



Presbyterian Controversies: Three Centuries of Order and Disorder

January 6, 2019

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What is this Class About?

- A survey of Presbyterian History in the US
- A look into the origins, organization, promise, and conflicts since the 1600s
- To give attendees a better understanding of Northridge's background

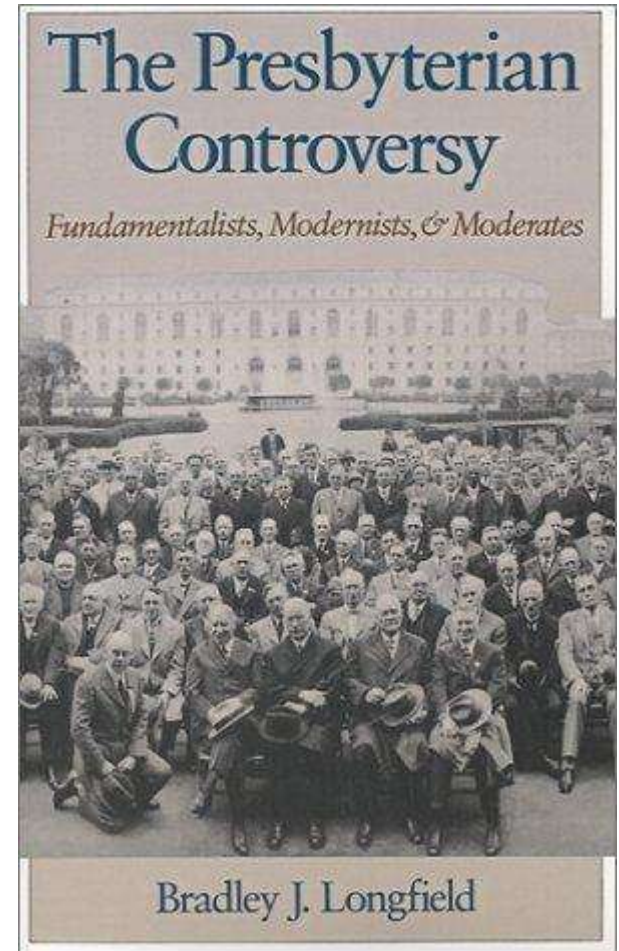


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- James Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians*, 1996
- William Weston, *Presbyterian Pluralism*, 1997
- George Marsden, *The Evangelical Mind & the New School Presbyterian Experience*, 1970.
- Donald Fortson, *Colonial Presbyterianism*, 2006

Bibliography

- Bradley Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*, 1993
- Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the US & Canada*, 1992
- *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 1872-present



Class Schedule

- **January 6** **Origins and Colonial Controversies: 1692-1789**
- January 13 Old/New Schools and the Civil War: 1789-1865
- January 20 The Hazard of New Fortunes: 1865-1918 and
the Battle for Princeton: 1918-1938
- January 27 Old and New Streams: 1938-Present

Definitions

- Calvinism
 - Common but narrow term-Calvin's followers (1565-1620)
 - Synod of Dort (1618-1619) often summarized up in TULIP:
 - **T**otal Depravity
 - **U**nconditional Election
 - **L**imited Atonement
 - **I**rresistible Grace
 - **P**erseverance of the Saints

Definitions

- Reformed
 - Initially applied to all Protestants (“like Lutherans”)
 - Later narrowed to Zwinglian-Calvinist party
 - Broadly covered German, Dutch, French (Huguenot) Reformed branches
 - Presbyterian = English Reformed
 - Refers to distinctive doctrine and practices:
 - Covenant theology
 - Polity
 - Lay leadership

Definitions

- Presbyterian
 - Dominate reformed churches in Scotland & Ulster
 - Congregationalist strand in England and regions of the United States
 - Greek term for elder: *presbyter*
 - Bottom up power structure
 - Congregations govern by session
 - Churches governed by presbyteries
 - Presbyteries governed by synods/general assembly
 - Delegated rights for each level
 - Clergy Equality=Clerk is the highest position of leadership

European Foundations



Europe 1500



John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Born in Noyon France.
- Raised to be a priest, became an attorney instead
- Gives two accounts of his conversion: one sudden, one gradual
- Fled from Paris in 1533 following conflict between Catholic reformers and conservatives at College Royale



John Calvin (1509-1564)

- Began work on Institutes of Christian Religion in 1536 while in Basel, Switzerland
- By 1536 had left France for good, aligning with Reformers
- Stopped in Geneva, intending to stay one night, was persuaded to stay and reform the church by William Farel
- First effort at church reform in Geneva did not go well, Calvin left for Strasbourg in September 1538

