

## Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening in Colonial America

Starting in the 1730s, many American colonists experienced a huge Christian religious revival. Known as the “Great Awakening,” this revival spread new ideas about religion and may have influenced the American Revolution.

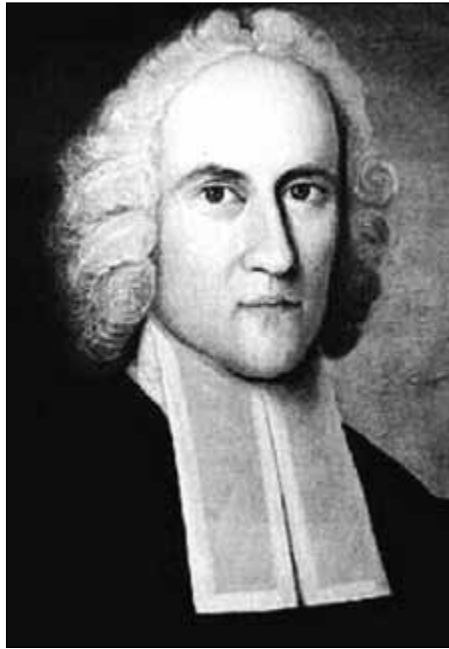
Jonathan Edwards was born in 1703 in the English colony of Connecticut. He was the son and grandson of famous Puritan ministers.

Jonathan went to a college (later called Yale) to prepare to be a pastor. He graduated at 17 and soon after had an intense spiritual experience, which the Puritans called a “conversion.”

Within a few years, Edwards became an ordained minister and was married. His grandfather, who was famous for leading local religious revivals, died in 1729. Edwards replaced him as minister of the Puritan Congregational Church in Northampton, a town on the Connecticut River in western Massachusetts.

Edwards soon became controversial. He ended his grandfather’s practice of permitting “unconverted” persons to participate in Holy Communion, a sacrament that recalls the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. Edwards sided with those Puritans who believed that only converted Christians could take communion and hope to avoid the terrors of hell.

In the winter of 1733–34, the behavior of the unmarried young men and women of Northampton troubled Edwards. They were meeting together at night, “frolicking” at the tavern, and not going to church meetings. When a young man suddenly died of an illness, Edwards seized the moment.



*Jonathan Edwards (1703–58), a minister from Connecticut, led a religious revival that sparked the Great Awakening in New England. (Library of Congress)*

In his funeral sermon, Edwards warned that even those in the prime of life could die at any moment. Unless they were spiritually born again by accepting Jesus in their hearts, he preached, they would surely fall into the eternal fires of hell. Edwards spoke calmly, but intensely, and the young people listened. Some cried out, wept, and fainted at his words.

Soon, Edwards was holding prayer meetings just for the young people of the town. Many asked him, “What must I do to be saved?” The Great Awakening had begun.

### The Evangelicals

The Christian idea of being born again through a conversion process had its roots in the Protestant Reformation in Europe. The Reformation occurred 200 years before the time of Jonathan Edwards. John Calvin, a Protestant Reformation leader in Switzerland,

taught that God had already decided (predestined) who would go to heaven and who would go to hell. No one, however, could be sure of his or her fate.

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## Religion and Society

This edition of *Bill of Rights in Action* examines religious issues. The first article looks at the Great Awakening, a religious movement in colonial America that may have affected the American Revolution. The second article explores historical origins of the split between Muslim Sunnis and Shiites, which still divides Muslims today. The last article examines the controversy over whether the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violates the First Amendment’s establishment clause.

**U.S. History:** Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening in Colonial America

**World History:** Islam Divided: The Shiites and Sunnis

**Current Issues:** Should We Take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?

Even so, Calvin believed that people might receive signs that God had saved them from eternal damnation. Calvin thought that one such sign was the conversion of a sinner. This happened when the person sincerely and fully opened his or her heart to Jesus and experienced a “new birth.” In return, God saved the converted individual from hell. Calvin called this a “covenant with God.”

Calvin’s doctrine of conversion became a central belief of the Puritans, Presbyterians, and other Protestants in Britain and America. Calvin believed that it would probably take a lifetime for a person to become converted. This involved first recognizing one’s sinfulness, experiencing the inner joy of Christ’s love, and then spending years studying the Bible, attending church, and living a moral life.

Around 1700, some Puritans and others began to preach that a sinner could be converted, born again, and saved from hell in one spiritual moment. Known as evangelicals, these Puritans emphasized not only sudden conversion, but also a strict reading of the Bible and dramatic preaching as well as moral behavior.

In 1700, most American ministers were religious scholars who used reason to instruct their church members. The evangelicals, however, tried to appeal to people’s emotions.

Protestants following the ideas of John Calvin believed that God created special “seasons” when outpourings of God’s spirit awakened sinners to the danger to their souls. These Christian awakenings, also called revivals, had taken place before in Europe and America.

Evangelical ministers like Jonathan Edwards expected a massive Christian awakening similar to the Protestant Reformation. They thought this revival would start in America and sweep the world.

### **The Awakenings Begin**

When signs of an awakening appeared, evangelical ministers would “preach up” the opportunity of sinners to save their souls. The ministers aimed to persuade the unconverted to open their hearts to God’s spirit passing over the land before it was too late.

Both scholarly and evangelical ministers believed colonial America in the 1730s was ripe for a spiritual revival. A majority in many churches remained unconverted. Jonathan Edwards wrote that it was “a far more degenerate time . . . than ever before.”

