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THE INFLUENCE OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD
ON
THE AMERICAN COLONIAL CHURCH

By

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

THE INFLUENCE OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this thesis is to discover the particular relationship and the influence of George Whitefield on the American Colonial Church in the light of a study of his life and times.

B. Significance of the Problem

The many historical works written concerning the Great Awakening and its important leaders have not stressed the relative importance and contribution of George Whitefield.

George Whitefield was not the theologian that Jonathan Edwards was, nor was he the denominationalist that Gilbert Tennent had been to the Presbyterians. Whitefield as an itinerant evangelist of this Anglican Communion was able to make certain contributions to the Colonial Church which the local pastor was unable to do. Through his personal relation to the religious and civic leaders of the colonies, the Christian Church was vitalized. It was in this respect that George Whitefield made his chief contribution.

C. The Problem Delimited

To deal effectively and adequately with the various ramifications of Whitefield's relation to the American Colonial Church would take volumes. It is therefore evident that the treatment given in this thesis will of necessity be general. The study will be concerned with Whitefield's impact on the religious conditions, and where necessary will include such an examination of these conditions as may be required.

D. The Method and Procedure

In order to carry out the purpose as stated, the following method of procedure will be employed:

1. A hasty review of his early life from birth to young manhood for the single purpose of determining the factors that contributed to his religious life and evangelistic fervor will be presented.
2. Since no man or public personality can be understood apart from the time and conditions of the country in which he lived, a clarification of the issues involved in the religious conditions of the Colonies will follow. Whitefield's aims and purposes rose out of the religious and theological conditions prevalent on the Continent and in the Colonies. It was from the decline of personal experimental religion that Whitefield emerged as an "apostle" of vital, experimental Christianity. He sought to revive the Protestant truth of personal, dynamic religious experience.
3. An examination of the relation and contribution of George Whitefield to the American Colonial Church will conclude the study. His contributions in the realms of an itinerant evangelist, social ser-

vice, and educational promotion will be followed by a discussion of his ecclesiastical and homiletical influences.

E. Source of Data

The principal sources from which the material here presented is gathered are: the Journals of George Whitefield, "Memoirs of George Whitefield" by John Gillies, "The Life of George Whitefield" by Luke Tyerman, the exhaustive biographies of Whitefield, and miscellaneous historical works.

CHAPTER II

HIS EARLY LIFE AND THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO HIS RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

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A. Introduction

The most significant period of any man's life is his youth and early manhood, for it is in this period that the personality is most plastic and impressionable, and eternal forces exert their greatest influence. It is the time of intellectual, social, and religious development. It is also the time when the individual has spiritual conflicts leading to a great concern over the problems of religion. His home and environment will influence his ideals and purpose of life. Hence, it is not only possible to determine what may be expected of a youth, but also in retrospect to determine the various reasons and principle causes for a person's achievements and ideals expressed in maturity. George Whitefield is a typical illustration of these factors. When one analyses his home training, his environment, and the other experiences that make up his life, one can readily understand the position he took concerning the religion of his day and his reaction to certain problems in England and the Colonies. Hence, to have a clear understanding of his work it is necessary to note certain of his early experiences and factors that contribute to his religious life and evangelistic fervor.

B. The Moral Conditions During This Period

1. Society

Complete understanding of a man's life requires a survey of

the social and moral conditions that existed during his time. Whitefield was born into a society that was swinging from the Puritan form of life to the wide-open license of the Restoration Period. The industrial revolution had quickly brought to society the burden of caring for the laborers. The new system of production, namely the factory system, rapidly coming to the fore. Men and women were becoming enslaved to their employers. High society as a result of this greater economic prosperity became morally incompetent.

The lower classes became restless, cynical, drunkards, and had no respect for civil law. It was to this type of people that Whitefield made his greatest appeal.

2. Religion

The universality and the nature of ir-religion of this period is clearly attested by Bishop Butler in his famous analogy; when he said:

.... that it had come to be taken for granted Christianity is not so much a subject for inquiry but that it is now discovered to be fictitious.¹

The clergy spent their time in pleasure seeking activities.

George Whitefield came into this immoral culture preaching the necessity of being born again. He placed great emphasis on holy and righteous living. This message soon had listeners from all walks of life -- from the lowest type of individual to the nobility. Whitefield and the Wesleys, under the power of the Holy Spirit saved England from internal social revolution.

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1. Belden, Albert D., George Whitefield-The Awakener, p.55.

C. Boyhood and Education

1. Parental Heritage

George Whitefield was born at Bell Inn, Gloucester, England on December 16, 1714. He was the son of Thomas Whitefield, an inn-keeper in Gloucester. His mother was the former Elizabeth Edwards of Bristol. The Whitefields had six sons and one daughter. George was the youngest. His father died when he was two. For seven years his mother remained a widow, and then married Mr. Longden, an iron monger in Gloucester.¹ George, being the youngest, was regarded by his mother with peculiar tenderness, and was educated with more than ordinary care. We notice that on his father's side his great grandfather and his grandfather were clergymen of the Church of England. "Though Whitefield's ancestry was far from aristocratic, it was not ignoble."²

2. Early Education and Youth

Intellectually George Whitefield's mother was not as gifted as was Susanna Wesley, but she did try to send her youngest son to school. His first formal education was at the King's School connected with the cathedral. Soon after, he was enrolled at the Gloucester Free Grammar School at St. Mary's de Crypt. In the classical studies he was an average student, but at this school he discovered his natural gift of elocution.³

It was in these early years that the desire for acting

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1. Cf. Gillies, John, *Memoirs of George Whitefield -- Sermons and Other Writings*, p. 10.
2. Tyerman, Luke, *Life of George Whitefield*, Vol. I, p. 2.
3. Cf. Belden, op. cit., p. 120.

possessed him. He did enjoy the classical studies, but his vivid imagination was not to be harnessed by Latin and Greek. It resulted in a zeal for the theatrical, which lead to a delinquency in school. Whitefield writes, "I was so fond of reading plays, and I have kept from school for days together to prepare myself for acting them."¹ This fondness for acting during this impressionable age reveals why he was so dynamic in the pulpit later in life. In his later years he felt that God even brought good out of the evils of his previous study. He wrote, "It was a means of strengthening my memory and teaching me a proper gesture of speaking."²

To some people his boyhood may seem rather peculiar. However, to many others it reveals the constant struggle between sin and penitence that an adolescent experiences. We find him at certain intervals of his life, "a liar, a petty thief, a pretended rake, and almost an infidel"³, but then, one notices the other side of his personality. He would spend what little he had saved on a book, "The Manual of Bishop Ken; Composing Sermons; delighting in Thomsas a Kempis."⁴ He would pray much in private, and he received the sacrament at least once a month. When this penitent mood came upon him during lent, he would often fast for eighteen hours.

