1620

Colonial Settlements

IN THE UNITED STATES, the settlement of America has most often been represented by a single scene, the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. Images of the peaceful gathering of the Pilgrims and their Wampanoag neighbors at the "First Thanksgiving" the following year have tended to mask a more complex and darker reality. Indeed, the settlement of North America was characterized by ongoing conflict, not only between European settlers and Native American peoples, but also among

◀ **Enrico Causini, *Landing of the Pilgrims, 1620* (1825)**

This sandstone relief in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, the meeting place of the Senate and House of Representatives, suggests the central place the Pilgrims later assumed in U.S. history. As the Pilgrim father steps ashore at Plymouth Rock, he is greeted by an Indian offering an ear of corn, the staple crop of Native American societies throughout North America. In fact, the Pilgrims settled on the grounds of a village used in the summer by a group of Wampanoag, a tribe whose aid was crucial to the survival of Plymouth Plantation. The wave of English immigration that followed the settlement ultimately led, however, to the dispossession or destruction of Indian peoples throughout New England.

European countries, especially Spain, France, and England. Seeking to break Spain's monopoly in the Americas, a group of French Huguenots (Protestant Lutherans) sought to establish a settlement in Florida as early as 1562. But the effort ended when the settlers at the colony on St. John's River and the survivors of a French fleet sent to aid them were massacred by Spanish forces in 1564. To safeguard Florida, Spain established a fort at Saint Augustine, the first permanent European settlement in what is now the United States. The French consequently turned their attention northward, to Canada, where they established a settlement at Port Royal, in present-day Nova Scotia, in 1605, and a fur-trading post at Quebec in 1608.

John Smith's Map of Virginia

This map, which appeared in Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), illustrates the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River, among other geographical features, and includes a vignette of a council presided over by the powerful leader of the Powhatan Confederacy.

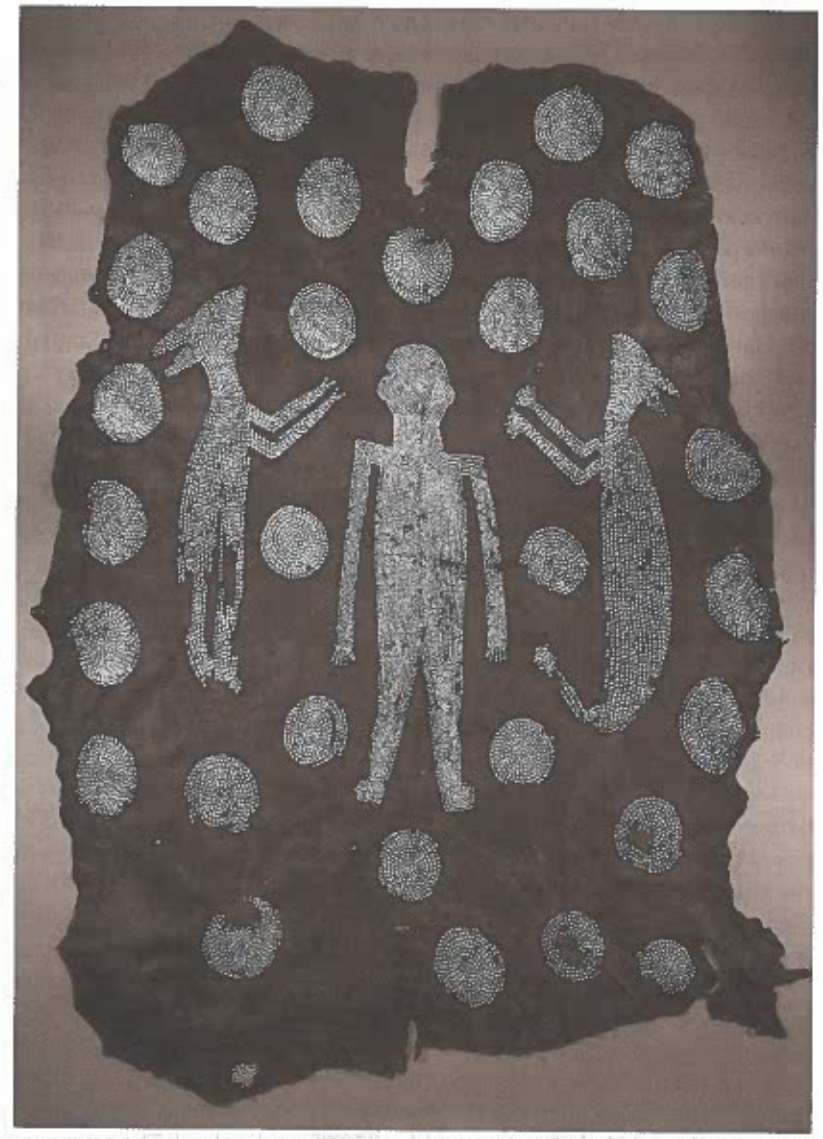
In an effort to compete with France and Spain by exploiting the resources of North America, the English concentrated their efforts in the area between Canada and Florida, an extensive territory they called "Virginia."