In the spring and summer of 1735, Jonathan Edwards was leading the Northampton awakening, which was rapidly spreading to other towns. Hundreds from all classes and ages stepped forward to be born again and saved from hell.

Edwards wrote a stirring account of the Northampton awakening, which inspired evangelical ministers in both America and England. In New England, people called these ministers “New Light” preachers.

Meanwhile, a recent mass migration of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians from Northern Ireland fueled another awakening in the Middle Colonies. Gilbert Tennent, an evangelical Presbyterian minister in New Jersey, had experienced a sudden conversion as a youth on his voyage to America. Tennent’s emotional preaching style with his vivid descriptions of the agonies of hell appealed to the young and shocked the older generation. Soon, hundreds of Presbyterians along with Lutherans, Baptists, and other Protestants were converting to save their souls.

Tennent discovered an ironic secret among many Protestant pastors. While most were highly educated and knowledgeable about the Bible, some, perhaps even a majority, had never experienced a “new birth” and thus remained unconverted.

Tennent attacked the unconverted ministers as being “blind as Moles, and dead as Stones.” He demanded to know how this “Ministry of Dead Men” could possibly guide others through conversion and spiritual rebirth. He told his listeners to leave these ministers and seek out converted ones. Tennent’s view of unconverted ministers often divided churches and communities where he preached.

Thus, in the 1730s, two separate awakenings were underway—one in New England and another in the Middle Colonies. But they were not connected, and the South remained untouched by any awakening.

### **“The Grand Itinerant”**

Another evangelical, George Whitefield, helped spread the awakening throughout the colonies. Whitefield grew up in England, the son of an innkeeper. At age 21, he had a conversion experience and joined the emerging evangelical movement. He became an ordained preacher of the Anglican Church, the official church of England.

Whitefield revolutionized evangelical preaching in England. He preached to large crowds in open fields and city streets. He delivered sermons without reading

them. He moved about the countryside, ignoring the parish boundaries of the Anglican Church. This made him an “itinerant,” or traveling, preacher.

More than anything else, Whitefield spoke with deep emotion in a loud and riveting voice about the need for sinners to convert to Christ in order to save their souls. His listeners often screamed, rolled on the ground, and fainted when he described burning in hell forever.

Whitefield promoted his preaching by putting up posters and placing notices in newspapers in advance of his speaking. He even had a press agent. Within a year, many in England and America knew him as “The Grand Itinerant.”

In 1739, at age 25, the now famous Whitefield made a well-publicized tour of the American colonies to unify and expand the local awakenings. Benjamin Franklin reported in his newspaper that Whitefield preached to thousands in Philadelphia with stunning effect.

Whitefield then traveled to other Middle Colonies and into the South. He preached every day to men and women of all Christian faiths, ages, and classes, even to slaves. Almost everywhere he went, his emotional sermons about the love of God and the horrors of hell produced hundreds of conversions.

Next, Whitefield went to Boston where both evangelical New Light and scholarly Old Light ministers welcomed him. He preached to 20,000 people on Boston Common. He visited other parts of New England and finally met with Jonathan Edwards at Northampton. Whitefield had read Edwards’s description of the Northampton revival. In 1740, Whitefield reignited it.

The Great Awakening was now occurring throughout most of the colonies. Only the South and frontier areas lagged behind in the religious excitement. Whitefield’s work seemingly finished, “The Grand Itinerant” returned home to England in 1741.

### **New Light vs. Old Light**

Toward the end of his spectacular revival tour of America, Whitefield joined with Gilbert Tennent in criticizing unconverted ministers. This issue would ultimately



*George Whitefield (1714–70), an English preacher, helped spread the Great Awakening throughout the colonies. (Library of Congress)*

undermine the good feeling that Whitefield had brought to the revival.

Whitefield’s tour of the colonies had motivated other evangelical itinerant preachers. As they traveled about, these New Light preachers often held their meetings in competition with the regular town ministers. The town ministers became resentful and accused the itinerants of being “enthusiasts,” those who provoked hysterical reactions among the people.

James Davenport was probably the most famous enthusiast preacher of this time. After George Whitefield returned to England, Davenport abandoned his Congregational Church on Long Island (New York) and took up

itinerant preaching in Connecticut.

Davenport’s style of preaching was highly emotional. He even imitated the agony of Christ on the cross.

He drew large crowds and brought about many conversions, especially among the poor. He also spent much time attacking unconverted ministers as “wolves in Sheep’s clothing.”

Connecticut, like most other colonies, had an official established church. In that colony, the government supported the Congregational Church with public taxes that paid the salaries of its pastors.

The Connecticut colonial legislature, dominated by the Old Light establishment, looked upon Davenport and other itinerant preachers as a threat to the Congregational Church. In the spring of 1742, the legislature passed a law that prohibited itinerant preaching by anyone from outside the colony.

When Davenport continued preaching in Connecticut, authorities arrested him. At his two-day trial before the colonial legislature, Davenport shouted out at his accusers, “Lord, strike them!” The legislature found him “under the influence of enthusiastical impressions and impulses,” declared him insane, and deported him back to Long Island.

The following year, Davenport returned to Connecticut. He told his followers to throw certain religious books and “idols” like jewelry and fancy clothing into a



bonfire. This episode was too much even for other New Light preachers who, like Jonathan Edwards, feared Davenport was discrediting the entire revival movement.

By 1743, Old Light critics of the revival, such as the Reverend Charles Chauncy of Boston, had provoked a major debate on the revival. Chauncy charged that it was just a lot of “noise” and “enthusiastic Heat.” Others, however, pointed to thousands of conversions and a change in the moral behavior of many.

