

What Does It Mean To Be  
*Presbyterian* in America  
Declaration and Constitution:  
18<sup>th</sup> Century America  
Part 1

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# Objectives

By the end of this session you should be able to

- Identify **Enlightenment** themes: *Deism*
- Understand the relationships between  
**Religion and American Revolutionary War**

# American Church History

Colonial	National	Modern
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1787

1865

Calvinism

Arminianism

Liberalism

Biblicism Rationalism

Subjectivism

Existentialism

Theocentrism

Anthropocentrism

Liberalism

# The Founders

“Most of the Founders  
were Deists”



“Most of the Founders  
were Evangelical  
Christians”

# Deism

- *A system of belief that a transcendent God left his creation to be governed by Natural Laws discernable by reason.*
- “God is absentee”
- No miracles, no revelation, no God-man
- Jesus as Moral Teacher
- Bible as guidebook for ethical life, virtue, piety

# Deism: Origin

- Science: universe operated on fixed principles, hence, is a machine operating by fixed natural laws
  - Copernicus, Galileo (helio-centricism), Newton (gravity)
- Philosophy: if universe runs on fixed laws, then the universe can be known by Reason, without Revelation
  - Francis Bacon – Inductive method (observe vs. authority)
- Theology: man can start with himself and find truth apart from any help
  - Descartes: “I think, therefore I am” (mathematical laws)

# Deism: Spread

- Herbert of Cherbury & David Hume
- Carried into France, picked up by Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot. Strong impetus from French Revolution
- Carried to America by English immigrants and mercenaries (Lafayette)

# Deism: Results

- Contributed to the concept that: *if a ruler failed in responsibility, the people could revolt*
  - Root of American Revolution
- Developed the concept of man's goodness
- Developed theory on destructive criticism of Bible



# The Roots of Modernity and Postmodernity



Locus of Reality	Rationality	Non-Rationality (the Intuitive)
Authority	Reason	Self
Worldview	Progressive Positivistic	Privitism / Individualism
Features	Order / Balance / Symmetry	Randomness / Disorder (despair / anxiety / relativity)

# John Locke

- 1632-1704
- Political philosopher,  
physician
- Empiricist
- Father of “Liberalism”



# “Letter Concerning Toleration”

- Became a “Bible” in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- Argued for the “reasonableness” of Christianity



# Religion and the American Revolution

- Religion as a **Cause** of the Revolution
- Religion as a **Participant** in the Revolution
- Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

# Religion as a **Cause** of the Revolution

- Influence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening
- Fear of English political control thru Anglicanism
- Clergy molded public opinion by political sermons

# Religion as a **Participant** in the Revolution

- Congregationalists – most active
- Anglicans – loyalists, but 2/3 of signers of DoI
- Quakers – generally pacifists, but Betsy Ross
- Presbyterians – 1<sup>st</sup> to accept DoI & identify w/Rev.
- Baptists – intensely loyal, suffered in R.I.
- Catholics – non-committal
- Methodists – despised as loyalists

# Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

## *Positively:*

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

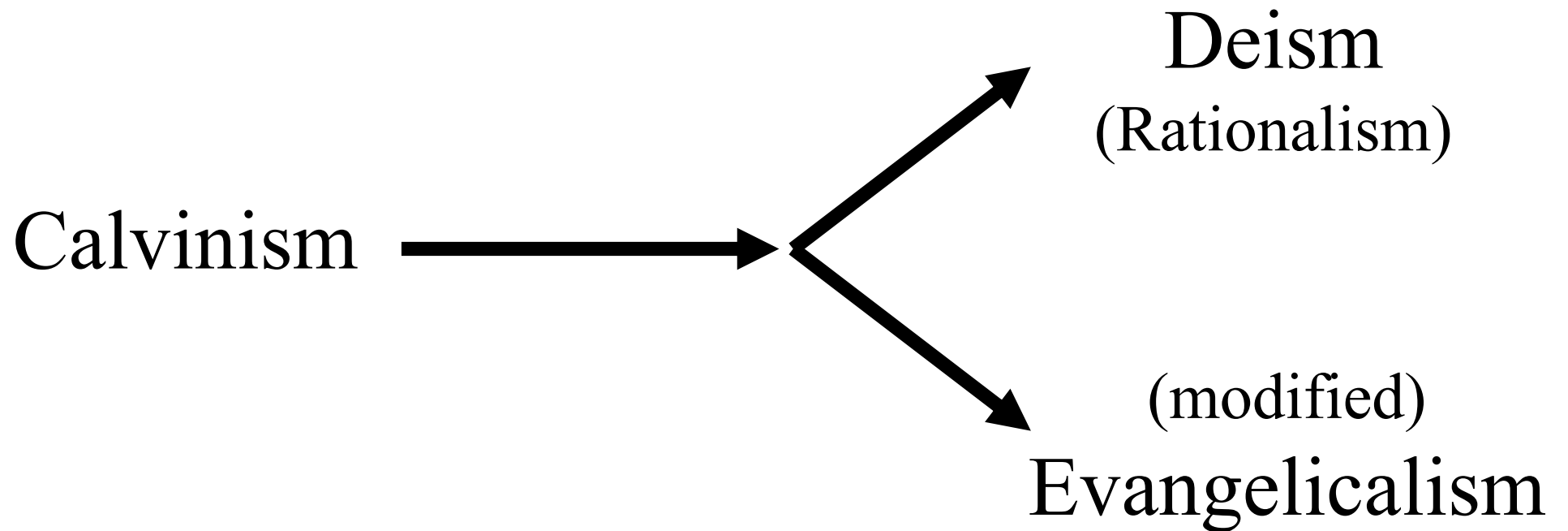
# Religion in **Consequence** of the Revolution

## *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



# Fundamental 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Shift



Sovereign God

Sovereign Man

# 1-Word Summary

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