Despite the failure of their first settlements at Roanoke Island, off the coast of present-day North Carolina, English efforts at colonization were sustained by glowing printed accounts of the beauty and potential of the newly explored lands. Thomas Hariot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, first published as a pamphlet in 1588, was swiftly reprinted by Richard Hakluyt in his popular compilation *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) and then circulated throughout Europe in lavishly illustrated editions in English and three other languages, published in 1590 by Theodor de Bry in Frankfurt, Germany. Another avid proponent of colonization who recognized the power of print was Captain John Smith. Smith was one of the leaders and the most vigorous promoter of the first permanent English colony in North America, at Jamestown, Virginia, which he helped establish in 1607. Knowing that advertisements were crucial to the success of the colony, Smith wrote a series of books designed to encourage the English colonization of North America, including his *A Map of Virginia: With a Description of the Countrey* (1612) and *A Description of New England* (1616). But his most famous work was *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), in which Smith at once promoted colonization and laid the foundations for one of the most enduring myths of North America, his dramatic rescue by the Indian "princess" Pocahontas.

That famous and possibly fictional event has also tended to mask a darker reality. Smith's heroic adventures and the rosy pictures painted in promotional tracts and travel narratives bore little relation to actualities in the Jamestown Colony. During the early decades of the colony, life there was made almost unendurable by rampant disease, the shortage of food and other supplies, and the tense relations between the colonists and the native peoples of the powerful Powhatan Confederacy. Although the successful cultivation of tobacco established the economic viability of the colony, the consequent expansion into native lands displaced Indians and triggered a devastating attack on the scattered English settlements in 1622. The cultivation of tobacco also demanded massive amounts of physical labor, which was initially provided by indentured servants from England. The grim conditions under which they lived and worked were vividly described by a young man named Richard Frethorne, who arrived in Virginia as an indentured servant in 1623. In a letter he wrote to his parents in England, Frethorne described his lack of clothing, desperate hunger, and constant fear that he would die of disease or be killed by the Indians. Listing the names of twenty people who had already perished at his small settlement, where there were only "32 to fight against 3000 if they should come," Frethorne pleaded with his parents to send aid so that he might "be redeemed out of Egypt."

Powhatan's Mantle

Made from the hides of seven deer and from thousands of shells gathered by the Algonkin peoples living in the rich area around the Chesapeake Bay, this seven-foot-long ceremonial mantle belonged to Wahunsonacock, chief of the Powhatan Confederacy and called Powhatan by the English.



