

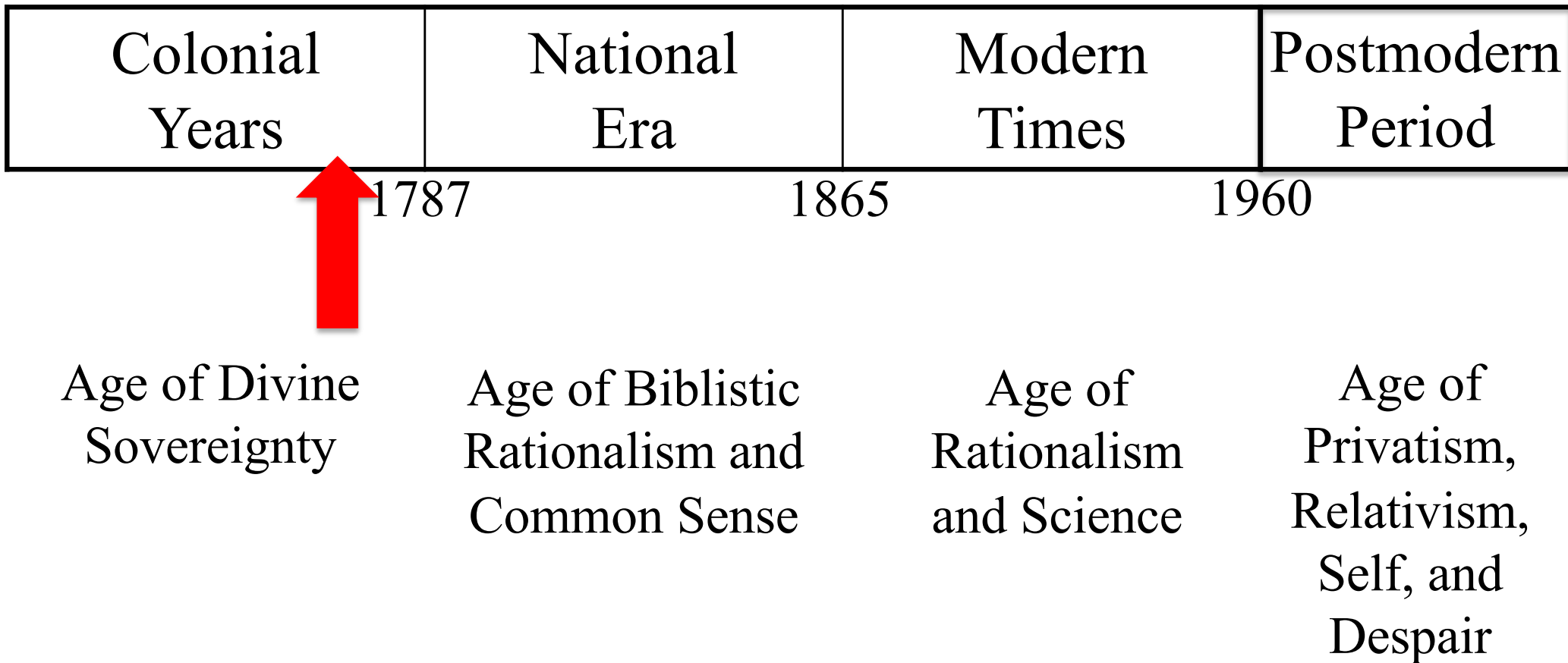
What Does It Mean To Be: *Revolutionary*
American Enlightenment
Unitarianism, Deism, Liberalism
18th Century America
Part 1

Bill Petro

your friendly neighborhood historian

billpetro.com/compass

American Church History



Objectives

By the end of this session you should be able to

- Identify **Enlightenment** themes in Colonial America
- Understand the relationships between
Religion and the **American Revolutionary War**
- Discuss **Religious** Affiliation of **Signers** of
the **Declaration of Independence**