Back in Northampton where it all began, Jonathan Edwards announced in 1749 that unconverted parents could no longer have their children baptized in his church. This divided the church, which still included many who had not converted.

The following year, the Northampton congregation voted to dismiss Edwards. By then, the Great Awakening had ended in most colonies.

### **The Aftermath**

In the aftermath of the Great Awakening, hundreds of new, mainly evangelical, churches formed after separating from the established churches. The members of these new churches demanded the right to worship and preach as they wanted. They also strongly objected to public taxes and laws that supported the established churches.

The Great Awakening created greater religious diversity and led to greater tolerance of differing religions. After the American Revolution, this tolerance was enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . .”

Some historians say that the Great Awakening was a “rehearsal” for the American Revolution. They point out that revivals used colonial newspapers, pamphlets, circulating letters, outdoor rallies, and radical oratory to create an American mass movement. Later, Sam Adams, Patrick Henry, and others would use these relatively new communication techniques to unite the colonies against the king.

Those supporting the rehearsal theory also argue that evangelical preachers like Tennent and Davenport challenged the authority of the colonial political and religious ruling class. The New Light preachers taught Americans to decide things based on their individual consciences rather than blindly accept the will of the rich and powerful.

### **“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”**

In the summer of 1741, after George Whitefield had visited him, Jonathan Edwards delivered his most famous sermon. He urged sinners to run for their lives to Christ before it was too late. In the excerpt below, Edwards preached that only a merciful God was preventing the unconverted sinner from immediately falling into the fires of hell.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors [hates] you, and is dreadfully provoked; . . . he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire. . . . O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: ’tis a great furnace of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell: you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it. . . . But this is the dismal fate of every soul in the congregation, that has not been born again. . . .

Hundreds of itinerant preachers carried this message of democratic individualism to the poor and powerless: women, servants, slaves, those without property, those who were uneducated, and even children. Without realizing it, say those favoring the rehearsal idea, the revivalists were preparing ordinary Americans to eventually take political matters into their own hands. Thus, the Great Awakening planted the seeds of the rebellion against England in 1776.

Those who reject the idea that the Great Awakening was a rehearsal for revolution say that it was not a true mass movement. Even after Whitefield’s tour of the colonies, most revival activity remained in New England, parts of New Jersey, and some large cities like Philadelphia. It hardly touched the Southern colonies at all.

Those opposing the rehearsal idea point out that no revolutionary leaders arose at this time. Even radicals like Davenport were more concerned about saving souls than changing the political system. He simply ignored the political authorities and the laws they passed against itinerant preaching. There were no outcries or uprisings against the king. The colonial governments remained in the hands of the established church and propertied classes.

Finally, opponents of the rehearsal idea stress that the revival faded in the late 1740s leaving few long-lasting effects. New issues such as customs duties on imports, the quartering of the king's troops, and taxation without representation emerged after 1760 to anger the colonists. The Great Awakening may have stirred up a lot of people, but only with regard to the state of their souls.

The debate continues today. Historians are divided over whether the Great Awakening was a rehearsal for the American Revolution.

### For Discussion and Writing

1. Who were the main leaders of the Great Awakening?
2. How did the New Light evangelical preachers differ in their practice of Christianity from the Old Light ministers?
3. Do you think James Davenport should have been arrested, tried, and deported for breaking the Connecticut law against itinerant preaching? Why?
4. What effects did the Great Awakening have on the colonies?

### For Further Reading

Brockway, Robert. *A Wonderful Work of God, Puritanism and the Great Awakening*. Bethlehem, Penn.: Lehigh University Press, 2003.

Marsden, George. *Jonathan Edwards, A Life*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003.

Nash, Gary B. *The Urban Crucible, Social Change, Political Consciousness and the Origins of the American Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.

## A C T I V I T Y

### A Rehearsal for Revolution?

Was the Great Awakening a rehearsal for the American Revolution?

1. Write an essay, defending your position on this question with evidence from the article.
2. After writing your essay, meet in a small group to discuss the question.
3. Decide as a group how to answer the question and report your conclusion, along with any minority views, to the rest of the class.

## Standards Addressed

**National High School U.S. History Standard 4: Understands how political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies.** (3) Understands characteristics of religious development in colonial America (e.g., the presence of diverse religious groups and their contributions to religious freedom; the political and religious influence of the Great Awakening; the major tenets of Puritanism and its legacy in American society; the dissension of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, and Puritan objections to their ideas and behavior).

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 5.4: Students understand the political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.** (4) Identify the significance and leaders of the First Great Awakening, which marked a shift in religious ideas, practices, and allegiances in the colonial period, the growth of religious toleration, and free exercise of religion.

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 8.1: Students understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy.** (1) Describe the relationship between the moral and political ideas of the Great Awakening and the development of revolutionary fervor.

**National High School U.S. History Standard 13: Understands the causes and consequences of the development of Islamic civilization between the 7th and 10th centuries.** (2) Understands challenges to Muslim civilization (e.g., the transformation of the Arab Caliphate into a Southwest Asian and Mediterranean Empire under the Umayyad Dynasty, and why the Muslim community divided into Sunni and Shi'ite factions . . . ).

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 7.2: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages.** (2) Trace the origins of Islam and the life and teachings of Muhammad, including Islamic teachings on the connection with Judaism and Christianity. (3) Explain the significance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic beliefs, practice, and law, and their influence in Muslims' daily life.

**National High School Civics Standard 2: Understands the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments.** (5) Knows essential political freedoms (e.g., freedom of religion, speech) . . .