Even as Jamestown struggled for survival, other English settlers established colonies in what came to be called New England. In contrast to indentured workers such as Frethorne, the earliest settlers of New England conceived of their flight from England as a reenactment of the biblical Exodus, a journey out of spiritual bondage to a new promised land. Whereas the settlement at Jamestown was primarily a commercial venture, religion played a central role in the founding of New England. During

the Protestant Reformation, reformers in England sought to restore what they viewed as the ancient purity and simplicity of the church as established by Christ and his disciples in the first century, and furthermore to "purify" the religious practices and rituals of the Church of England, which they believed had not gone far enough in ridding itself of the vestiges of Roman Catholicism. The Puritans, as they came to be called, sought reform from within the Church of England. The Pilgrims were Separatists, or Puritans who formally separated themselves from the established church in order to form their own independent church, an act of treason in England. The Pilgrims consequently left the country, settling for a time in Holland before deciding to try their fortunes in North America, where 102 colonists landed on present-day Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in November 1620. Meanwhile, the Puritans were facing mounting intolerance in England. The idea of the great migration, the resettlement of large numbers of Puritan immigrants from the Old to the New World, was born in 1629, when a wealthy group of men organized the Massachusetts Bay Company and obtained a royal charter to establish a colony in New England. The following year, seven hundred adults and children led by John Winthrop embarked from England on a fleet of ships that arrived at present-day Salem, Massachusetts, in July 1630.

Believing they had been assigned a special place in God's plan of human history, both the Pilgrims and the Puritans kept detailed records of the founding of New England. The earliest history of Plymouth was based on journals kept by two of the leaders of the colony, William Bradford and Edward Winslow, whose accounts were published as *A Relation or Journal of the Beginning and Proceeding of the English Plantation Settled at Plimoth in New England* (1622). Usually called *Mourt's Relation* because the preface was signed by "G. Mourt," the book was designed to promote the settlement at Plymouth. Drawing on his journal and his contributions to *Mourt's Relation*, Bradford in 1630 began to write *Of Plimoth Plantation*, a formal history of the Pilgrims from the establishment of their Separatist Church through their years in Holland to their arrival and the early years of their settlement at Plymouth. Bradford's book was not published until the nineteenth century, but many historians were familiar with the manuscript, which became an important source for early accounts of the founding of New England.

The Puritans were equally eager to promote their colony and to preserve its history in writing. In March of 1631, Thomas Dudley (1574-1653), then the deputy governor and later the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote to an English friend from his new home in Boston:

> For the satisfaction of your Honor, and some friends, and for the use of such as shall hereafter intend to increase our plantation in New England, I have in the throng of domestic, and not altogether free from public business, thought fit to commit to memory our present condition, and what hath

> befallen us since our arrival here; which I will do shortly, after my usual manner, and must do rudely, having yet no table, nor other room to write in, than by the fireside upon my knee, in this sharp winter; to which my family must have leave to resort, though they break good manners, and make me sometimes forget what I would say, and say what I would not.

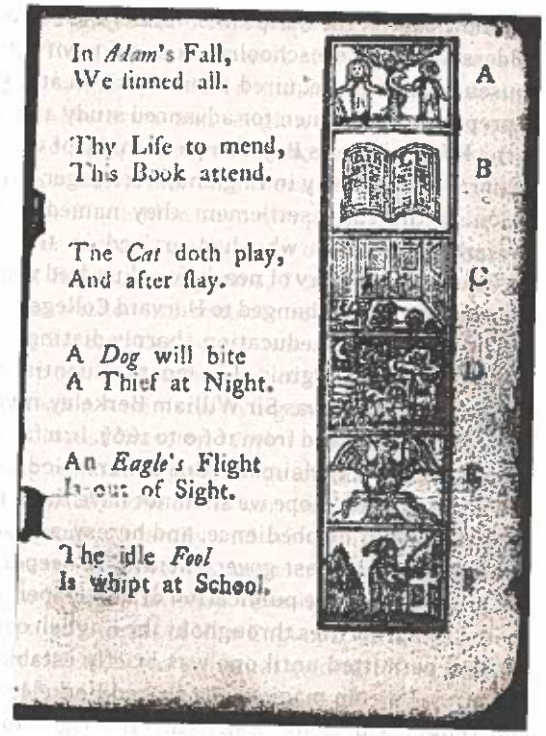
Even as he sought to persuade others in England to come to the new colony by offering an account of his experiences, Dudley was beset by many of the difficulties of writing in the primitive settlement of Boston. Despite such obstacles, however, writing played an integral part in the settlement of New England. At about the same time Bradford began to write his history of Plymouth in 1630, for example, John Winthrop began a journal in which he carefully recorded the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Published posthumously as *A Journal of the Transactions and Occurrences in the settlement of Massachusetts and the Other New-England Colonies, from the year 1630 to 1644* (1790), Winthrop's account later appeared and is now best known as *The History of New England.*