Approaches to Authority and the Enlightenment

Reformation
16 & 17th century

Enlightenment
18th century

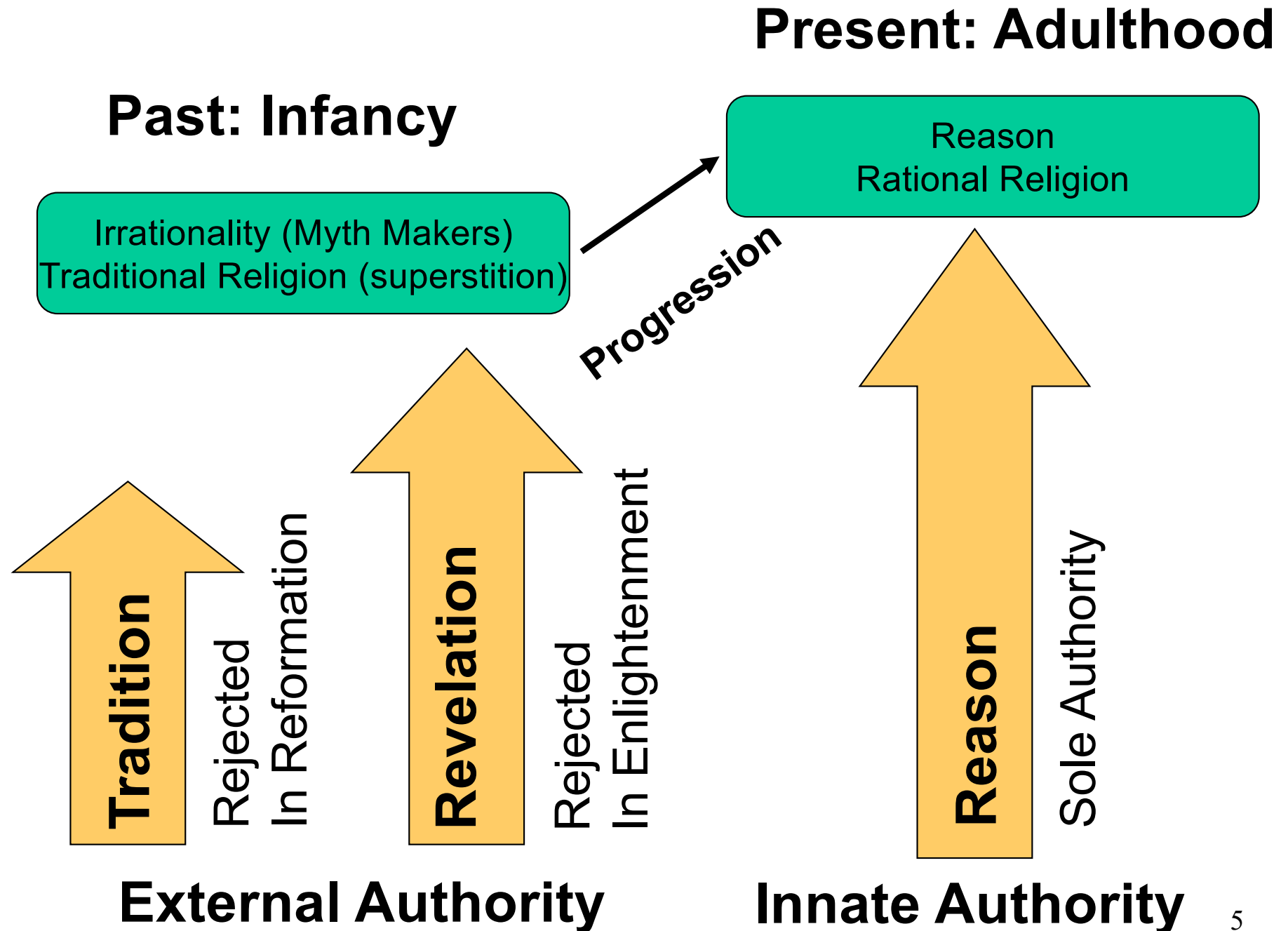
Roman Catholicism

Protestantism

Rationalism

Authority	Holy Church ↓ Authoritarianism Pope and Councils	Holy Bible ↓ Creeds & Confessions (Secondary)	Human Reason ↓ Philosophical Systems
Salvation	God ↓ ↑ Church ↑ ↓ Man	God ↓ Christ ↓ Man	God ↑ Man

From Revelation to Reason



Were all the Founding Fathers
Deists?