**National High School Civics Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.** (6) Knows how shared ideas and values of American political culture are reflected in various sources and documents (e.g., the Bill of Rights, . . . landmark decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States).

**National High School Civics Standard 25: Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.** (5) knows major documentary sources of personal, political, and economic rights such as . . . court decisions . . .

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.11: Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.**

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 12.2: Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.** (1) Discuss the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured (e.g., freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, privacy).

**12.5: Students summarize landmark U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.** (1) Understand the changing interpretations of the Bill of Rights over time, including interpretations of the basic freedoms (religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly) articulated in the First Amendment . . .

**12.10: Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: . . . the relationship of religion and government.**

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# Islam Divided: The Shiites and Sunnis

Well over a thousand years ago, violent events in Iraq eventually led to a major split in Islam between Shiite and Sunni believers.

All followers of Islam (called Muslims) agree on the beliefs about the beginning of their religion. They believe that in Mecca and Medina, cities in the Arabian Peninsula, Muhammad received the word of God through the Angel Gabriel. The most important part of these revelations from God appears in the Islamic phrase, “There is no god but God.”

Muhammad, called the “messenger of God” and the “prophet,” died in A.D. 632. Afterward, his followers put the revelations that Muhammad claimed he had received from God in a sacred book called the Koran.

Scholars also collected Muhammad’s sayings, deeds, and examples of his behavior from those who personally knew him. Muslims call these customs derived from the prophet’s life the Sunnah (based on written records known as the Hadith).

The Koran and Sunnah became the basic sacred sources of Islamic belief and law, guiding all aspects of a Muslim’s life.

Muslims observe a common set of beliefs and practices. These include such things as praying five times a day to God. Islam (which means submission to God) also incorporated elements from Judaism and Christianity. Muslims revere Moses and Jesus as earlier prophets. Like Jews and Christians, Muslims believe in heaven, hell, and the Day of Judgment. Before Judgment Day, according to Islam, a “divinely guided leader,” al-Mahdi, will appear to bring God’s peace and justice on Earth.

When Muhammad was alive, his followers looked to him as the leader of God’s “harmonious community.” Through persuasion and conquest, Muhammad brought many tribes in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond into a growing Muslim empire. When he died, however, a crisis arose over how to choose his successor. This individual would not be another



The two most holy cities in Islam are Mecca and Medina in the Arabian Peninsula. The Umayyads, the first Islamic dynasty (661–750), made Damascus, Syria, their capital. The Abbasids, the second dynasty, made Baghdad, Iraq, their capital.

prophet, but a caliph, the political leader of the Muslims.

## Ali Against the Umayya

Ali ibn Abi Talib was Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law. Muhammad left no sons, and many thought he had chosen the 30-year-old Ali to succeed him as caliph. Others disputed this. The Muslim community chose Abu Bakr, an elder who was not a member of Muhammad’s family, but who was one of his close associates.

Although Ali possessed an excellent knowledge of the Koran and Sunnah, the Muslims passed him over two more times in selecting caliphs. The Muslim community finally made Ali caliph when Uthman, the third caliph and a member of the Umayya family, was assassinated in 656. But Muawiya, the Umayya governor of Syria, accused Ali of being involved in the murder of Uthman and refused to recognize him as the new caliph.

Facing a rebellion sparked by Muawiya in the province of Iraq, Ali took his army there to put it down. Citing the Koran, Muawiya demanded that Ali surrender the assassins of Uthman. Ali refused, saying that

the assassination of Uthman was justified due to his misdeeds. Ali then attacked Muawiya's army. Thousands of soldiers slaughtered one another during a week of combat. No clear victor emerged.

Both sides agreed to each appoint a judge. The judges would investigate whether Uthman had acted unjustly. Some of Ali's men, however, objected to this way of settling the dispute. They argued that the judgment should be God's alone on the field of battle. Making this a human judgment, they said, was a sin against God. Several thousand of them left Ali's camp. Muslims later called this group Kharijites, meaning those who left a corrupt community.

Much to his surprise, Ali lost the judgment about Uthman. But he refused to accept it and fighting continued. Finally, in 661, a Kharijite assassinated Ali with a poisoned sword at the doorway of the mosque at Kufa (in southern Iraq).

Many remained loyal to Ali and considered him a martyr who defended Islam and the right of Muhammad's family to rule Muslims. These supporters became Shiites, meaning "Ali's Party." A later caliph built a shrine, the Imam Ali Mosque, in Najaf, Iraq, where Shiites believe their fallen martyr is buried.

### **Husayn Against the Umayya**

The elders of the Muslim community offered to make Ali's oldest son, Hasan, caliph. The Umayya family, however, forced him to give it up in favor of Muawiya, Ali's old enemy. In 661, Muawiya established a family dynasty of caliphs (the Umayyads) with its capital in Damascus, Syria.

Husayn was Ali's second son and the grandson of Muhammad. Husayn held back from rebelling against Caliph Muawiya. But when Muawiya named his own son, Yazid, as the next caliph, Husayn strongly objected. After Muawiya died in 680, Husayn refused to accept Yazid as caliph.

Kufa (in Iraq) had become the center of Shiite resistance to the Umayyads. Disgusted with what they considered Umayyad tyranny, the Kufans asked Husayn to come to their city, promising to help him defeat Caliph Yazid's army. In the fall of 680, Husayn left Arabia with a small band of warriors and their families.

When he arrived in Iraq, Husayn set up a camp of tents at Karbala. The Umayyad governor of Iraq, ibn Ziyad, ordered the Umayyad army commander to demand that Husayn declare homage to Caliph Yazid.