George, the tavern-keeper's son, was often found reading the Bible by candle light late at night. When but a youth, he had definite convictions regarding sin. At one time some of his mother's customers tantalized him and he ran to his room, fell on his knees, and with

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 5.
2. Whitefield, George, A Brief and General Account on the First Part of the Life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, p. 5.
3. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 11.

tears streaming down his cheeks prayed the Psalm of David, "By the name of the Lord will I destroy them."¹ Such experiences resulted in the secret desire to become a clergyman. He says, "I frequently used to imitate the ministers reading prayers, and to make little sermons in little books about as long as my finger."² These conflicting trends in his early life clearly indicate the reasons for the amazing maturity of Whitefield's moral passion and spiritual fervor during his early twenties.

When he was fifteen his mother's business started to fail. Consequently he was withdrawn from school, and "putting on the blue apron"³ he was soon "washing the mops, cleaning the rooms and becoming common drawer for near a year and a half."⁴ Now, more than ever before, his environment played an important part of his life. With the business failing, his brother took over the management of the Inn.

George, unable to get along with his sister-in-law, left for Bristol. At Bristol his religious life became more regular. He enjoyed reading Thomas a Kempis and receiving the sacrament. When he returned to Gloucester, once again his religious life began to vacillate. He wrote, "I had no inclination to go to church or draw nigh unto God ... However, I had so much religion left as to persist in my resolution not to live in the Inn."⁵ His mother permitted him to live with her, and it was during this uncertain period of his life that he fell deep into sin. Paradoxical as it may seem, during this time while he lived

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1. Whitefield, George, A Brief and General Account on the First Part of the Life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, p. 3.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., p. 7.

in sin, he still had a feeling of his high calling. One day while reading to his sister he said:

Sister, I believe God intends something for me which we know not of; as I have been diligent in business, I believe many would gladly have me for an apprentice, but every way seems to be barred up, so that God I think will provide for me somehow or another.¹

Here we see revealed the unconscious desire to do what God wanted him to do.

When he was seventeen years old, the conflict of faith came to a new high in his overt actions. His actions then showed a seriousness of purpose, leading to definite acts of devotion. He had become a legalist in religion. He once said, "But yet hypocrisy crept into every action -- as I once affected to look more rakish, I now strove to appear more grave than really I was."²

3. Oxford and the Holy Club

a. Entrance to College

Whitefield's entering college was an act of divine providence. One day while he was home with his mother a friend from Pembroke College called. During the course of the conversation he told how, as a servant, after paying his bills he had a penny left. His mother asked George if he would do the same; his response was an immediate "Yes." George began to study his old text books and his mother secured a servant's position for him. At the age of eighteen he entered Oxford with the sum of ten pound which had been given him by a friend. Two types of people awaited him there; both were to influence his decisions concerning life. Belden says:

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1. Ibid., p. 8.

2. Ibid., p. 11.

It was an eventful change, for there was awaiting Whitefield at Oxford just that human environment which, out of all his generation could best minister to the peculiar genius slumbering within him. John and Charles Wesley were there, and the Holy Club.¹

His first associates were not the members of the Holy Club, rather the most sinful men of the school. He went to services only to make fun of them. Of his new friends he later wrote:

I began to reason as they did, and to ask why God has given me passions and not permitted me to gratify them. . . I soon made a great proficiency in the school of the Devil -- I affected to look rakish, and was in a fair way of being as infamous as the worst of them.

This was the spiritual condition of the man who was soon to reveal the mercies of the cross to a debauched society.

b. The Holy Club

There is no need to spend much time enlarging upon the Holy Club. It is sufficient to say that its purpose was to help men lead a strict and ordered life. In living by rule and method, their lives became so ritualistic that the undergraduates nicknamed the members, Bible Moths, Bible Bigots, Sacramentarians, and especially Methodists. This latter name has remained.

When Whitefield arrived at Oxford in 1732, the Holy Club had fifteen members. At the time of his joining, the strict discipline had reduced its number to seven. Whitefield was introduced to the club by Charles Wesley, and he "ever honored Charles ... as his spiritual father ... the love existing between them was like that of Jonathan and David."³ The group acted as soul-savers in the prisons of England, fed the poor, and performed other like acts of mercy. For everyone in the

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1. Belden, op. cit., p. 17.
2. Whitefield, George, A Brief and General Account on the First Part of the Life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, p. 10.
3. Wakeley, George, The Prince of Pulpit Orators, p. 66.

club it was a time of soul-searching and soul-saving in the monastic sense. This was Oxford Methodism, a monastic club constantly searching for the truth and personal salvation. Whitefield was one of the first in the club to discover that discipline and works are not the way to Christ, but rather that the way is by justification by faith.

c. Conversion

God's Holy Spirit had been convicting Whitefield of his sins ever since he was a boy. New as a member of the Holy Club he found that the austere practices did not satisfy his yearning soul. One day while reading a treatise entitled "The Life of God in the Soul of Man", he found that true religion really was "the union of the soul with God or Christ, formed within us."¹ He was convicted immediately by the Spirit and knew that he must be re-created spiritually. From this moment until his conversion he "was visited with outward and inward trials."² In this spiritual state his first actions were to practice austerities and disciplines that monks might perform. He mortified his body and cared not for his hair lest he appear vain. The other students became repulsed and began to shun his presence. He "wore woolen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes, as visible signs of humility."³

For several months he was in this condition of spiritual suffering. Wakeley in quoting from one of his journals says:

'Sin revived and he died', He says, 'Though weak, I often spent two hours in my evening retirements and prayed over my Greek Testament and Bishop Hall's most excellent contemplations.' While thus engaged in searching the Scriptures, he discovered the true grounds

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1. Gillies, op. cit., p. 16.
2. Whitefield, George, A Brief and General Account on the First Part of the Life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, p. 18.
3. Gillies, op. cit., p. 17.

of a sinner's hope and justification. The testimony of God concerning his Son became 'power unto salvation.' 'I found and felt in myself' says he, 'that I was delivered from the burden that so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Savior.'¹

This was the greatest single determining factor in Whitefield's life, for on it were focused the basic Reformation Principles which shortly were preached as the basis of the Great Awakening.