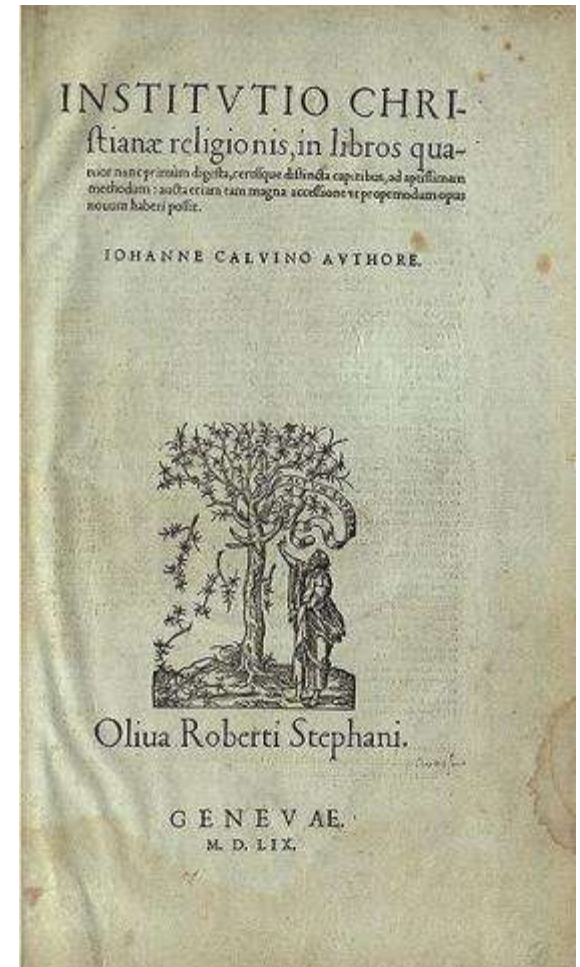


John Calvin & Geneva: 1541-1564

- Was persuaded to return to Geneva by the City Council in 1541
- The Council passed Calvin's ordinances and approved the revised catechism
- Preached over 2,500 sermons
- Conflict within Geneva
- By 1555 Geneva had become center of Reformed scholarship and sheltered many Protestants from around Europe.
- Died of overwork and stress 1564

John Calvin: Theology

- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (definitive French edition 1560)
 - Exegetical and systematic theology
 - Augustinian emphasis on the sovereignty of God, predestination, and election
 - Austere worship meaning:
 - Elements in worship may only be those found in Scripture (contrast to Luther)
 - Reformed according to the “Word of God” i.e. psalms only!
 - Four bare walls and a sermon



John Calvin: Theology

- Marks of the True Church
 - First, “the word of God sincerely preached and heard” (Institutes IV 1)
 - Secondly, “wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ” (Institutes IV 9)
 - Calvin’s followers (including Knox and Beza) added a third mark: “ it practices church discipline for correcting faults” (Belgic Confession Article 29)
 - This third mark is often a source of heated dispute and debate

Reformation: 1555



John Knox (1514-1572)

- Trained as a priest
- Conversion in 1546
- Captured by French troops in 1547
- Served as a galley slave for two years
- Released in 1549 and exiled to England until 1554
- Fled to Geneva in 1554 remained until 1559



John Knox: Return to Scotland

- Returns to Scotland in 1559
- Scottish nobility reject Catholicism in 1560
- Knox leads efforts to write First Scots Confession
- Began preaching at St. Giles in Edinburgh
- At age of 50 married 17 year old
- Dies in 1572



Knox's Theology



- Importance of Church discipline
 - Third mark of the true church
 - Martin Bucer in contrast to Anabaptists
 - “The gospel rightly preached and and the sacraments rightly administered presumes church discipline rightly practiced”

English Reformations: Henry VIII

- The King's Great Matter
 - Henry proclaimed head of Church of England in 1534
 - Factions within Church of England
 - Henry swung back and forth
- Successors
 - Henry VIII dies in 1547, succeed by Edward VI



English Reformations: Elizabethan Bargain

- Edward VI (1547-1553)
 - Henry's only son, strong Protestant
 - With Thomas Cranmer developed Book of Common Prayer (1549)
- Mary I (1553-1558)
 - Daughter of Catherine Aragon
 - Devout Catholic, sought to undo Protestant Reformation
- Elizabeth I (1558-1603)
 - Daughter of Anne Boleyn
 - Protestant theology, Catholic worship