The army commander led 4,000 soldiers to Husayn's camp. Husayn only had about 70 fighting men, because the Shiites of Kufa never came to his aid. Husayn refused to submit. He addressed his opponents with a Koran in his hand, saying they would violate God's law if they killed the grandson of the prophet. Husayn, age 55, then hobbled his horse to show he would remain and fight to the death.

The Battle of Karbala began with warriors fighting each other with swords in individual combat. Action continued when the Umayyad army, using armored cavalry and archers, attacked and burned Husayn's camp. The Umayyad soldiers killed Husayn's men one by one.

The Umayyad soldiers avoided attacking Husayn until the very end when they cut him down and severed his head. Horses trampled his headless corpse. The Umayyad army killed all of Husayn's warriors and many of their family members. The attackers spared only one of Husayn's young sons when the army commander stopped his men from killing him.

Ibn Ziyad sent Husayn's head to Caliph Yazid in Damascus. Many Shiites soon believed a growing legend that Husayn's severed head spoke verses from the Koran. Husayn became another martyr and hero to the Shiites, who believed more than ever that it was God's will for the family of Muhammad to rule the Muslim world.

### **Shiism**

The Shiites of Kufa felt guilty about not rallying behind Husayn at Karbala and vowed revenge against the Umayyads. In 749, the Kufans backed a revolt led by a member of the Abbas family, which was related to Muhammad (al-Abbas was Muhammad's uncle). The rebel leader, however, was not a Shiite. When the revolt succeeded, a new dynasty (the Abbasids) took over the expanding Muslim Empire. The Abbasids established their capital at Baghdad in Iraq.

Shiites were once again disappointed that a relative of Ali did not become the new caliph. Once the Abbasids gained power, they persecuted the Shiites just as the Umayyads had done.

For many years after Ali's murder, the Shiites differed with other Muslims mainly on the political question of who should be the caliph. Around 750, however, Jafar al-Sadiq, the leading Shiite religious scholar, combined the ideas of other scholars into the doctrine of the Imamate.

*(Continued on next page)*



## Major Differences Between Shiism and Sunnism

	Shiism	Sunnism
<b>Successors to Muhammad</b>	Muhammad designated Ali and his descendants as the prophet's rightful successors to lead the Muslim community.  The first three caliphs were illegitimate tyrants.	The rightful successors to Muhammad are the most qualified leaders as chosen by the Muslim community.  The first three caliphs were legitimate and "right guided."
<b>Imamate</b>	Ali was the divinely inspired First Imam chosen by Muhammad. Up to 12 Imams who were descended from Ali came after him. The Imams were saintly figures who taught right behavior after the time of Muhammad.	Sunnis do not recognize the Imamate of the Shiites, but still revere Ali. Sunnism attempts to include as many different Islamic practices and beliefs as possible to achieve a "harmonious community."
<b>Law</b>	The sources of Islamic law (Sharia) are the Koran, Sunnah, and Imams.	The sources of Islamic law are the Koran and Sunnah.
<b>Clergy</b>	A formal clergy structure consists of religious leaders (e.g., ayatollahs) who interpret Islamic law for Shiites to follow in the absence of the "Hidden Imam."	There is no formal clergy structure. Religious scholars interpret Islamic law by consensus to guide the lives of Sunnis.

According to the Imamate, God provided each generation with an Imam who was the rightful leader of the Muslim community. The Imam, who was free of sin, held authority on both religious and political matters, interpreted the Koran and Sunnah, and spoke on God's behalf. Those who accepted the teachings of their Imam were saved from hell.

Shiites believe that Muhammad chose the first Imam, who was Ali. The second and third Imams were Ali's two sons. Divinely inspired descendants followed them, each chosen by the previous Imam. Later on, the Shiites disagreed over the total number of Imams who led their community, but most today believe there were 12.

"Twelve-Imam Shiism" became the dominant form of Shiite belief after 873 when the 11th Imam died. His son, then only 4, was supposed to be the 12th Imam. But he mysteriously disappeared and became the "Hidden Imam." So-called Shiite "Twelvers" believe that he is al-Mahdi, the one who will appear shortly before the Day of Judgment to usher in God's will for a peaceful and just world.

Until the return of the 12th Imam, the Shiites must rely on the guidance of religious authorities, the most impor-

tant of whom are ayatollahs. These authorities interpret the Koran, Sunnah, and traditions of the Imams as the Shiite sources of Islamic law.

### Sunnism

Many Muslims reacted against the Shiite form of Islam and yearned for a return to the tradition of Muhammad's "harmonious community." These Muslims strictly followed the Koran, but also put special emphasis on the Hadith—the sayings, deeds, and moral example of Muhammad, which provide the basis for the Sunnah (the "right path"). Those who followed this traditional form of Islam called themselves Sunnis.

Sunnis founded several schools of Islamic law (the Sharia), which became the foundation of Sunnism. Scholars belonging to these schools interpreted the Koran and Sunnah, which Sunnis believe are the only true sources of Islamic law. When scholars disagreed, they settled their differences by consensus. Consensus became a precedent for guiding Sunni Muslims in many areas of life such as inheritance, the role of women, dress, and warfare.

Sunnis do not recognize the Shiite Imamate or believe in the return of the "Hidden Imam." Nor do they follow



powerful religious leaders like the Shiite ayatollahs, who issue decrees on matters of Islamic law and even politics. In fact, aside from Sunni scholars, Sunnism has no formal structure of clergymen. Any Sunni may technically lead prayers in a mosque, although a Muslim trained in Islamic law usually fulfills this role.