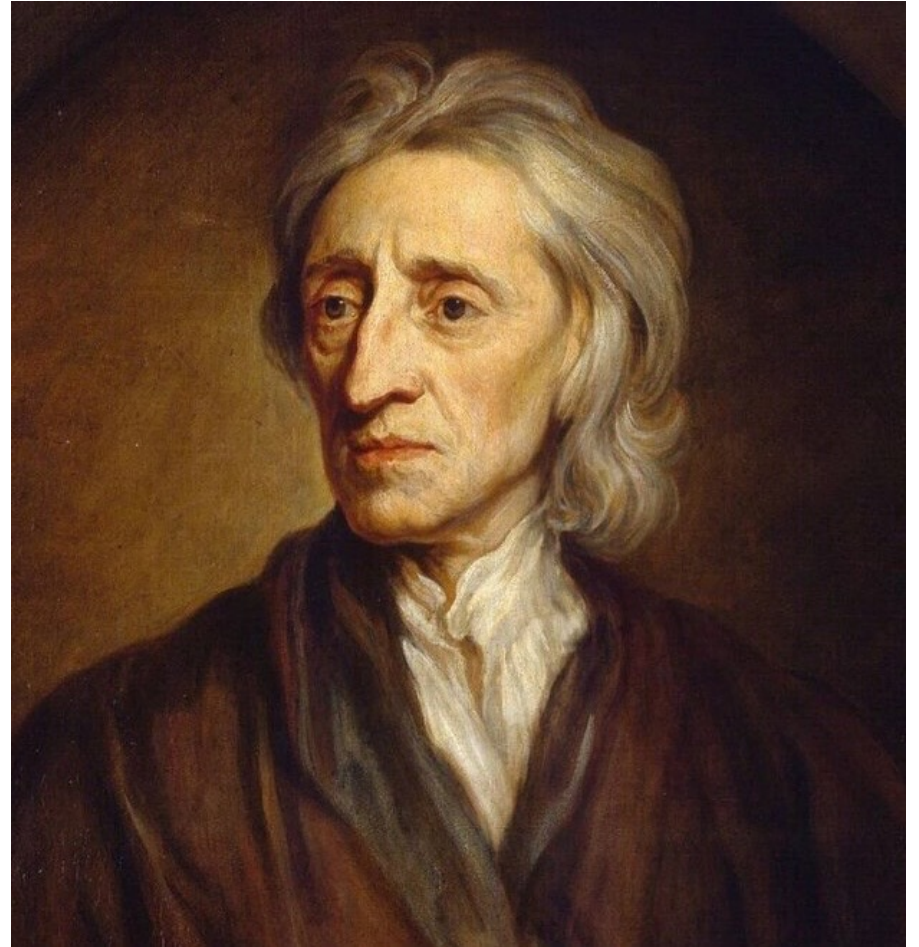
Were all the Founding Fathers
Bible-believing Christians?

Orthodoxy, Unitarianism, and Deism

	Orthodoxy	Unitarianism	Deism
Source of Truth	Reformation Empiricism Rationalism	Empiricism Rationalism Reformation	Enlightenment Empiricism Rationalism
Nature of God	Theistic Trinitarian <i>Personal</i>	Theistic Single <i>Personal</i>	Theistic Single <i>Utterly transcendent</i>
Medium of Revelation	Supernatural Natural	Natural Supernatural	Natural
Person of Christ	God/Man	Archetypical Man	Exemplary Man
Nature of Sin	Derived & Personal Depravity Moral <i>inability</i>	Personal Depravity Moral <i>ability</i>	Moral <i>ability</i>
Atonement	Penal	Exemplary	(None)