D. Early Ministry

1. His Ordination as Deacon

Contrary to the popular opinion of the day, his decision to enter the ministry was a very personal, Holy and sacred calling. He entered with great reluctance and caution. To him the ordination as one of His servants in the Church of Christ was as solemn an occasion as the judgement day. Of this he said, "I never prayed more earnestly against any sin than I did against entering into the service of the Church too soon."² His only desire was to do the will of God. He knew, though, that if God would not keep him out of the ministry "His grace would be sufficient to support and strengthen (him) whenever he sent (him) into the ministry."³ This revelation of his attitude gives us a key to his whole character. It was the main-spring of all his actions, and the cause of his unparalleled success as an evangelist in England and in the colonies. On June 20, 1736, he submitted himself to Bishop Benson for Deacon's Orders.

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1. Wakeley, op. cit., p. 68.
2. Whitefield, George, A Brief and General Account on the First Part of the Life of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, p. 37.
3. Ibid., p. 37.

2. His Missionary Call

While the Wesleys were in Georgia, Whitefield was ordained; he received his Bachelor Degree; he administered the funds raised by the Methodists for prison work; he assumed the leadership of the society, and in general was the most outstanding preacher of England.

Oxford's hold on Whitefield was short lived. He was called to officiate in the absence of the Vicar at the Tower of London. His success as a preacher was beyond all expectation. When he returned to Oxford after two months, he received a call to be the Vicar at Dummer in Hampshire. This was the decision that was to affect the rest of his life. Deep in debt as he was, would he accept a profitable curacy in London, or would he respond to the appeal articulated by John Wesley to come to the colonies? Wesley had written:

Only Mr. Delamote is with me, till God shall stir up the hearts of some of his servants, who, putting their lives in His hands shall come over and help us, where the harvest is so great and the labourers so few. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield? In another letter were these words: ... Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat, and raiment to put on; a house to lay your head in such as your Lord had not ... and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.¹

Upon receipt of such mail, young Whitefield could contain himself no longer, and his heart leaped within in response to the call.

Unavoidable delays made it impossible for Whitefield to embark for Georgia immediately. However, the year of waiting became the most important of his life. The boy preacher had become a "gospel rover"² with neither Bishop nor parish able to confine his preaching of the doctrine of the new birth. His popularity as an evangelist spread rapidly, and soon became the by-word in England. The news of so great

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 60.

2. Ibid., p. 64.

a religious personality quickly spread to the colonies, preparing them for his eventual coming. He had now "prepared the way for Methodist itinerancy."¹

3. First Voyage to America

In December of 1737 Whitefield embarked for Georgia as a chaplain having been hired by the trustees of Georgia. This voyage is one of the most outstanding of the thirteen he made across the Atlantic.

While on board ship this young evangelist was soon to prove his worth. At the beginning of the crossing everyone on board shunned his presence. He proceeded, however, to hold public prayers in perfect dignity without antagonizing the crew. He claimed no favors and by the end of the voyage there were many definite conversions, including passengers, crew members and even one captain.

On May 7, 1738 the ship landed at Savannah, Georgia. In the land where Wesley had failed, Whitefield succeeded. Whereas Wesley had come as a ritualist, Whitefield came with food, hardware and the saving Christ. What was his chief purpose? He says, "I find that there are many divisions amongst the inhabitants, but God I hope will make me an instrument of composing them."² He learned to have a genuine interest in the affairs of people. The orphans especially touched his heart.

On September 6, 1738, Whitefield returned to England. He had found his mission. His object in returning was to receive priest's orders and raise money for a proposed orphanage. This orphanage was

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1. Ibid., p. 64.
2. Ibid., p. 130.

one of the primary reasons for his constant interest in the colonies.¹

4. Preaching in the Fields

Returning to England, disappointment met him. In the many churches where he had preached previously, the doors were closed. His youthful success had provoked jealousy among the clergy, and they disliked his preaching about the new birth.

With church doors closed to him, he found the Spirit leading him towards the fields. Outside the city of Bristol, in a coal mining district he preached in the open for the first time. Only two hundred persons were present for his first sermon, but within a short time he was preaching to ten thousand at a time. His success with these rough men was summarized by Gledstone when he said, "After having been long uncared for, at last they saw a clergyman willing to endure fatigue and shame for the sake of preaching to them."² This type of preaching prepared him for the large crowds soon to be confronted in the colonies.

E. Summary

The personal history of George Whitefield has been traced to reveal the factors contributing to his religious life and evangelistic fervor. This has been done in view of the fact that the background for his ministry, together with the religious status of the colonies (which will be discussed in the next chapter) are essential to the understanding of his spiritual zeal apart from understanding his early life,

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1. Post. p. 52.

2. Gledstone, James Patterson, George Whitefield, M: a., Field Preacher, p. 77.

and the various significant factors that affected his religious development.

The immoral social and religious conditions of the times, which brought about the secularization of religion, reveal the type of environment into which Whitefield was born and upon which he exerted his influence.

His desire to enter the ministry came during his early childhood. His awareness that God was dealing with him came during his teen-age years. His college life was marked by two significant events; namely, his membership in the Holy Club and his conversion which gave him an evangelistic fervor.

There were four significant experiences during his young manhood that affected the pattern of the remainder of his life. The solemn moment of ordination as a deacon, his missionary call, his first voyage to the colonies, and his preaching in the fields to the masses after his return to England.

The following chapter, in keeping with the purpose of this thesis, will consider the religious conditions in the colonies at the time of George Whitefield's ministry there.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE COLONIES

DURING WHITEFIELD'S DAY

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THE RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE COLONIES DURING WHITEFIELD'S DAY

A. Introduction

The general conditions of the time in any geographical area gives a background for understanding the actions of its leaders. The purposes and aims of a religious leader rise out of the religious conditions and the theological tendencies that are prevalent. George Whitefield was no exception. The moral laxity as well as the spiritual decline of the first half of the eighteenth century which characterized the life of the American Colonial Church struck a responsive chord in the heart of George Whitefield. However, this era must not be judged too hastily, for the religious decline was inevitable. Two major factors which contributed to this decline were the great influx of immigrants to the colonies, and the gradual change in the thinking of the colonists.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider these factors in some detail and to look into the attempts that were made to meet the problem.

B. Immigration and the Transplanted Church

1. Immigration's Effect on the Church

The first factor to be considered in understanding the religious decline of this period is the vast number of European immigrants. A great many of these people were separatists who had suffered persecution as a minority group in their native land. Many others came for political freedom, while still others came as missionaries. There

was a dual purpose in this namely, religious liberty for themselves and the opportunity to bring the gospel to the Indians. Strange as it may seem, those who came as the persecuted often became the persecutors, when other religious groups "invaded" their territory. Such conduct often leads to intolerance for others and schisms.