In their effort to develop Sunnism as the orthodox (traditional) form of Islam, most Sunni scholars tried to include a variety of Muslim beliefs, religious practices, and customs. But these things had to conform to Sunni interpretations of the Koran and Sunnah.

By the 900s, the vast majority of Muslims followed Sunnism. The Abbasid caliphs and later the Turks, who seized Baghdad from them in 1055, adopted Sunnism as the official form of Islam. This recognition did not end the divide between Shiites and Sunnis. Fierce riots broke out between Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq and elsewhere. Ever since, Sunni political leaders throughout much of the Muslim world have often persecuted the Shiite minority. Only Iran, in the 1500s, adopted 12-Imam Shiism as the state religion.

What began as a dispute over the successor to Muhammad gradually evolved into two ways of practicing Islam. Sunnism emerged to preserve a traditional form of Islam after the Shiites and other Muslims developed different ideas about how to follow the will of God. A bitter history drove the Sunnis and Shiites apart and keeps them divided today.

Although the division remains, Sunnis and Shiites both continue to follow the basic teachings of Muhammad. Like all Muslims, they believe in one God whose final prophet was Muhammad. They consider the Koran to be the unchanging and literal word of God. They pray five times a day and try sometime in their lives to make a pilgrimage to the sacred mosque in Mecca.

## For Discussion and Writing

1. Why did Islam split between Shiites and Sunnis?
2. What do you think is the single most important similarity and difference between Shiism and Sunnism? Why?
3. Divisions have occurred in most world religions. Why do you think this happens?

## For Further Reading

Esposito, John L. *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Glasse, Cyril. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. New York: HarperCollins, 1989.

## Muslim East Map

A. For this activity you will need:

- a printed or hand-drawn outline map of modern Middle East countries
- color markers or pencils
- print and Internet reference sources such as an encyclopedia, an almanac, the CIA's *World Factbook* ([www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html)), *Infoplease* ([www.infoplease.com/index.html](http://www.infoplease.com/index.html)); you may need to use more than one source.

B. Use reference sources to answer these questions about each of the Middle East Muslim countries listed below:

1. Does the country have a Shiite or a Sunni majority?
2. What is the largest ethnic group of the country?

<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Oman</b>
<b>Iran</b>	<b>Saudi Arabia</b>
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>Syria</b>
<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Turkey</b>
<b>Kuwait</b>	<b>United Arab Emirates</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>Yemen</b>

C. Use the outline map of the Middle East to visually present the information you have found.

1. Label the name of each country listed above on the map.
2. Develop a color code (legend) to indicate a Shiite majority and a Sunni majority.
3. Use other colors to indicate the dominant ethnic groups in the Middle East countries.
4. Use your color-coded legend to mark each country on the map, showing whether it has a Shiite or Sunni majority and what the largest ethnic group is. Each country on the map should be marked with two colors from your legend.

# Should We Take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?

An atheist father of a primary school student challenged the Pledge of Allegiance because it included the words “under God.”

**M**ichael A. Newdow, who has both law and medical degrees, makes his living as an emergency-room doctor. He is an outspoken atheist. He believes that the words “under God” should not be a part of the pledge of allegiance and that his young daughter should not be forced to recite these words in public school.

In 2000, Newdow filed a lawsuit in a federal court in California. He claimed that the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violated the First Amendment’s establishment clause.

One fact complicated Newdow’s lawsuit: He did not have full custody of his six-year-old daughter. Newdow and the child’s mother, Sandra Banning, were never married. California’s family court awarded “joint legal custody” to both parents, but with some significant conditions.

The California court granted Banning physical custody of the child most of the time, while allowing Newdow visitation rights. The two were supposed to consult with each other over the health, education, and welfare of their daughter. If they disagreed, however, Banning was the final decision-maker.

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The main defendant in Newdow’s lawsuit was the Elk Grove Unified School District in Sacramento, California, where Newdow’s daughter attended school. The defendant school district argued that Newdow, the plaintiff, had no “standing.” This is the legal requirement that the one bringing a lawsuit must show that he or she has a legal interest at stake. Without standing in a legal dispute, one cannot sue.

At first, Newdow attempted to secure standing by saying he was suing on behalf of his daughter, who recited the Pledge of Allegiance at school. But the state family court ruled that it was not in her best interest to be thrust into the middle of such a controversy. The court ruled, however, that Newdow could proceed on his own behalf as a parent.

Newdow filed suit in federal district court. After losing, he appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In 2002, much to the surprise of almost everyone, Newdow won his case by a 2–1 vote of the appellate court judges. The majority held that he had standing and that the words “under God” made the pledge an unconstitutional “government



*Students in 1941 in a Norfolk, Virginia, public school recite the Pledge of Allegiance. (Library of Congress)*

endorsement of religion.” The losing defendants in the case then appealed both matters to the U.S. Supreme Court.

## History of the Pledge

In 1892, Francis Bellamy, an official of the National Education Association, wrote the following Pledge of Allegiance to help celebrate the 400th anniversary of the landing of Columbus in America:

I pledge allegiance to my Flag [later changed to “the flag”] and the Republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The pledge caught on. By the Second World War, most schools required students to recite it. Some churches, however, objected because they believed that the Bible prohibited such a declaration of allegiance. In 1943, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could not force students to recite the pledge. By an 8–1 vote, the justices said that “no official, high or petty, can prescribe [order] what shall be orthodox [correct] in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion. . . .” *West Virginia v. Barnette* [319 U.S. 624 (1943)]

During the Cold War, patriotic and religious groups began to lobby Congress to include a mention of God in the pledge to contrast the United States from atheistic communist countries. In 1954, Congress passed a law that inserted “under God” in the pledge.