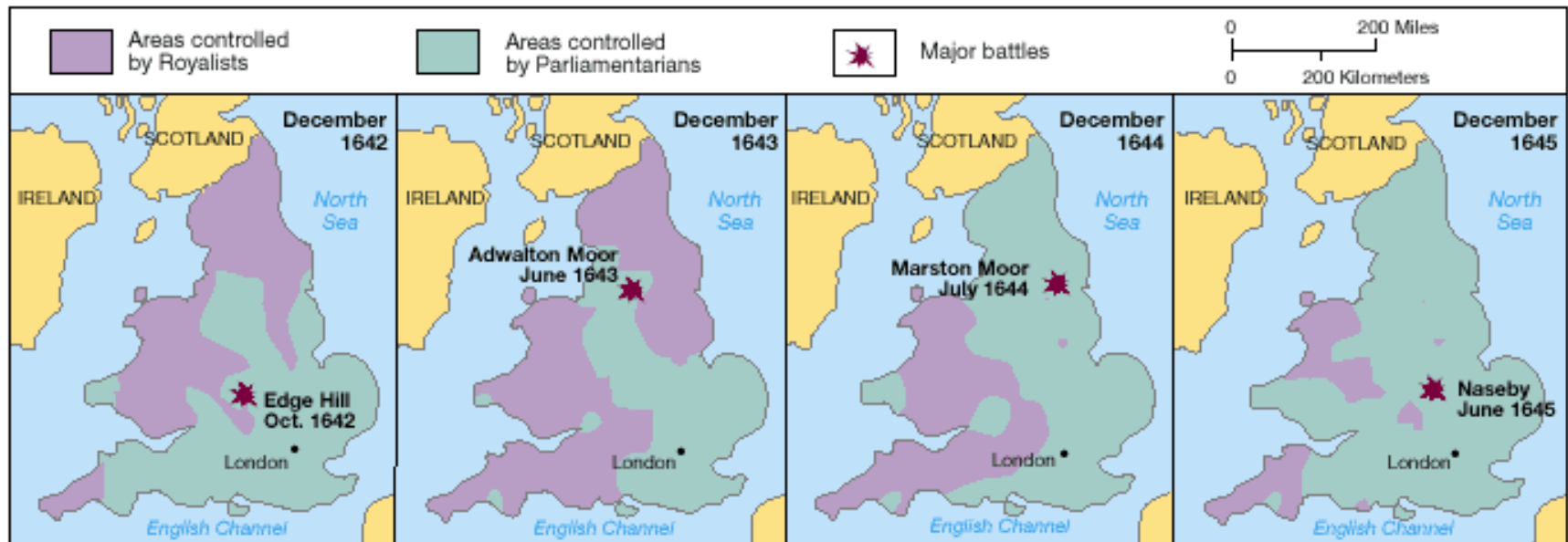



Stuarts & Civil War: 1603-1649

- James I & Charles I
 - Both sympathetic to Catholicism
 - Charles I (1625-1649) ruled without Parliament
 - Warfare in Scotland
 - Long Parliament
 - English Civil War and the rise of the Roundheads
 - Execution of Charles in 1649



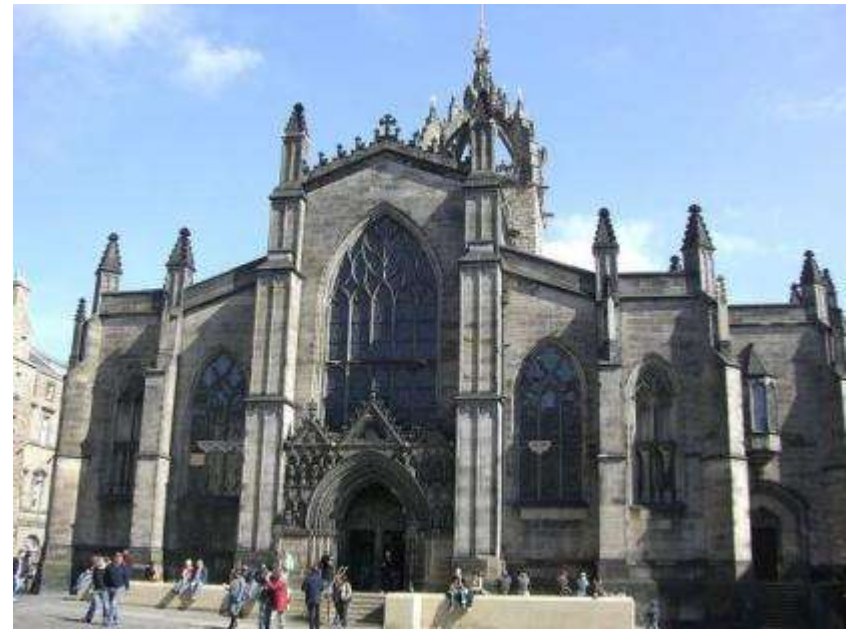
English Civil War: 1642-1648



 The English Civil War: The maps show the gradual triumph of the parliamentarians whose control of London and the coastal areas gave them a profound logistical advantage during the wars.

