakers near the Market. I sat down among them, and after looking round a while and hearing nothing said, being very drowzy thro' Labour and want of Rest the preceding Night, I fell fast asleep, and continu'd so till the Meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me (Norton, 246).

Franklin and Religion



Free Quaker Meeting House,
Philadelphia, built 1783

- A Deist early on, but backs off this belief in later life? (Norton, 267-268)
- Franklin's religious principles laid out (Norton, 283)

Reason and Religion

FORM OF THE PAGES.

TEMPERANCE.

Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.

	Sun.	M.	T.	W.	Th.	F.	S.
Tem.							
Sil.	*	*		*		*	
Ord.	*	*			*	*	*
Res.		*				*	
Fru.		*				*	
Ind.			*				
Sinc.							
Jus.							
Mod.							
Clea.							
Trans.							
Chas.							
Hum.							

- Finally, reason rather than revelation as pathway to virtue, moral perfection (Norton, 290)
- Franklin's pursuit of moral perfection utilizes scientific method?