



# The First Great Awakening in Colonial American Newspapers: A Shifting Story

*Lisa Smith*

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Gathering the attention and excitement of American colonists from Boston to Charleston, the religious revival of the 1740s traditionally known as the First Great Awakening provided colonial newspaper printers with their first story of transcolonial importance. At the time of the Awakening, American newspapers had become a vital part of the colonial information network as each major city offered at least one weekly paper. Papers printed weekly reports on revivalist preaching, eye-witness accounts of revival meetings, shocking stories of improper ordinations and church separations, as well as numerous contributed letters praising or denouncing virtually every aspect of the Awakening. No other colonial event of the 1740s, including the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Jacobite Rebellion (1745), came close to receiving as much newspaper coverage, making the First Great Awakening America's first "Big Story."

In *The First Great Awakening in Colonial American Newspapers: A Shifting Story*, Lisa Smith offers the first scholarly work to examine in detail the printed newspaper record of the revival. This comprehensive, in-depth examination of colonial newspapers over a ten-year period uncovers information on shifts in the presentation of the revival over time, specific differences in regional reporting, and significant transformations in the newspaper personae of popular revivalists such as George Whitefield and Gilbert Tennent. Using original newspaper excerpts and graphs revealing reporting trends, this book presents an engaging, detailed picture of how colonial newspaper printers covered the experience of the First Great Awakening.

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