When a group of people is transplanted from one country to another without adequate means of church discipline or pastoral care, a natural result will be spiritual decline in the lives of the people. The first part of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of this decline in the middle colonies. The expansion of the geographical borders of the country was not conducive to the maintenance of a strong religious life. The absence of ministers and churches resulted in the slipping away from a devout personal life. The following pages will focus attention on this slipping away in the major religious groups involved.

2. Problems Created for the Church

a. Major Denominations Involved and Their Problems

1) Dutch Reformed Church

In the year 1626 the Dutch West India Company established a settlement on Manhattan with more than two hundred people taking part in this settlement.¹ As the colony grew, other nations wanted to settle in the same area. For example, in 1664, the British, desiring the facilities of New Amsterdam, defeated the Dutch Governor, Peter Stuyvesant. This English occupation prompted many of the Dutch to move to east New Jersey. As time passed, each succeeding generation

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1. Bacon, Leonard Woolsey, The American Christianity Series, Vol. XIII, p. 69.

lost something of the religious devotion of their fathers. Maxson writes:

In name their religion was long before defined by the synod of Dordrecht ... They were strenuous supporters of orthodoxy, but orthodoxy to them was doing every least thing in the same way in which it had always been done. Two venerable rites were in their minds the sum of religious duty and privilege. Of spiritual struggles they knew nothing. There was no demand upon the emotional nature and little upon conduct except in a superficial conformity to certain universally accepted maxims of morality.¹

Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen, a German in Holland, accepted the call to come to the church at Raritan, New Jersey. In January 1721 he landed and preached his first sermon. His aim was to inspire a reformation in the spiritual lives of his people. However, he was opposed by the other Dutch ministers, and one man alone was not capable of solving the problem. Bacon gives us a clear picture of the conditions within the church in 1730. He says:

It continued to suffer, in common with some other church systems, from depending on a transatlantic hierarchy for the succession of its ministry. The supply of imported ministers continued to be miserably inadequate to the need. In the first four decades of the century the number of its congregations more than doubled, rising to a total of sixty-five in New York and New Jersey; and for these sixty-five congregations there were nineteen ministers, almost all of them from Europe. This body of churches, so inadequately manned, was still further limited in its activities by the Dutch language.²

2) Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Church

In 1685 the barbaric way that the Stuarts of England persecuted the Scotch caused the Scottish people to begin their immigration to America, and by the early part of the eighteenth century the vast numbers leaving the Ulster Province of Ireland raised the emigration figures to from 3,000 to 6,000 a year.³ The New England Puritans were

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1. Maxson, Charles Hartshorn, The Great Awakening In The Middle Colonies, p. 12.
2. Bacon, op. cit., p. 134.
3. Cf. Thompson, Charles Lenard, The Religious Foundations of America, p. 232.

not hospitable to the Scots, and this resulted in a population shift to Maine, New Hampshire, and the Delaware River towns of Luves, New Castle and Philadelphia.¹

To meet the spiritual needs of these people, seven Presbyterian ministers organized the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the year 1706. During the following twenty years, seventeen additional congregations were established in New Jersey Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The chief problem facing this new church was the lack of ministers. New England responded by sending some men to their aid, as did the Presbytery of Dublin and the Synod of Glasgow.

However, even with this help, religious decline among the people seemed inevitable. The church could not endure without proper consecrated guidance. This particular group will be further discussed later in the chapter², but for the present it is sufficient to say that sparse population, poor methods of communication, and a lack of sufficient ministers resulted in the religious decline of these particular groups of people.

3) The Quaker Church

William Penn, seeking a place of refuge for his friends of the "Inner Light" established what is now known as the city of Philadelphia in the year 1683. Two years after its establishment, the city had grown from a group of three cottages to include some 600 homes. By the end of the seventeenth century the colonists in Philadelphia numbered more than 20,000.³ In the year 1730, Governor Gordon estimated that the total population of Pennsylvania was 49,000.⁴

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1. Cf. Sweet, William Warren, Religion in Colonial America, p. 251.

2. Post. p. 29.

3. Bacon, op. cit., p. 117.

4. Ibid., p. 142.

The Quakers were not dependent on pastors and a hierarchy for its strength and unity. In the eighteenth century they were devoting most of their time to the edification of their own members, and guarding their purity.¹ Sweet gives a vivid picture of this group during this time. He states:

The Quakers gained the general reputation for integrity in business dealings, with the result that they early began to reap an inevitable temporal reward, and they became, generally, a prosperous class. But with economic prosperity and the comfort and ease which accompanied it, the old spirit of daring and adventure which had characterized the first generation gave place to one of caution and compromise. Many, especially those who held public office, ... while giving a formal adherence to the Society of Friends, did so because of hereditary attachment rather than from conviction. This tendency was accelerated by the precedent established by the London Yearly Meeting in 1737, in establishing birthright membership. This permitted the wife and children to be deemed members of the Yearly Meeting by which the husband or father is a member not only during his life, but after his decease. ... Quakerism, a Church made up of converted believers, now became a society based upon heredity.²

4) The German Reformed and Lutheran Churches

The supposition that a group transplanted to another land without adequate pastoral care and church discipline results in a spiritual decline in the lives of the people is clearly seen in what happened to the Germans in Pennsylvania. In the year 1709 the English Queen Anne helped some 20,000 Germans of the Palatine to find homes in America.³ The majority of the Germans who came to the colonies belonged to the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, although there were some Roman Catholics among them. Regardless of denomination, "they were scattered as sheep having no shepherd."⁴

A cry went to the motherland for ministers, but for many

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 146.

2. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 165.

3. Haffen, Le Roy R. and Rister, Carl Coke, Western America, p. 81.

4. Bacon, op. cit., p. 120.

years it was in vain. Thompson quotes D. Mulenberg who, in the year 1743, testified to the low conditions of morality and religion. He says, "If it had continued thus for some years longer, our poor Lutherans would have been scattered or turned into heathenism."¹

The plight of the German Reformed Church is illustrated by the fact that for many years thousands were without schooling or churches. Often the people built churches and had a pious layman assume the Sabbath responsibilities. In the midst of this religious decay, there were naturally many hungry hearts seeking the satisfying Christ.

5) The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church was entrenched in the poor Southern Colonies. Here the population was scattered over the vast tracts of land known as the plantations. Schools and churches were maintained only with great difficulty. With the exception of Georgia, slavery played an important part in the social structure of the area.

Perhaps the factor which played the greatest part in the deterioration of these colonies was that England had imposed a church upon the people which they did not like. The ministerial appointments were by patronage. These men were often "corrupt adventurers whose character was below the not very lofty standards of the people whom they pretended to serve in the name of Jesus Christ."²

In an attempt to remedy this situation, the Anglican Church created The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Ports in the year 1701. The major purpose was to spread the Gospel among the heathen and unchurched. However, it quickly became the organ of the

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1. Thompson, op. cit., p. 251.
2. Bacon, op. cit., p. 148.

