

Tiffani Reardon

Professor Powell

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### The Enlightenment in Relation to Franklin and the American Revolution

In the 1700s, people began to follow the idea that if you were born to two elect parents, you inherited your elect status and therefore did not have to work to get into heaven. Jonathan Edwards, a preacher from that time, did not like the religious behavior of the Puritans because of it, and believed that they had strayed from God's path. He delivered a sermon in Enfield, CT on 8 July 1741 called "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" in hopes that it would show people what they could be risking by straying from the path. However, the sermon was given to more than just Puritans, and some of the other religions took it differently than he meant. This started the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment views were essentially that God was a "clock-maker," in that he created the world and then left it to run on natural and scientific laws. People believed that they could create a "heaven on earth" and that they could perfect themselves and everything around them. These thoughts led to the idea that if they ruled themselves, they could hold control over whether they perfect their society or not, rather than leaving it all at the King's disposal. This led to the American Revolution.

Enlightenment thoughts appeared in Franklin's work when he spoke about his plan to become perfect in his spiritual autobiography.

"I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I drest plainly; I was seen at no places of idle

diversion. I never went out a-fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores thro' the streets on a wheelbarrow" (Franklin 33).

This quote shows how important it was to Franklin to perfect himself and the world around him. Though he did not succeed in eliminating his list of problems from his life, his mere desire was a large aspect of Enlightenment and Deism (the religion that came out of Enlightenment).

Works Cited

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, 1999-2010*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania, 1995. *Ushistory.org*. Web. 7 June 2012.