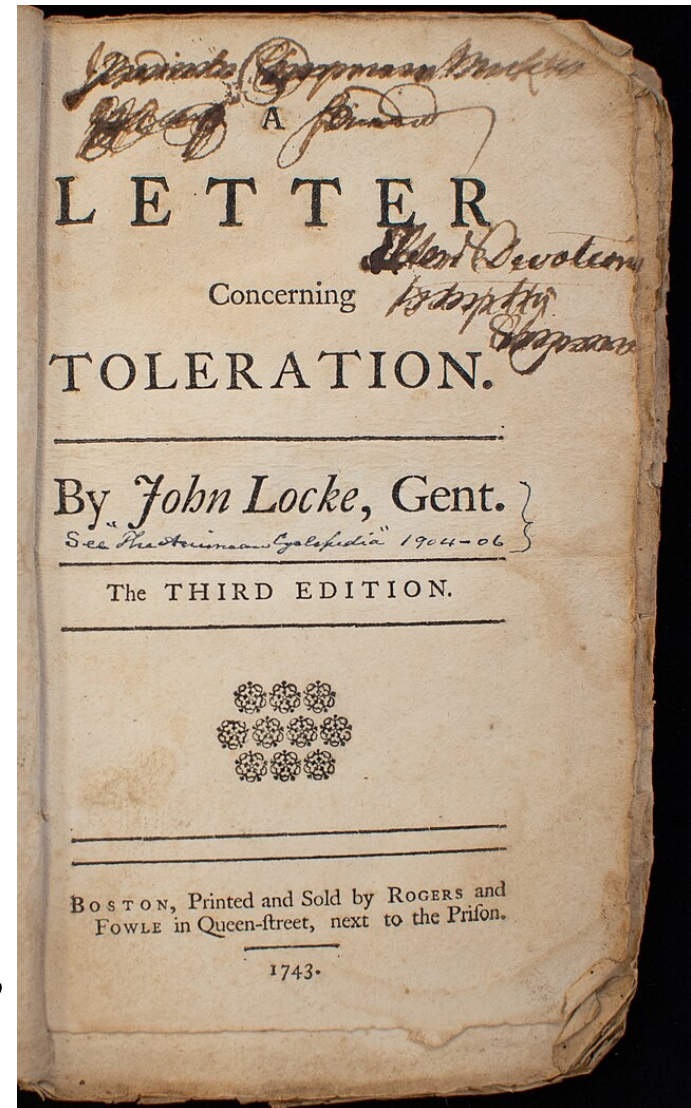
John Locke

- 1632-1704
- Political philosopher,
physician
- Founded “School of
Empiricism”
- Father of “Liberalism.”



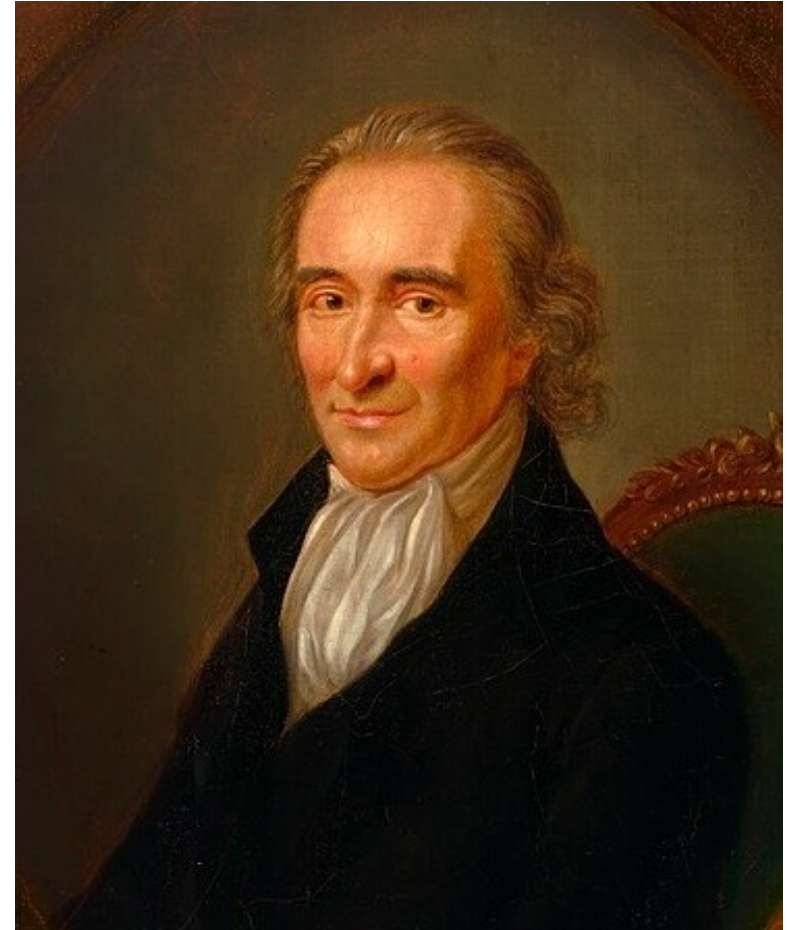
“Letter Concerning Toleration”

- Became a kind of “bible” in the 18th Century
- Argued for the “reasonableness” of Christianity.
- “*Life, liberty, and property*”



Thomas Paine

- 1737-1809
- Political philosopher,
inventor, statesman
- Wrote *Common Sense*,
The American Crisis,
Age of Reason (Deism)
- Promoted Enlightenment-era
“Human Rights”



Religion and the American Revolution

1. Religion as a **Cause** of the Revolution
2. Religion as a **Participant** in the Revolution
3. Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

Before

During

After

Religion as a **Cause** of the Revolution

- Fear of English political control thru Anglicanism
 - Influence of the First Great Awakening
 - Clergy molded public opinion by political sermons
- (Rev. John Witherspoon).