## The Establishment Clause

The First Amendment requires that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion . . . .” This is known as the establishment clause of the First Amendment. Its purpose is to separate church and state, preventing government and religion from interfering in each other’s affairs.

The meaning of the establishment clause continues to be hotly debated. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, has ruled that the First Amendment prohibits prayers and other religious observances in public schools because they amount to an establishment of religion.

In deciding what is and is not legally permitted under the establishment clause, the Supreme Court has developed several tests in its decisions (*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 1971; *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 1984, and *Lee v. Weisman*, 1992). According to these decisions, an act violates the establishment clause if it:

- has a religious purpose or effect;
- endorses, advances, or hinders religion;
- excessively entangles religion and government; or
- forces anyone to accept a religious belief.

The U.S. Supreme Court had never directly ruled on the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance. Only one other federal appeals court has made a decision on the pledge. In 1992, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals decided that “under God” in the pledge was merely ceremonial and did not aim to establish religion.

### **Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow**

On March 24, 2004, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the appeal of the Ninth Circuit Court’s decision. The “petitioners” (those appealing the case), now also included the U.S. government. Michael Newdow led the “respondents” (those responding to the appeal). Newdow argued his own case before the highest court in the land.

The following summary of the arguments in this case come from the written briefs and oral arguments presented by both sides.

#### **Part I Arguments—Does Newdow Have Standing?**

The petitioners argued that Sandra Banning was the final decision-maker. Only she could object to her daughter reciting the pledge. In fact, Banning was raising her daughter as a Christian who believed in God and willingly participated in the pledge.

Newdow insisted that he was injured when his daughter recited “under God” in the pledge. By her saying the pledge, Newdow stated, she was essentially saying her father was wrong about there not being a God. The government, Newdow said, was interfering with his right to teach his daughter about religion as he saw fit.

#### **Part II Arguments—Does “Under God” Violate the Establishment Clause?**

The arguments over the establishment clause can be grouped under six issues:

1. **Historical:** Whether the pledge is the same as references to God in other documents in U.S. history.
2. **Ceremonial:** Whether the pledge serves a harmless ceremonial function.
3. **Purpose:** Whether the pledge serves a religious purpose.
4. **Endorsement:** Whether the pledge endorses religion.
5. **Entanglement:** Whether the pledge entangles religion and education.
6. **Coercion:** Whether children are forced to say the pledge.

#### **Petitioners Argued: No, It Does Not Violate the Establishment Clause**

**Historical:** The petitioners argued that mere references to the role of God and religion in American history do not establish a religion. Examples include the mention of God or the Creator in the Declaration of Independence and Gettysburg Address; our national motto (“In God We Trust”); and even the opening of the Supreme Court itself (“God save the United States and this Honorable Court”).

**Ceremonial:** The mention of God in such things as the Pledge of Allegiance is a ceremonial activity that lends seriousness to public occasions like presidential Thanksgiving proclamations.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the pledge is to promote patriotism. It is not a pledge to God but to the flag and “the Republic for which it stands.”

**Endorsement:** The pledge does not endorse any church, sect, or religious doctrine. If the pledge said “under Jesus,” that would be a different matter.

**Entanglement:** Saying a school prayer is religious. Reciting the pledge is not religious. It does not excessively entangle religion with public education.

**Coercion:** No child can be required to say “under God” or any other part of the pledge.

#### **Respondents Argued: Yes, It Does Violate the Establishment Clause**

**Historical:** References to God in historical documents or in other public expressions are not the same as young children standing in a classroom and swearing in unison their allegiance to both the nation and God. In addition,

Congress only added “under God” in 1954 as a way to condemn atheism.

**Ceremonial:** The pledge is not some harmless ceremony, but a declaration that excludes and fosters prejudice against atheists. The original pledge included every American.

**Purpose:** The pledge is a means for the government to convince children to accept the religious belief that there is a God. This interferes with atheist parents who teach their children there is no God.

**Endorsement:** The pledge endorses monotheism while rejecting atheism and polytheistic religions like Hinduism. Government has no business taking sides on religious matters.

**Entanglement:** The original pledge was purely patriotic. The current pledge mixes religion and patriotism.

**Coercion:** Students may not legally be required to recite the pledge, but as a practical matter are forced to say it anyway. Young children are heavily influenced by peer pressure, the attitude of the teacher, and the fear of becoming a classroom “outsider.”

### The Supreme Court Decision

The Supreme Court ruled by a 5–3 vote that Newdow did not have legal standing to bring his lawsuit. The majority did not address the establishment clause issue.

The three justices who believed Newdow had standing wrote opinions on the establishment clause issue. They found, for different reasons, that the current wording of the Pledge of Allegiance was constitutional.

The ninth justice, Antonin Scalia, had removed himself from this decision because he had previously publicly criticized the Ninth Circuit Court’s ruling.

In short, Newdow was forced to drop his case for lack of standing, and the constitutionality of “under God” in the pledge remains undecided.

### For Discussion and Writing

1. Do you think Michael Newdow had standing in this case? Why?
2. What about religion do you think should and should not be permitted in public schools? Why?
3. Some local governments include a Christian cross on their official seals. Defenders of these seals say they merely reflect the historic origins of the place. Opponents say such seals violate the establishment clause. Use the four tests listed in the article to decide this issue for yourself.