In contrast to Bradford's small band of Pilgrims, the larger and more affluent group of Puritans had substantial resources for establishing a colony. Among the provisions they transported to North America were books, which were vital elements of the cultural and religious life of colonists in New England. The key book was the Bible, which the Puritans viewed as the revealed word of God and consequently as the ultimate source of authority in all human affairs, from domestic arrangements to the structure of civil and religious institutions. In "A Modell of Christian Charity," an address he delivered either on the eve of or during the voyage to New England, Winthrop described the venture as an effort to establish "a Citty upon a hill," a model Christian community based on the letter and the spirit of the Bible. The Puritans also brought along books offering practical aid in building the new colony, including handbooks on law and medicine, as well as technical books on carpentry and farming. Finally, just as they constructed their dwellings and laid out their fields along English lines, the Puritans transplanted European culture to New England, bringing with them dictionaries, encyclopedias, books on logic and rhetoric, and the works of Greek and Latin writers. Indeed, the Puritans were shaped not only by the Protestant Reformation but also by the humanistic values of the Renaissance.

Although they initially depended on books brought or imported from England, the Puritans soon began to publish their own. In 1638, the first printing press arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Stephen Daye established the Glover Press in Cambridge. The first book printed in the English colonies was *The Whole Book of Psalmes Faithfully Translated into English Metre* (1640), popularly called *The Bay Psalm Book.* Of the more than two hundred books, pamphlets, and broadsides published in Massachusetts Bay Colony during the next sixty years, one of the most unusual was John

New England Primer

First published in Boston around 1690, the *New England Primer* was probably the single most successful production of the press in colonial North America. As this copy printed in 1750 indicates, the book continued to instruct children in reading, writing, and religion even after Puritanism began to wane in New England.



Eliot's translation of the Bible into an Algonkian language, published in 1663 as part of a broader missionary effort to Christianize the Indians. But the most familiar product of the Puritan press was the *New England Primer*, first published around 1690. During the following 150 years, more than three million copies were printed for use at home and in schools, where the so-called Little Bible of New England was used to teach spelling and reading, as well as to instill moral and religious values.

Education was a central concern of the Puritans. Like other Protestants, they placed great emphasis on the ability of individuals to read and interpret the Bible. Literacy rates had consequently been relatively high among the Puritans in England, even for women and girls, and the rates remained high among those who came to New England. Girls were generally taught to read and write at "dame schools," often run by women in private homes. The colonists also began to establish schools modeled on the grammar schools in England, in which the curriculum for young boys included religious training, instruction in mathematics and rhetoric, and the study of Latin and Greek. Gradually, laws were passed requiring the education of all children. In 1647, for example, the General Court, or legislature, of the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed an act designed to promote universal literacy and thus prevent "that old deluder Satan" from keeping "men from

the knowledge of the Scriptures." Under the act, every town of fifty householders had to hire a schoolmaster, and towns of more than one hundred householders were required to establish a Latin grammar school capable of preparing young men for advanced study at a university. The founders of the Massachusetts Bay Company, many of whom had been educated at Cambridge University in England, were eager to establish a similar institution in the early settlement they named Cambridge. In 1638, John Harvard, a minister who had arrived in the colony the year before, bequeathed his library of nearly four hundred volumes to New College, the name of which was changed to Harvard College.