Scottish Reformation

- Stuart Dynasty Attempts to enforce episcopacy and prayer books in 1638
- Unifies Charles I's enemies
- Use of prayer book causes a riot in Edinburgh
 - National Covenant (1638)
 - Solemn League & Covenant (1643)



Westminster Assembly (1643-1649)

- Restructuring the Church of England
- Called by Parliament in July 1643
- Developed *Westminster Standards* (1646-47)
 - What is the chief and highest end of humankind?
To glorify God and fully enjoy God forever (Q&A 1)
- Larger & Shorter Catechisms

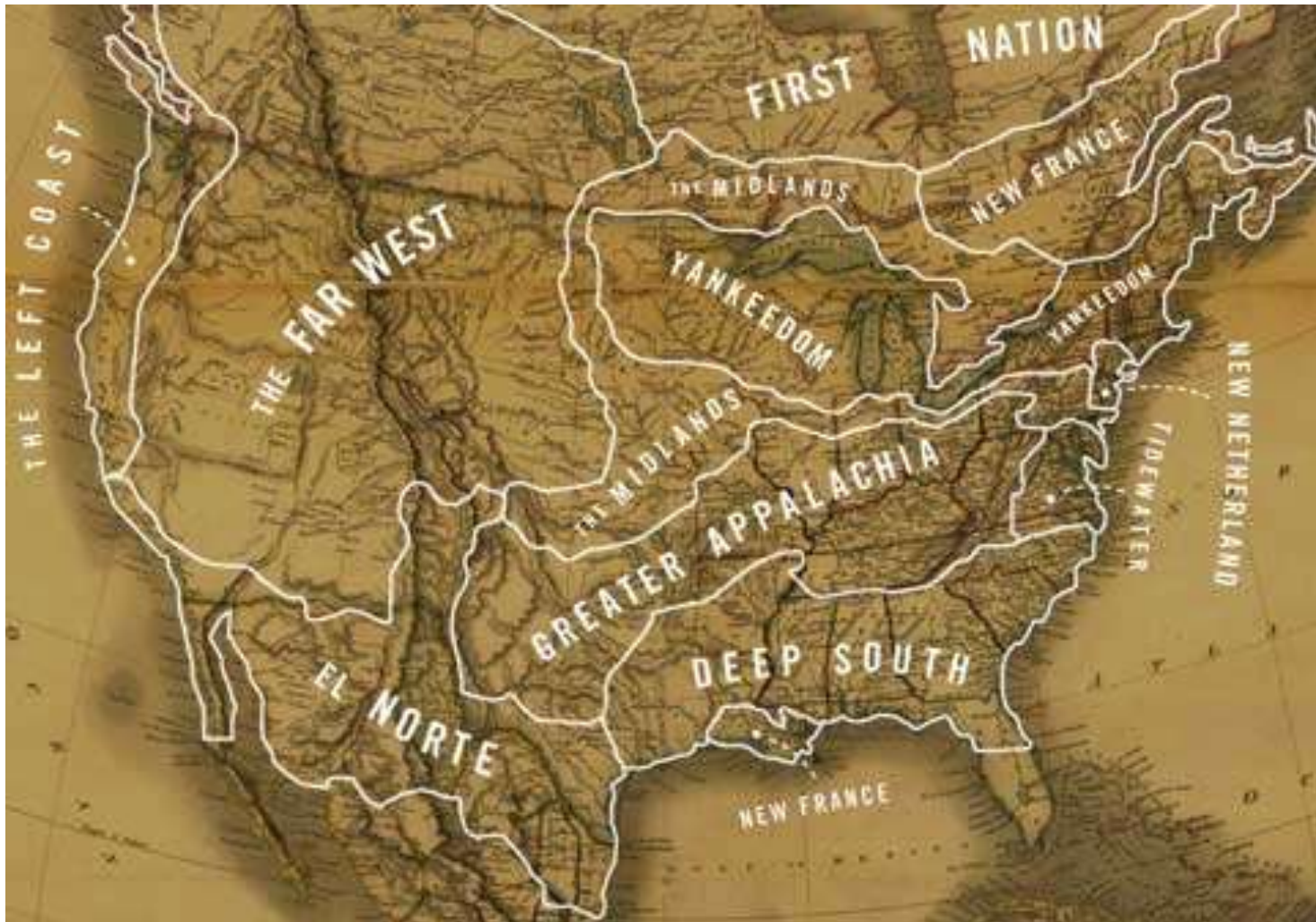
Westminster Assembly: Impact

- Comprehensive Reformed doctrinal statement of the Reformation
- Begins with Bible rather than Theology
- Standard of Presbyterian congregations in the American Colonies.
 - Westminster Confession was only confession of the Presbyterian Church until the late 1800s