Anglican cause in the Middle Colonies and in New England. It had two objectives: to work with the dissenters, and to strengthen the established churches.¹

b. Summary of These Major Problems

This brief review of immigration's effects on the churches of the colonies, points out certain problems which tend to be characteristics of all the major religious groups. These problems briefly stated are as follows:

The rapid immigration of the various ethnic groups caused a critical shortage of ministers who could assume the spiritual leadership of the people. Coupled with this was the fact that the colonists were dependent upon the mother country for their spiritual leadership and in the majority of cases the mother country was either reluctant or else unable to send the needed personnel to the colonies.

This shortage of leadership resulted in the weakening of the convictions that had helped the people endure persecution in the mother country, and led to a general decline in the religious life of the people. A closely related factor was that the various non-English speaking groups could not be spiritually helped by the ministers who spoke only English.

Particularly in the Southern Colonies, the sparse population, together with the plantation system made the maintenance of schools and churches difficult.

These in brief are the major trends in the decade preceding the coming of George Whitefield to America, and serve to point out

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1. Cf. Trinterud, Lenord J., The Forming of an American Tradition, p. 229.

specific reasons for the existing spiritual decay.

C. The Great Awakening

1. The Middle Colony Revival

a. The Dutch Revival -- Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen

The preceeding pages have discussed the major causes for the religious decline in the colonies during the first part of the eighteenth century. However, black the picture may have seemed, it was not without its rays of light, for in the midst of this depressing scene there were men who were beginning to proclaim the experimental Gospel of Christ.

In the area near New Brunswick, New Jersey, the Raritan Church called Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen to its pulpit. He came from Holland, and when the Dominie arrived in his charge in the year 1720, he found the church spiritually dead, with the people content with a most perfunctory orthodoxy. In an attempt to bring new life to the congregation, he began to preach evangelistic sermons. Also, he invoked a vigorous campaign to enforce the discipline of the Reformed Church.¹

The young preacher described the Christian life in terms which the people had never before heard or considered. His fresh insight into the Scriptures appeared as a new doctrine contrary to the Dutch Reformed teachings. He preached strongly against formalism and works. "He declared that God hates the outward performance of religious duties apart from a suitable frame of mind."² He attacked the belief in baptismal regeneration which the church members held as valid proof of Christian faith. He described regeneration as such a thorough going conver-

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 54.

2. Maxson, op. cit., p. 13.

sion that it necessitated a crisis experience in the life of the believer. This meant that many of his hearers could no longer claim that they had been converted, and soon led to trouble within the church.

Frelinghuysen had attacked the core of the spiritual disease of the time. His impersonal manner of preaching this inner religion rather than an outward performance of religious duties prompted a cleavage in the church.¹ Several of the members went to Dominie Boel in New York for advice, and contrary to what Frelinghuysen had been preaching he upheld the doctrine of baptismal regeneration as the true position of the Dutch Reformed Church.

For several years Frelinghuysen stood alone in the Hudson River Valley as an advocate of the necessity of a crisis experience in the Christian life. In this decadent society he remained faithful to Christ, and continued to denounce the sins of his people with such love and stinging directness that slowly a moral reformation was effected. In the year 1725 he began to see real fruit from his labor, for in this year the last of his deacons was converted to Christ. The revival had begun. The congregation grew rapidly, and many were converted who had never been on the church rolls.

This revival spirit was not confined to the four churches on the Raritan. Soon it spread to the newly organized Presbyterian Churches in the valley. The ministers were beginning to see the need for an experimental Christianity in their local churches.

Frelinghuysen introduced lay exhortation and lay preaching as a means of aiding the spiritual growth of his people. This was the move that met the most opposition from the other clergy. They felt that

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1. Cf. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 274.

this was a direct infringement upon their rights. In answer to their objections, he published a series of sermons defending his stand. The clergy could discover no heresy save his theological position on the necessity of the inner experience hitherto regarded by the Dutch Reformed Church as an heretical idea held by the Quakers. Frelinghuysen's sincerity and faithfulness to his position finally won the respect of the moderate evangelicals of his denomination, and even men such as the genial Dominie Du Bois, senior pastor of the Collegiate Church of New York supported him in the controversy.¹

When Whitefield came to New York in 1739, he found an evangelical work already begun. He had the backing of the popular Du Bois, Frelinghuysen, and the Presbyterian minister Pemberton. This was a real blow to the hard line conservatives and their leader Dominie Boel.

Without knowing it, Frelinghuysen had ignited the spiritual spark in the hearts of the people in the Middle Colonies. The revival among the Dutch in New Jersey prepared the way for the next phase which was, the spiritual awakening soon to take place among the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. The way was now opened for the dynamic preaching of the Tennents and George Whitefield.²

b. Scotch-Irish Revival -- the Tennents

Shortly before Whitefield's visit to America in 1739, the Presbyterian Church found its strength threatened from within. Heretical and immoral ministers were seeking to dictate the policies of the church, and soon there seemed to be two factions seeking direct control.

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1. Maxson, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Cf. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 275.

The conservatives had hoped to preserve orthodoxy by forcing all ministers to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The opposition felt that such action would curtail individual liberty, especially if a man's conscience would not permit him to subscribe to the whole Confession. Soon the two forces were lined up in open combat and what has since been known as the "Old and New Side Controversy" was underway.

1) Old and New Side Controversy

The central issues of the controversy were the requirements for the ministerial candidate, and the right of the Synod over Presbyteries. Briefly, the argument went something like this. The evangelicals insisted that ministerial candidates show evidence of personal piety, and demanded that they be examined on this basis as well as on the basis of what they believed. The conservatives felt that prying into a man's personal experience was assuming a divine prerogative, and that the only qualifications for a minister should be the necessary education, subscription to the standards, and a clean moral life.

The issues came to a head in 1729 when the "Adoption Act" was passed. This act gave the Synods power to require of all candidates seeking admission to the Presbyteries, to state their acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This was a victory for the Old Side Party. However, in the year 1733 the New Side gained its point by securing the adoption of an overture concerning the trials of a ministerial candidate. It was introduced by Gilbert Tennent and directed "that there be due care in examining candidates for the Lord's Supper and for the ministry; on the evidence of God's grace in them, as well as other qualifications."¹

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1. Webster, op. cit., p. 134.

The controversy concerning the power of the Synod over the Presbyteries reached its peak in 1737, with the Old Side Party the victor. At this time a ruling was made that ministers from one Presbytery could not go into another Presbytery to preach without Presbyterial permission.