The emphasis on education sharply distinguished the Massachusetts Bay Colony from Virginia. The most influential figure in the early development of Virginia was Sir William Berkeley, royal governor of the colony from 1642 to 1652 and from 1660 to 1667. In a famous diatribe, the authoritarian Berkeley exclaimed: "But I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into this world, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!" Insofar as "printing" meant the publication of newspapers, Berkeley's hostility was shared by authorities throughout the English colonies, where no newspaper was permitted until one was briefly established in Boston in 1690. Certainly, Puritan magistrates shared Berkeley's intolerance of political and religious dissent, restricting the right to vote to men who were church members and banishing dissidents like Roger Williams (1603-1683), an English Protestant theologian who founded Rhode Island. In contrast to Berkeley, however, the Puritans viewed education as a means of promoting religious orthodoxy and social stability. They also believed that literature could serve similar ends. Although Harvard College was established to train men for the ministry, it also emphasized a broad education in the arts and sciences, including languages and literature. In a sermon delivered in 1677, the influential Puritan minister Increase Mather thus told the legislators of the Massachusetts Bay Colony that they must support schools and the college to ensure that there would be "able instruments raised up for the propagating of Truth in succeeding Generations," adding, "And some have well and truly observed, that the Interest of Religion and good Literature, have risen and fallen together."

"And some have well and truly observed, that the Interest of Religion and good Literature, have risen and fallen together."

The premium placed on both literacy and literature in New England helps account for the prominence of Puritan writers in the early literary history of what became the United States. Poetry was especially valued by the Puritans, who avidly read English religious poets such as George Herbert and who also wrote a great deal of poetry. The first bestseller published in the colonies was a long narrative poem by a Puritan minister,

Michael Wigglesworth's *The Day of Doom*, "A Poetical Account of the Great and Last Judgment" (1662). The 224 ballad stanzas of the poem were read, recited, and frequently memorized by children and adults alike, revealing the powerful intersection of literature and religion among the Puritans. Although Wigglesworth is no longer well known, two other Puritan poets have assumed central places in early American literature. The first is Anne Bradstreet, who came to New England in 1630 along with her father and husband, both of whom later served as governors of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. A collection of Bradstreet's poems, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America*, was published in London in 1650, and a second edition was later published in Boston. Her poetry was also widely read and admired at the time, in sharp contrast to the work of the other most important Puritan poet, Edward Taylor. A minister living in the isolated frontier community of Westfield, Massachusetts, Taylor wrote a staggering amount of poetry, including funeral elegies, religious meditations, and a history of Christianity. But almost none of his work was published or even circulated beyond a small group of family and friends. In fact, Taylor's work was unknown until the 1930s, when his manuscripts were discovered and some of his poems were finally published, revealing him as one of the preeminent writers among the Puritans of New England.

The habits of personal reflection and spiritual meditation that found expression in the poetry of Bradstreet and Taylor also generated significant works in prose. Those who believed they had experienced God's grace and were consequently among the elect were required to give a public account of their conversion experience. Many also recorded those

Wampanoag War Club

This seventeenth-century war club was carved from the ball root of a maple tree and inlaid with triangular pieces of horn and wampum, small beads made from shell. Long thought to have belonged to "King Philip," the name the English settlers gave to the Wampanoag chief Metacomet, the weapon was most likely manufactured by a Native American and may well have been used in King Philip's War.