Colonial America



Cultural Regions of the United States



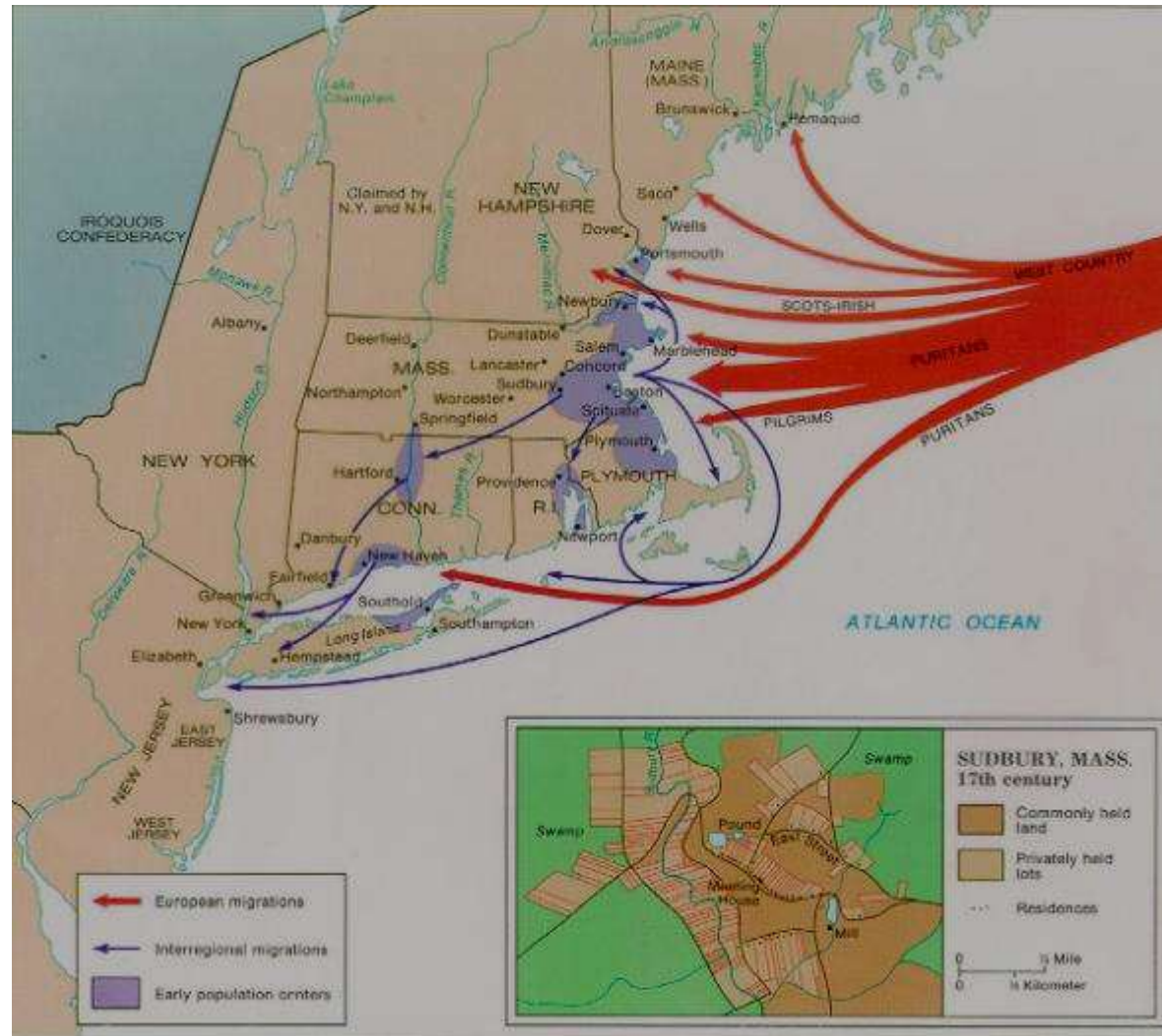
The Four Folkways

Region	East Anglia	South/West	North Midlands	Borderlands
American	New England	Virginia	Delaware Valley	Backcountry
Period of migration	1629-1640	1642-1675	1675-1715	1717-1775
Size of migration	21,000	45,000	23,000	250,000
Control of migration	Corporate	Royal Colony	Proprietary	Fragmented
Denomination	Congregational	Anglican	Friends	Presbyterian
Residence	65%	35%	40%	30%
Sex ratio	140	500	250	160
Families	90%	20%	50%	70%
Naming	Biblical	Norman/Teuton	Mixed Biblical	Saints
Male domination	Moderate	High	Moderate	High