By now the churches were beginning to feel the effects of the care that was going into the acceptance of candidates for the ministry, and the insistence upon evidences of piety on the part of the clergy resulted in a growth on the part of the people. Signs of revival were being seen, and in most cases the leaders of this movement were Scotch-Irishmen, graduates of William Tennent's "Log College" at Neshaminy, Pennsylvania.¹ The complaint which led to the restricting of preachers was prompted by these young revivalists. Gilbert Tennent and his New Light brethren had gone beyond the limits of their own presbyteries and had preached to congregations under the care of other ministers. The Old Side Party could now be called the Anti-revivalists, and its power was soon felt in other directions.

2) Log College

The Log College was an important factor in the religious awakening of the Middle Colonies. It was founded by William Tennent Senior around the year 1726 when he became pastor of the Neshaminy church. While the school was established to train his own sons, Gilbert, William, John and Charles, other young men were soon admitted.² Webster says:

William Tennent, Sr. had the rare gift of attracting to him youth of worth and genius, imbuing them with his healthful spirit, and sending them forth sound in the faith, blameless in life, burning with zeal, and unsurpassed as instructive, impressive, and successful preachers.³

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1. Cf. Alexander, Archibald, The Log College, p. 44.

2. Cf. Trinterud, p. 53.

3. Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, p. 367.

The college's aim was to train men for the ministry. The problem as Tennent saw it was the presumptuous security of the people. He stressed preaching for convictions in order to counteract the moral laxity of the times. When the college was established he sought to train men who would preach a vital Christianity.

In the course of twenty years (1726 - 1746), Tennent had trained some sixteen or more men. In his journal, George Whitefield praised the school as a fitting institution for ministers, distinctly superior to the educational institutions of New England and Europe.¹

Most of the graduates went into the Presbyterian ministry, and gradually they settled in the churches of central New Jersey. They preached for conversions and emphasized that one can have the joy and assurance of knowing Christ. Revival soon broke out in many of these churches, with Gilbert Tennent the leader.

However, in spite of the effect of this type of preaching upon the people, in the year 1738 the Synod dealt a severe blow to the Tennents and Log College. This ruling stated that no Presbytery could license any clergyman until he had passed a Synod examination which covered his academic course. The Old Side wanted all candidates to be trained in European Universities or the schools of New England. The Tennents interpreted this as a personal reflection on their type of training and saw in it an attempt to keep graduates of their college from entering the ministry.² Unfortunately, at the time the ruling was first passed they were in no position to express their objections in an organized way.

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1. Whitefield, George, Journal #5, p. 44.
2. Alexander, op. cit., p. 44.

3) New Brunswick Presbytery

In the same year, 1738, the Presbytery of New Brunswick was established. Its members were those who were actively devoted to evangelism. Led by Gilbert Tennent it consisted of William Tennent, Jr., Samuel Blair, Eleazer Wales, and John Cross.¹ Their major purpose for organizing the Presbytery was to license and ordain candidates suitably prepared for the ministry.²

It was not long after this that a revival of unusual power began at New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, under the ministry of Samuel Blair.³ The Tennents were so active in promoting the revival in other churches that it became known as the Tennent Revival. The opposition accused the Tennent group of destroying the foundations of all rational religion and charged them with heresy and malice.

In 1739 there were evidences of revival power in the churches of Jonathan Dickinson in Newark and Elizabethtown. The revival was spreading but only to those churches that had evangelistic preaching.

Such was the situation in the Middle Colonies when George Whitefield came to America in 1739. Gewehr says:

His coming increased the animosities already existing between the two parties in Synod. The Old Side was ready to condemn the work as mere wild fire enthusiasm, while the New Side, warmly embraced his doctrines and became enthusiastic supporters of the movement he represented.⁴

2. New England Awakening

a. Creedalism

The Puritanism of New England was not exempt from this general

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1. Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 73.
2. Whitefield, George, Journal # 5, p. 44.
3. Beardsley, Frank Grenville, A History of American Revivals, p. 29.
4. Cf. Gewehr, Wesley M., The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740 - 1790, p. 16.

decline in religion. It had slipped from a religion emphasizing personal experience with Christ to one of conformity to certain creeds of the church.

In 1629 the Salem Covenant did not contain even one doctrinal statement. Calvinistic doctrines were taken for granted. The covenant was simply a promise to walk in the way of the Lord. The people did, however, have to undergo a personal examination of their belief by the ruling elders before being admitted to churchmembership.¹

It was not long, however, before this requirement was questioned. The standard was so high that in a very short time there were more men and women in church who had not made a confession of personal experience than there were those who had. The second generation grew up, not in ignorance, but in a heartless formality which itself began to relax as the old divines died.

The Cambridge Platform of 1648 was the first rung of their ladder in the transition from a religion of experience to a religion based on a confession. They defined the Church as all those who proved to be saints and obedient to the Word. The children of such were also members. The problem now was the maintaining of a regenerated church, since many could not claim the religious experience which hither-to had been essential to membership.²

This decline in the number of people with a conversion experience limited the membership rolls. To solve this problem the Half - Way Covenant was drawn up in Boston in the year 1662. It was a half-way agreement which recognized that the children of parents who

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1. Thompson, op. cit., p. 145.

2. Cf. Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 105.

were within the covenant of the church were members of the church, and were entitled to transmit their church membership and right to Baptism to their offspring. However, in their unregenerated state they could not partake of the Lord's Supper unless they first made confession of a religious experience.¹

This was not the right answer, and instead of promoting a vital religious experience, soon the tendency was to encourage moralism. Those who adhered to this creed did not seek to qualify for full membership, but rather were satisfied to remain in their unregenerate condition.²

The next step was inevitable. Solomon Stoddard, (1643 - 1729) permitted both the converted and the unconverted to partake of the Lord's Supper. He felt that its observance was an act of worship, and the unconverted person was not to be excused from performing this act. Stoddard also believed that all the sacraments were mere monuments. Their important contribution was the effective representation they made. He placed them in the same realm as that of prayer or sermon.³ Naturally the result of such a religious trend was decline. Philip writes:

Politics divided the people, and pleasure absorbed the young. Family discipline was generally neglected, and licentiousness rapidly spreading. The sabbath evening became the chief season of mirth and dissipation.⁴

Bacon writes, "By the end of the first third of the eighteenth century, New England, politically and morally, had come into a state of unstable equilibrium."⁵ To these spiritually slumbering people came Jonathan

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1. Cf. Foster, Frank Hugh, A Genetic History of the New England Theology, p. 32.
2. Cf. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 13.
3. Cf. Foster, op. cit., p. 39.
4. Philip, Thomas, The Christian History, Vol. II., p. 148.
5. Bacon, op. cit., p. 105.