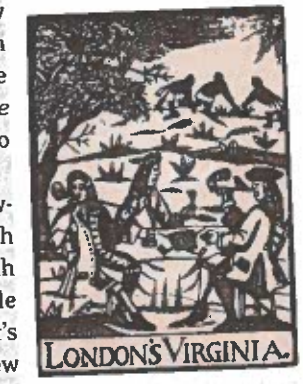
experiences in diaries or wrote more formal spiritual autobiographies. The conditions and conflicts arising from the settlement of New England also spawned another kind of life writing, the captivity narrative. Despite their professed intention of spreading the light of the Gospels in what they viewed as the "wilderness," the Puritans and other European settlers more often spread disease and destruction among the native inhabitants of New England. The growing number of English settlers and their inexorable expansion into tribal lands resulted in a series of wars with the Indians. During one of the earliest and bloodiest of those conflicts, King Philip's War of 1675–76, Mary Rowlandson was taken prisoner during an attack by Narragansett, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag Indians on her settlement in Lancaster, Massachusetts. Following her release, she wrote *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God . . . Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, which was published in both Boston and London in 1682. The widespread popularity of the book, which was a major bestseller, led to the publication of many similar narratives during the following decades, as the wars between the New England colonists and the Indians became part of the larger struggle between England and France for control of North America. Indeed, the captivity narrative became and remained one of the most popular literary genres of the colonial period.

The sense of vulnerability produced by ongoing conflicts with the Indians contributed to fears of and a series of narratives about witchcraft in New England. During the seventeenth century, accusations of witchcraft were far more common in England, France, and Germany than in New England. But the most famous of all witchcraft trials took place at Salem in 1692. Beginning with reports of the erratic behavior of two young girls, and the charge of witchcraft against an enslaved woman from the West Indies, the accusations spread, fueled by fear, class divisions, and religious differences. In the view of some historians, the accusations also revealed anxieties about the increasing power of women, especially affluent widows, in the colony. Eventually, 160 people (most of them women) were accused and many of those were incarcerated. Five people died in jail, while twenty others—thirteen women and seven men—were executed. Less than five years later, a day of repentance for the trials was observed throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Nonetheless, the trials gained lasting notoriety, partly as a result of narratives like *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692), in which the prominent Puritan minister Cotton Mather described a "horrible plot against the country by witchcraft," culminating in Satan's unleashing of an "army of devils" upon Salem.

Even as the Puritans were undergoing the convulsions of the witch trials, a new group of religious dissidents, the Society of Friends (Quakers), was seeking refuge in North America. Like the Puritans, the Quakers sought to return to what they viewed as the simplicity of early

Christianity. But the Quakers rejected the Puritan doctrines of original sin, predestination, and election, the salvation of only a few chosen by God. Instead, the Quakers believed that every individual was imbued by God with an "Inner Light" of spiritual understanding and was therefore potentially among the saved. Pacifists who refused to serve in the army or to pay taxes in support of the Anglican Church, the Quakers were widely persecuted in England. In 1680, however, a wealthy convert to the Society of Friends, William Penn, received a huge land grant in North America to pay off a debt owed to his late father by the king of England. Just as John Winthrop had earlier described the Puritan commonwealth as a "Citty upon a hill," Penn called his new colony of Pennsylvania a "holy experiment" and an "example to all Nations." In an effort to establish his experiment in religious and political freedom upon a just and secure foundation, Penn established friendly relations with the native population of the area by signing a treaty of friendship with the Delaware Confederacy in 1682. Penn also tirelessly promoted his colony, publishing tracts in English, Dutch, and German. Pennsylvania immediately began to attract thousands of Quakers from England and equal numbers of Protestants of various sects from other European countries, especially Germany. Like earlier settlers from the Netherlands and Sweden, whose colonies in North America had come under English rule, the new settlers contributed to the growing body of colonial literature written in languages other than English. For example, the leader of the first wave of German immigrants, Francis Daniel Pastorious, soon wrote *Positive Information from America* (1684), the first of a series of works he sent to Germany for publication.