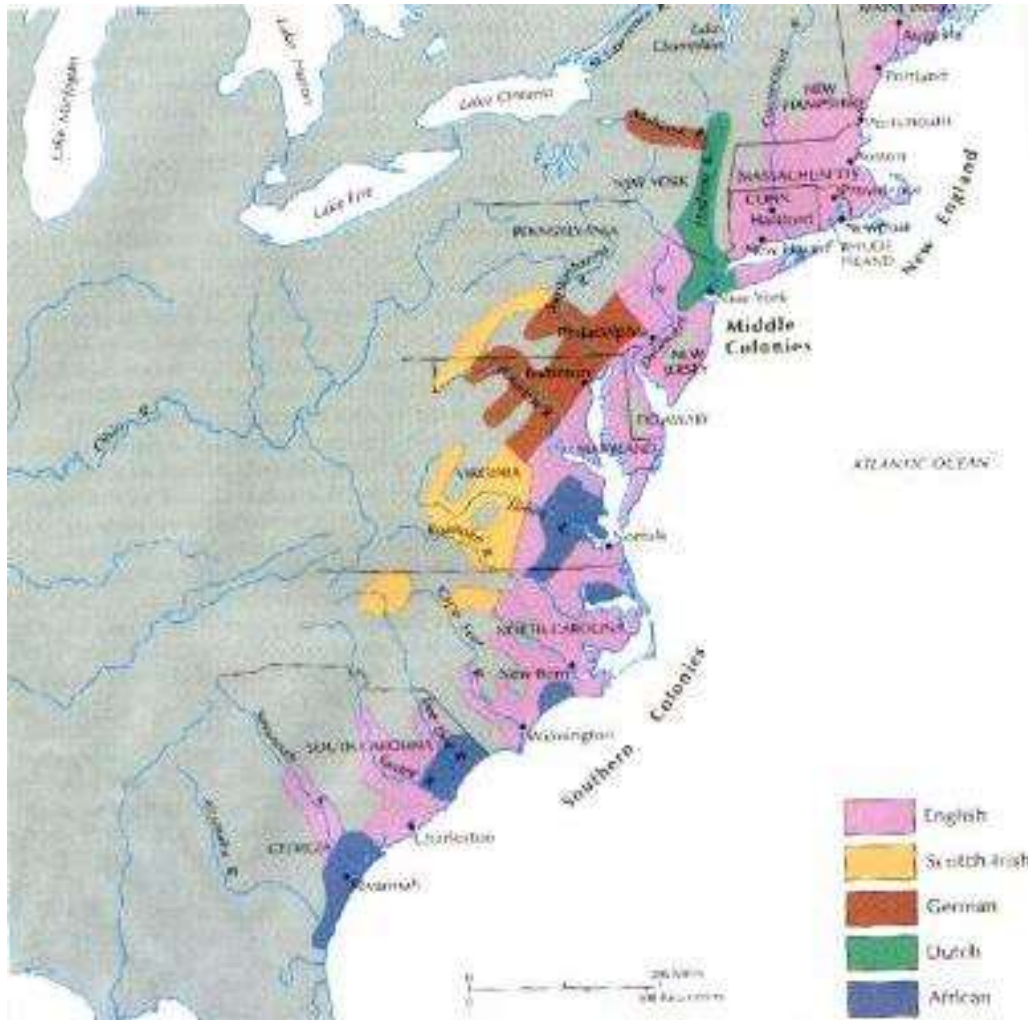
Influences: Puritan & Scots

- Early Presbyterian congregations on Long Island
- Puritan (Congregationalist) New England Next door
- Middle Colonies were heterogeneous in population
 - Dutch
 - Scots
 - English
 - Welsh
- Scottish Presbyterians v. English Puritans
 - Theological tensions over adherence to the Westminster standards-Scots were stricter

The Puritan Migration



Scottish Migration



Francis Makemie (1658-1708)

- Immigrated from Ireland
1682
- Sent as missionary to
Rehobeth Maryland
- Worked for religious liberty
in Maryland and Virginia
 - Secured Act of Toleration for
non-Anglicans in 1707
 - Presbyterianism never
received official state support



Formation of American Presbyterian Church

- First Presbytery meeting in 1706
 - Presbytery of Philadelphia
 - Moderated by Makemie
 - First Synod 10 years later
 - Bottom up power: Presbyteries have power of ordination from the start
- Mixture of English and Scottish traditions
- No adopted doctrinal statement in 1706
 - Wariness of divisions confessions caused back in England and Scotland