Religion as a **Participant** in the Revolution

- **Congregationalists** – most active, “true Israel”
- **Anglicans** – Loyalists, but most of signers of DoI
- **Methodists** – despised as Loyalists
- **Presbyterians** – 1st to accept DoI
& identify w/Revolution
- **Baptists** – Southern Patriots; R.I. intensely Loyalist
- **Catholics** – non-committal
- **Quakers** – generally pacifists, but Betsy Ross.

During

Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

Positively:

Free-market ecclesiastical society:

- Anglicanism *disestablished* as state religion
- Congregationalism *disestablished* in New England
- Churches organized nationally:
 - Anglican (C. of E.) → *Protestant Episcopal Church*
 - *Methodist Episcopal Church* – Asbury & Coke, superintendents
 - Catholics: Nationally: *Catholic Church in the U.S. of A.*
 - *Presbyterians*: General Assembly w/ John Witherspoon.

After

Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

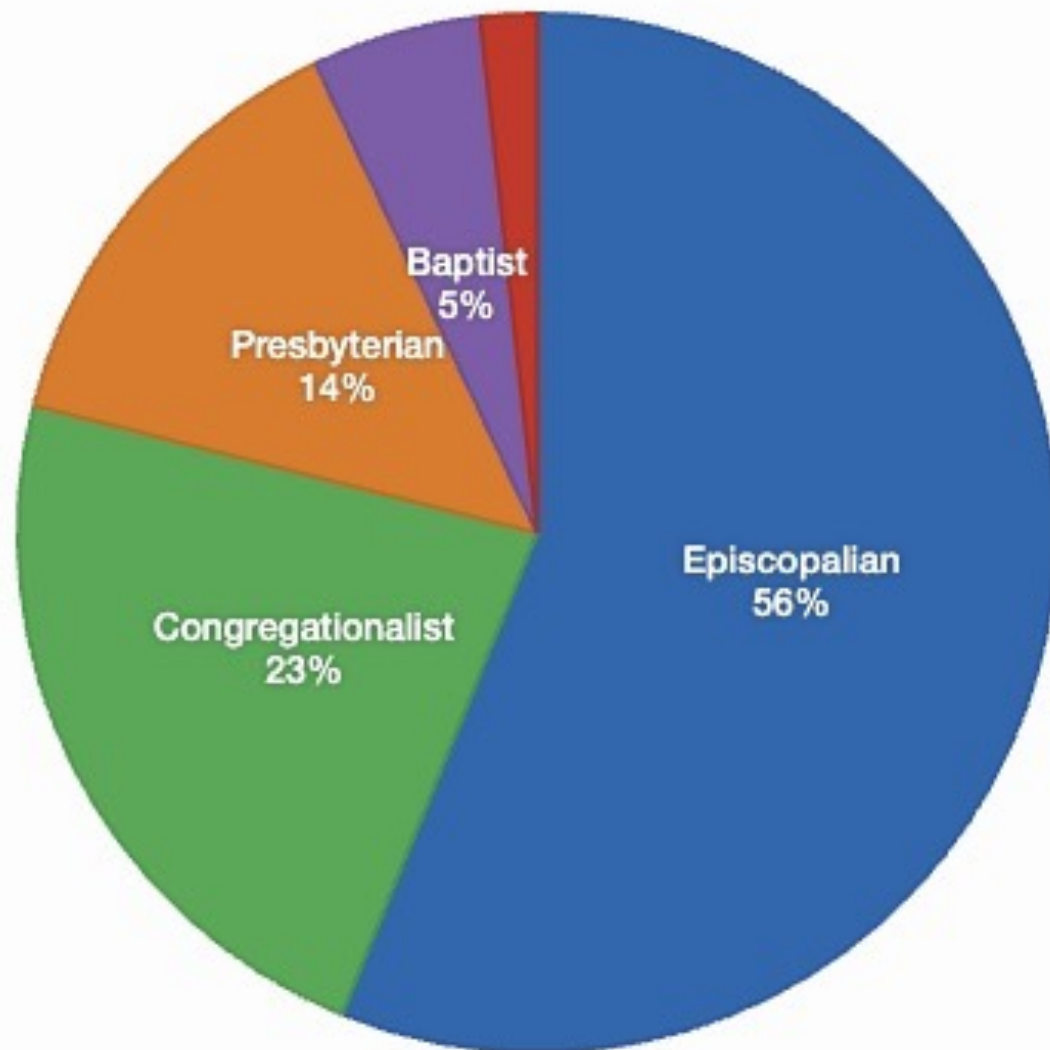
Negatively:

- Religion declined because of attention to War
- Reorganizational process for denominations led to a decline of interest in evangelism
- Stress on rights & worth of the individual led to a decline of Calvinism
- Not *all* American leaders were orthodox religiously: *pluralistic*.

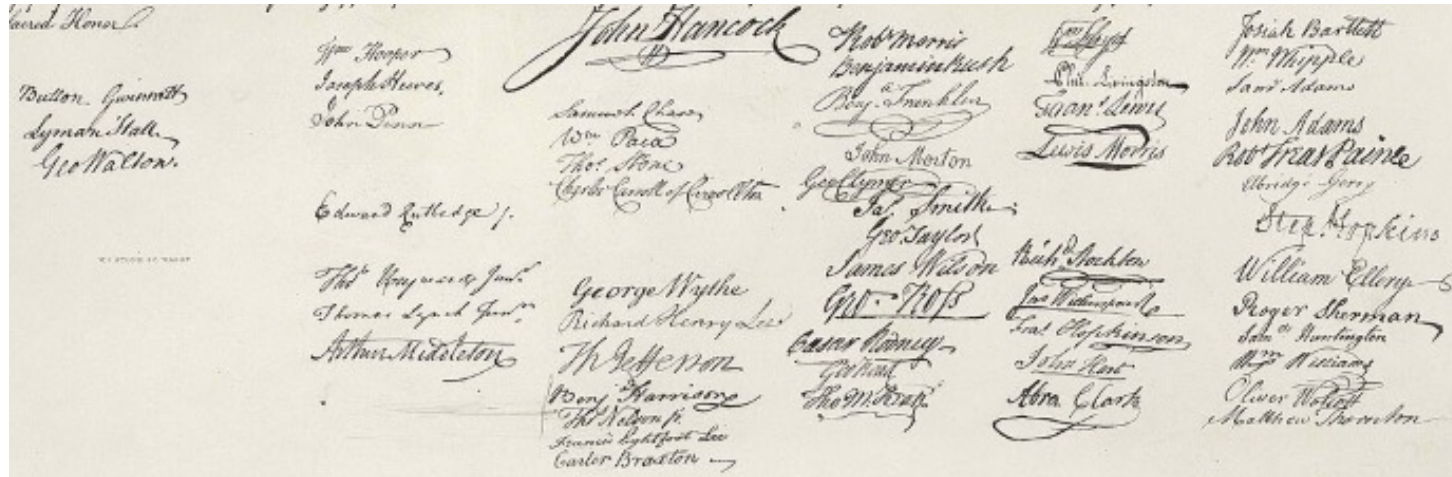
After

56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence

■ Episcopalian 57% ■ Congregationalist 23% ■ Presbyterian 14% ■ Baptist/Quaker 4% ■ Catholic 2%



12 out of 56 Signers were Presbyterian



- Matthew Thornton (NH)
- Philip Livingston (NY)
- William Floyd (NY)
- Benjamin Rush (PA)
- James Smith (PA)
- George Taylor (PA)
- James Wilson (PA)
- Abraham Clark (NJ)
- Richard Stockton (NJ)
- John Hart (NJ)
- **John Witherspoon (NJ)**
- Thomas McKean (DE)

1-Word Summary

• Pilgrims	Separatists
• Puritans	Saints
• Denominations	Inclusive
• Whitefield	Dramatic
• Wesley	Methodism
• Edwards	Glory
• Great Awakening	Fire
• Enlightenment	Rationalism
• Deism	Mechanistic.