The settlement of Pennsylvania added yet another element to the growing diversity, both ethnic and religious, of the English colonies in North America. As diaries and journals written around the turn of the eighteenth century illustrate, the experiences and physical circumstances of people living in different colonies were equally diverse. Sarah Kemble Knight's celebrated journal of her journey from Boston through Connecticut to New York in 1704-05 offers a fascinating account of the hardships of early travel and the social mores of the provincial world of rural New England. Only a small number of the numerous slaves that had been imported into the region worked on the family farms that predominated in New England, and farmers there had little in common with wealthy southern planters like William Byrd II. Certainly, his diary illustrates the radically different path development had taken in Virginia. Although there were class and racial divisions throughout the colonies, nowhere else was the social structure as hierarchical and rigid as in Virginia, where by the end of the eighteenth century the initial reliance on indentured servants had been replaced by an expanding system of slavery. The exploitation of slave labor led to the emergence of a small gentry class with the kind of privileged and



English Tobacconist Advertisement

In this early advertisement three gentlemen planters relax with drinks and their pipes under the shade of a tree while three slaves work in a tobacco field, an illustration of the transition from indentured servitude to slave labor in Virginia.

increasingly opulent lifestyle described by Byrd, who ultimately owned a vast estate of nearly 180,000 acres in Virginia.

A century after the establishment of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown, the various colonies had thus developed distinctly different cultural institutions, social structures, and systems of government. There were, consequently, few widely shared colonial experiences, even within the relatively narrow boundaries of the English colonies in North America. A major exception was the Great Awakening, a religious revival that swept through the colonies from the 1730s to roughly 1750. Beginning among Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the revival spread among various sects, first in the North and later to the South. The Great Awakening was closely associated with developments in England, especially the rise of Methodism within the Church of England. A major figure in the North American revival was George Whitefield, an

John Wollaston, *George Whitefield* (c. 1742)

In this oil portrait Wollaston emphasized Whitefield's cross-eyed appearance, which some people viewed as a sign of divine favor, and the power of his celebrated oratory, as evidenced by the mesmerized woman in the front row, who is bathed in the same spiritual light that falls upon the famous preacher's face and hands.

itinerant Methodist preacher from England who toured the colonies during 1739-42. Exploiting his formidable oratorical abilities and the growing resources of print culture, including handbills and newspaper advertising, Whitefield drew huge crowds. His mesmerizing sermons on the terrors of hell and the pressing need for conversion also sparked local revivals, first in the middle colonies and then in New England.

There, the groundwork had already been laid by another famous revivalist, Jonathan Edwards. In fact, Whitefield's evangelical style had originally been inspired by Edwards's vivid account of revivals that spread through the Connecticut Valley during the 1730s, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, which was first published in London in 1737 and then in Boston in 1738. The foremost theologian of the colonial period, Edwards also wrote a series of massive religious treatises, as well as the most famous of all Puritan spiritual autobiographies, his *Personal Narrative*. But he gained renown and is now probably best known for his sermons, especially "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," delivered during the height of the Great Awakening in 1741. Although many Puritan ministers opposed the movement, which they viewed as a dangerous manifestation of religious "enthusiasm," or irrational emotionalism, Edwards and other young ministers viewed the Great Awakening as a vital means of reviving the spiritual piety of the founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and restoring the central role the church had assumed in early New England.

In fact, as Edwards and many others recognized, the changing economy, growth of cities, and increasingly diverse population of New England had already loosened the grip of Puritanism, which continued to wane in the decades between the Great Awakening and the Revolution. Nonetheless, it remained a vital force. In reaction to what they viewed as a rising tide of rationalism and secularism, during the 1790s theological descendants of Jonathan Edwards launched a powerful counterattack, now known as the Second Great Awakening. That long-lasting revival sharply altered the course of society and culture in what by then had become the United States. Puritanism also continued to exert a strong pull, not only on those who affirmed its fundamental beliefs but also on those who questioned or rejected its religious doctrines, including philosophers, theologians, and writers as diverse as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Indeed, of all the *-isms* that have shaped American culture and society, Puritanism in its varied manifestations has been among the most enduring, at once deeply coloring the American mind and profoundly shaping the contours of life in the United States.