Old World Context: Scotland

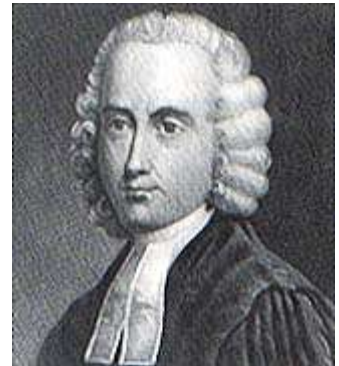
- By 1706, Westminster Confession & Catechisms were widely accepted as doctrinal statements
- Problems arose when ministers were expected to subscribe to these documents
- 1693 Scottish Parliament required all ministers to subscribe to Westminster Confession
- 1696 Church of Scotland stated that “no minister may write or publicly speak anything contrary to or inconsistent with the confession”

Old World Context: Ireland

- In Ireland, Synod of Ulster required ministers to subscribe to Westminster in 1689
 - Further tightened in 1705
 - Reaction among Irish Presbyterian clergy, who formed Belfast Society in opposition
 - Tensions rose steadily until 1720
- Pacific Act of 1720
 - Allowed for ministers to declare “scruples” with Westminster Confession
 - Did not please either factions in Irish Church
 - Dispute weighted heavily among American Presbyterians in the 1720s

Growth of Colonial Presbyterian Church

- Three Presbyteries by 1717 (New Castle, Philadelphia, and Donegal)
- In 1727 John Thompson of New Castle requested that the Synod of Philadelphia require candidates to subscribe to Westminster Confession
- Opposed by a number of presbyters, including the influential Jonathan Dickinson of Philadelphia, who argued that subscription will not protect from corruption in doctrine
 - “Tho subscription may shut the door of the church communion against many serious and excellent servants of Christ who conscientiously scruple it; yet its never like to detect hypocrites, nor keep concealed hereticks out of the church.”

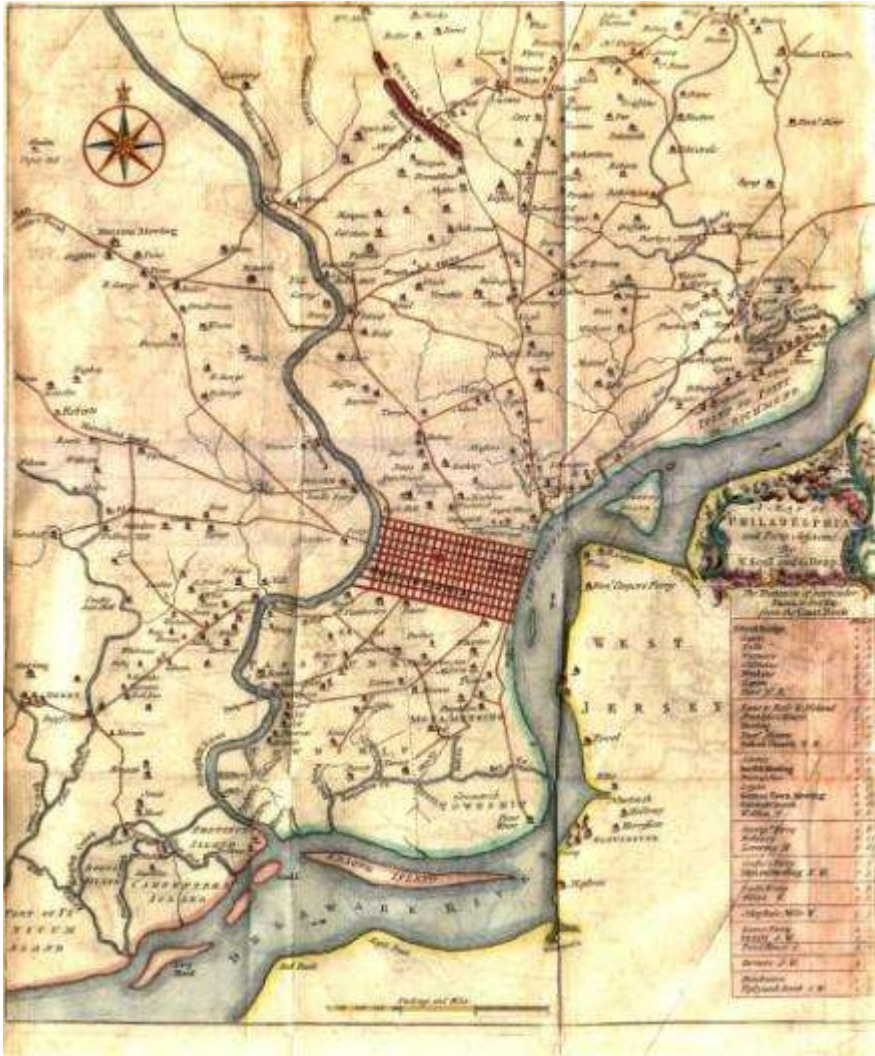


Synod of Philadelphia: 1729

- 27 members showed up, work concluded September 19, 1729
- Committee of Eight (included Dickinson and Andrews)
- Committee pushed for freedom of conscience while pushing for formal creed.