Edwards and later George Whitefield.

b. Jonathan Edwards

Never had the traditional theology of the New Englanders been in such need of a champion as in the beginning of the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Foster writes:

The forces embraced in the perfect systems of Calvinism, both good and evil, have been at work a hundred years upon a field singularly favorable to their normal development, protected by its isolation from the most demoralizing tendencies, but not wholly excluded from the general influences of the age. The course of events has been against the better of them, and has tended to emphasize the worst. ... it seems that the whole theological system is about to give way to another, and with this change the great principles of the Protestant Reformation seem about to fall.¹

Many a devout Calvinist believed that Jonathan Edwards was the man who might justify the ancient dogmas of the troubled churches of New England. Edwards began his ministry where the full force of the theological situation could be felt. In 1727 he was called to assist his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at Northampton. Upon the death of his grandfather in 1739 he assumed full responsibility as pastor of the church.²

Edwards saw immediately that the extra-ordinary dullness in the religious life of the community was affecting the morals of the young people. Sweet quotes Edwards as saying, "It was their manner to get together in assembly of both sexes for mirth and jollity, which they called frolics, and they would often spend the night in them."³ For many months he labored intensely with the young people, hoping to promote conversion experiences in each of them that would be a deep and divinely wrought work in the soul.

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1. Foster, op. cit., p. 47.

2. Cf. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 23.

3. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America., p. 187.

It was five long years before there were any signs of revival. Then, in 1734 two young people died untimely deaths. The people began to take an interest in the eternal issues of life. In the sermons which followed these unfortunate occurrences, Edwards insisted upon the sovereignty of God and the mercy of God. In December of 1734 the spark was ignited as five people were converted, and by February of 1735 there were over three hundred conversions.

The results of this revival were tremendous. The main topic of conversion¹ was a person's relationship to Christ. Prince writes:

The solemn rumor of that suprising work of God resounding through the country was a special means of exciting great thoughtfulness of heart in many irreligious people; and great joy in others, both in the view of what the mighty power and grace of God had wrought, and in the hopeful prospect that this blessed work begun would go on and spread throughout the land.¹

The revival spirit spread from Northampton throughout the whole Connecticut valley. It was not a provincial affair, but spread to one hundred and fifty communities.

The excitement of the revival gradually passed away, but the effects remained. The churches that had been thus blessed were stronger than before. The difference between a converted person and a nominal Christian was defined. "The doctrine of regeneration acquired practical effectiveness, for men were actually born again in great numbers .. the paralysis of New England was broken up."²

The seed was now sown in New England as it had been in the Middle Colonies under Frelinghuysen and the Tennents. The way was prepared for George Whitefield to reap the harvest.

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1. Prince, Thomas, An Account of the Revival of Religion in Boston, p. 7.
2. Beardsley, op. cit., p. 31.

D. Summary

The religious trends of this era constitute the background for an interpretation and understanding of George Whitefield's relationship to the American Colonial Church.

The immigration of the first forty years of the eighteenth century tells the story of the confusion and diffusion of the many racial and religious groups. These people were separated from the mores and folkways of the Old World and church discipline. Because of the absence of an adequate clergy to provide spiritual food, these peoples soon lost their Christian vitality. This led to religious indifference and moral decay.

In the midst of these conditions three phases of an embryonic awakening were traced. Each phase was related to a specific religious or geographical group. Briefly, the phases were these.

In the early days of the eighteenth century, the Dutch Reformed Church was spiritually dead. The majority of the Church members were unable to testify to having a personal relationship to Christ as their Redeemer. Christianity had come to mean the assent to a creed, and the result was a perfunctory orthodoxy.

To these Dutch people of the Raritan Valley came Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen. His purpose in coming was to create a spiritual reformation in the hearts of these people. Under his able leadership, and by preaching the necessity of having an inner experience with Christ, a revival began in his churches. This revival soon spread to other churches in the valley. It was just the spark that was needed to prepare the way for George Whitefield.

During this same period the Presbyterian Church of the Middle

Colonies was experiencing the gradual development of two theological factions. The conservative group was known as the "Old Side" Party, and in opposition to this body there arose the "New Side" Party which placed less value on the traditional creedal basis for church membership than on the necessity for having a personal religious experience with Christ. This new principle broke down denominational and creedal barriers and resulted in the awakening of the people from their religious indifference.

The Tennent family and the Log College played the predominant role in bringing the revival to these Presbyterians. Another important development of this period was the forming of the New Brunswick Presbytery under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent. With him were several of the Log College graduates who felt the need of an organized effort to combat the non-evangelistic emphasis of the New Jersey Synod.

It has already been pointed out that the same departure from a personal religion was also seen in New England. The theological modifications of this church led to lax religious practices and in spite of the periodic adoption of orthodox statements of faith, religious vitality tended to decline. As church membership was given to all who would adhere to the creed, the experimental religion of their forefathers began to vanish. This resulted in a general lessening of godliness and power.

Into this religious environment came Jonathan Edwards. This decay and the futility of the organized church to cope with the situation challenged the sensitive spiritual awareness of Edwards. In his preaching he specifically insisted upon the sovereignty and the mercy of God. Finally, in 1734 a religious revival broke out in his church. This spark soon spread to the neighboring communities.

With the spread of evangelical preaching in the various communities, seed was being sown for the harvest. There arose a need for a man who was broad in denominational associations, deep in emotional experience, and with a sense of a Divine commission from God. This leader was found in George Whitefield. He came into a spiritually hungry nation, forcefully preaching the doctrine of the new birth, and giving his best to the church of Christ in America. In the following chapter his specific contribution to the American Colonial Church will be considered.

CHAPTER IV
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A. Introduction

The spiritual conditions of the Colonies have already been noted. George Whitefield came into a land already prepared for his ministry, and he reaped the harvest prepared by a handful of faithful men before his coming. The question may well be asked, what influence did Whitefield have upon America's religious life? True, he founded no denomination as did Calvin; he headed no movement against any Church as did Luther; and he wrote no great books as did Bunyan. Instead, he came as a simple, honest man, who lived for only one thing, and that was to present Christ as man's Savior.

What was his specific influence upon the American Colonial Church? It is hard to be specific when dealing with his influences and contributions, for there is much overlapping of any divisions. This chapter will deal with his major impacts upon the Colonies under the two headings of Direct and Indirect Influences. Selected activities while in the Colonies will be used as supporting evidence for the breakdown of the material here presented.