### For Further Reading

“One Nation Under God? A Constitutional Question.” *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*. 19 Mar. 2004. URL: <http://pewforum.org/religion-schools/pledge/backgroundunder.pdf>

“Pro/Con Summaries of Responses to: Should the words ‘under God’ be in the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance?” *Under God Pro/Con*. URL: <http://www.undergodprocon.org/>

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## A C T I V I T Y

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### Moot Court on the Pledge of Allegiance

**Moot Court Question:** Does “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violate the establishment clause?

1. Form the class into three groups: those who will argue “no” to the question above; those who will argue “yes”; and nine Supreme Court justices who will decide the question.
2. The students in the “no” and “yes” groups should divide responsibility for presenting the following arguments: *Historical*, *Ceremonial*, *Purpose*, *Endorsement*, *Entanglement*, and *Coercion*. The arguments summarized in the article are a beginning point (see Part II Arguments). The following web sites contain more material to support these arguments:

*The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life: Pledge of Allegiance Resources*. URL:

[www.pewforum.org/religion-schools/pledge/](http://www.pewforum.org/religion-schools/pledge/)

*Under God Pro/Con*. URL:

[www.undergodprocon.org/](http://www.undergodprocon.org/)

3. The Supreme Court justices should also look at these web sites to prepare questions to ask about the six arguments presented by each side.
4. During the moot court, the “no” side will present each argument first followed by the “yes” side.
5. The Supreme Court justices should be prepared with questions to ask each presenter.
6. After both sides have finished their arguments, the justices should discuss in front of the class their views on the moot-court question. Finally, the justices should vote on this question and give the reasons for their decisions.



# Civic Mission of Schools

## Submit an Outstanding Civic Practice

The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is a long-term national effort to renew and elevate civic education in the schools. This national campaign will work with coalition partners to bring about changes in state, local, and national policy that implement the recommendations in *The Civic Mission of Schools* report. Among its many projects, the national campaign is looking for organizations, schools, and teachers to submit examples of excellent programs or publications to improve and increase civic learning in our schools. They will be kept in a database for educators and policy makers to access.

Each submission must be e-mailed to CMS. The form for submittal is available at:

[www.civicmissionofschools.org/submissions.html](http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/submissions.html)

For more information on the Civic Mission of Schools, go to:

[www.crf-usa.org/civic\\_renewal/civic\\_renewal\\_home.htm](http://www.crf-usa.org/civic_renewal/civic_renewal_home.htm)

## California Campaign Is Launched

Funded primarily by the Carnegie Foundation of New York and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is working to improve civic education across the country. The California Campaign is organized by Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Center for Civic Education, two prominent national civic education organizations based in California.

The California campaign will:

- **Conduct research** to determine the effect of current educational practices in California on developing student civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes and student capacity for effective civic engagement.
- **Work with schools** to assess current civic education practices and improve them by developing and implementing promising practices and providing teacher preparation and resources.
- **Propose policies** that will guarantee every child has a quality education.
- **Increase public awareness** about the importance of civic education.

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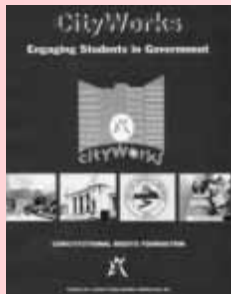
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- **A Student Handbook** containing detailed instructions for completing the CityWorks project activities and serving as a portfolio for students to record much of their work.

#### CityWorks

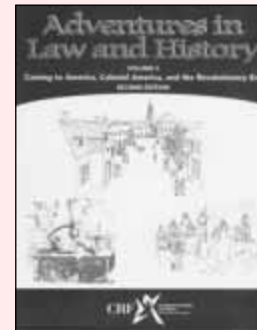
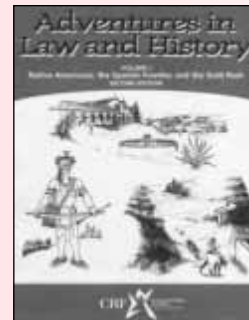
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**CRF's program areas include the California State Mock Trial, History Day in California, youth internship programs, youth leadership and civic participation programs, youth conferences, teacher professional development, and publications and curriculum materials.**

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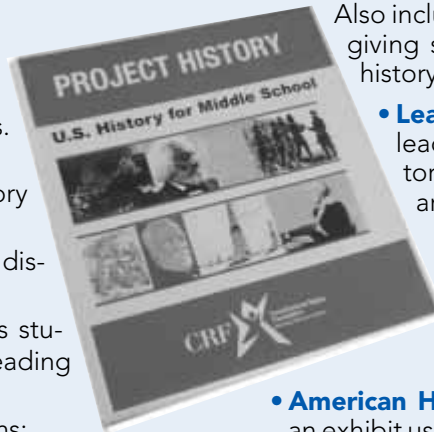
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**4: How the Women's Rights Movement Began**

**5: Black Soldiers in Union Blue**

**6: Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Monopoly**



Also included are four **Hands-On History Projects**, giving students an opportunity to pursue a U.S. history topic in depth.

• **Leaders Forum.** Students portray American leaders who meet to discuss issues in U.S. history from the perspective of the leaders they are portraying.

• **History Network Newscast.** Students create news-format presentations describing an event in U.S. history and its background, causes, consequences, and significance.

• **American History Museum Exhibit.** Students create an exhibit using visuals and narrative descriptions.

• **Project History Book.** Students create an alphabetically arranged "encyclopedia" defining, illustrating, and describing the significance of words or phrases.

**Web Links:** The CRF website ([www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org)) supports each lesson with online links to focused readings and other resources.

#32030CBR Project History, 138 pp. \$21.95

See ordering information on page 15.