Philadelphia Region



Adopting Act (1729)

- How to ensure orthodoxy of candidates for ministry?
 - Scottish: Require candidates to declare obedience and submit to Westminster Standards
 - English/Puritan: Presbytery to examine candidates closely on personal views to prevent ecclesiastical tyranny
 - Shades of present situation
- Adopting Act
 - **Required** “agreement in and approbation of Westminster Standards in all essential and necessary articles”
 - Candidates could declare “**scruples**” in some matters
 - Presbyteries that approved candidates by ruling on scruples could be challenged at the Synod level
 - Many, many battles over what was “essential and necessary”
 - Loose v. Strict Standards

Great Awakening (1735-1742)

- Jonathan Edwards: Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God
 - New England's theology of revival, evangelism, and mission
- George Whitefield: Revival Tours across the American colonies
 - Calvinistic revivals
- Theodore Frelinghuysen
 - Dutch Reformed revivals



Tennent Family

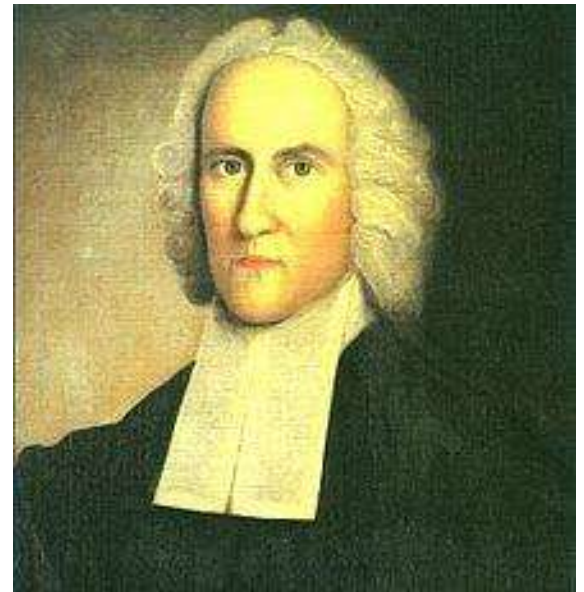
- William Tennent: Irish Presbyterian who founded Log Cabin College
- Son Gilbert Tennent influenced by Frelinghuysen
 - Began itinerant preaching 1736
 - Preached without following parish boundaries
 - Local ministers questioned Gilbert's ministry credentials
 - Gilbert preached "Danger of an Unconverted Ministry"
 - Declared opponents unconverted and said that these ministers did not show marks of the true church
 - Later apologized for sermon in 1757

Interpreting the Adopting Act

- What was “essential and necessary?”
- Confusion already by 1730
 - The Hemphill case: plagiarizing sermons from Arians!
 - 1735 requirement that all ministers from Ireland would need to subscribe and publicly state scruples
- Synod of 1736
 - Conservative interpretation of 1729

Old Side-New Side Split

- 1741
 - Presbyterians split into Old Side (anti-revival) and New Side (pro-revival) factions
 - Old Side Presbyteries: Philadelphia & New Castle
 - New Side Presbyteries: New Brunswick & Long Island (with New York eventually joining)



Old Side/New Side

- Theological divisions
 - Revival as one major issue
 - Order as crucial problem
 - Moderation, uniformity, and control
 - Itinerant preachers
- Polity divisions
 - Adopting Act
 - Questioning the form of order
 - Educational requirements

Old Side-New Side Issues

- Old Side wanted church order upheld, the Adopting Act followed, and an educated ministry
- New Side focused on need urgent ministry, testimony of personal conversion
- Some Scottish/Puritan divisions
 - New Englanders spoke for greater inclusion and the admissibility of scruples
 - Scotch-Irish pushed for stronger doctrinal adherence

Old Side-New Side Reunion

- Rapid growth of New Side churches (triple the size of Old Side churches)
- Reunion efforts began in 1754, finalized in 1758
- Tennent's apology (1749)
- Candidates for the ministry would have to demonstrate an "experimental acquaintance" with the gospel (New Side)
- Proper education required for all ministers (formation of Princeton University in 1746)
- Candidates needed to affirm Westminster Standards and could declare scruples
- Great Awakening declared a "blessing from God"

Questions?



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