B. Itinerant Ministry

In England Whitefield's itineration had made him famous as

an evangelist, and he had become known as the "Gospel Rover".¹ This system was to be widely used in his work in the New World. In America his preaching soon took him to all of the Colonies. To the people of this new country, itinerant preaching was a novelty, but it soon became one of the most effective methods of unifying the revivalistic efforts.

Between 1738 and 1769 Whitefield made six trips to America, and on each visit much time was spent in extensive travel up and down the Atlantic Coast. On his last visit, he died at the home of a friend in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Since it would be impossible to discuss each visit in full, the second trip will be used to point out the scope of his travels and the work he did, and the route of the third visit will be included as added support.

1. Second Visit to America

a. Immediate Popularity

Whitefield made his second visit to America in November of 1739. He came for the sole purpose of building an orphanage. His reputation had gone before him, and when he arrived in Philadelphia he was immediately asked to preach. The response to his preaching was overwhelming, and thousands of people of many denominations came to hear him.² It was in Philadelphia that his itinerant ministry began. While he intended to return to Savannah and assume the duties of an appointed minister of the Church of England, and to provide a home for the orphans in that city, most of his time was spent in preaching to

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1. Ante, p. 15.

2. Cf. Gillies, op. cit., p. 42.

the people of the Colonies.

It was in Philadelphia that Whitefield became acquainted with the Tennent family. Tyerman writes concerning this meeting:

Saturday, Nov. 10. "About eleven, he read prayers and preached in the Church; there dined with the minister of the parish, at his return home, was much comforted by the coming of Mr. Tennent, an old grey-headed disciple and soldier of Jesus Christ; about three, went to the prison, and preached on the trembling jailor; returned home with the Swedish minister and Mr. Tennent; conversed with them of the things of God,"...¹

He was invited to preach in New York by Mr. Noble, the only person who knew him in the city. On the way to New York he preached at Burlington and New Brunswick, the home of Gilbert Tennent.² The latter then accompanied him to New York. Upon his arrival, the commissary refused him the use of the established church. Undaunted, Whitefield held services in the fields for nearly a week. He had been offered the use of the Presbyterian Church, but knowing the bitterness between the Anglicans and the Presbyterians, he did not want to take sides and at first refused the offer. He did yield to Mr. Pemberton's offer, however, when he learned that the commissary had preached in a Dutch Reformed Church. Thousands came to hear his farewell sermon. The windows were opened to permit those outside the church to hear him.³ Tyerman quotes Thomas Prince who was an eye-witness of this service as saying:

I never saw, in all my life, such attentive audiences as Mr. Whitefield's in New York. All he said was demonstration of life and power. The people's eyes and ears hung upon his lips. They greedily devoured every word.⁴

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 324.
2. Cf. Whitefield, Journal No. V., p. 34.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39.
4. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 329.

This seemed to be a typical reaction on the part of the people. Maxson wrote, "In a city where deep religious emotion was almost unknown, Whitefield, by his frankness, earnestness, and pathos had opened a fountain of tears".¹

En route to Philadelphia on his return, he preached at Elizabethtown for Jonathan Dickinson. When he passed through New Brunswick he met several of the evangelical ministers who had been instrumental in the revival of the Middle Colonies. They included Frelinghuysen, the Tennents, Blair and Rowland.² At Neshaminy he preached for Mr. Tennent, Sr., the founder of the "Log College". Whitefield described the congregation thus:

...at Neshaminy, I believe there were a thousand horses. The people, however, did not sit upon them to hear the sermon ... but tied them to the hedges. ... Though it was cold the congregation stood very patiently in the open air, and seemed in no hurry to return home after the discourse was ended.³

When he reached Philadelphia in November, he sold the cargo he had collected to obtain funds for the orphanage he planned to build in Georgia. This time he stayed in the city only a month, but the visit produced a remarkable effect upon the religious life of the people. Every day for a year afterwards religious services were held in the churches. Twenty-six prayer meetings were formed as a result of his challenging preaching. He left the city in December, taking with him his good friend Steward, and traveling along the coast on horseback.⁴

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1. Maxson, op. cit., p. 50.
2. Cf. Whitefield, George, Journal No. V., p. 42.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
4. Cf. Webster, op. cit., p. 144.

On the day of his departure, two hundred horsemen accompanied him to Chester, Pennsylvania. At Chester he preached from a balcony to some five thousand people. He continued on through Maryland, Virginia, and Carolina, stopping to preach wherever the opportunity arose. He finally arrived in Savannah on January 11, 1740.¹

b. Preaching Tour

Upon his arrival in Savannah, he established the long dreamed of Orphanage, and for three months he labored there, attending to the spiritual and physical needs of his charges. The running expenses for such an enterprise soon depleted his resources, and the only financial source known to him was the good will of the people of the Colonies. Consequently, in the middle of April he set out on an extensive preaching tour. A dual purpose was thus achieved; money could be collected for the work at the Orphans-Home, and souls might find Christ.

Wherever he preached on this tour, revival seemed to break out. As an itinerant evangelist he invoked the displeasure of the Old Side Presbyterian Party. He further incited their wrath when he allied himself with the Log College men. The result was the spread of revival from a mere local one to one including all of the New Jersey Synod.²

As an Anglican, he was not bound by the ruling restricting Presbyterian ministers to their own churches. When Jonathan Dickinson invited him to preach for him, their friendship resulted in the New

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1. Cf. Gillies, op. cit., pp. 44-46

2. Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 87.

York Presbytery drawing closer to the Tennent group. Dickinson had now publicly aligned himself with the revival and against the Old Side Party.¹

Whitefield closed his evangelistic campaign in Philadelphia in May of 1740. Just before its close, a great revival broke out. Thousands came to hear him. The largest building in the city was too small to accommodate the crowds, so Whitefield resorted to field preaching. It was during this campaign that Whitefield attracted the attention of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was amazed at the change that this young preacher's sermons wrought in the lives of the people, and he once observed that the change was so great that one could not walk through the streets of Philadelphia in the evening without hearing psalms sung from the homes of most of the families.² Ever alert for new printing business, Franklin arranged to print Whitefield's sermons. Thus began a warm and intimate friendship.

c. Visit to New England

Some scholars believe that the most important results from this second visit to the Colonies were those achieved in New England. In August of 1740, he received letters of invitation from the Rev. Dr. Colman and Mr. Cooper, ministers in Boston. Longing to see the descendants of the Puritans, he sailed for Newport, Rhode Island, arriving there on September 14, 1740.³

On September 18 he arrived in Boston, then the capital of New England. His reputation had gone before him, and the whole town

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 33.

2. Cf. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 335.

3. Cf. Gillies, op. cit., p. 50.

was waiting for him. Here he had the support of the majority of the leading clergy, although Charles Chauncy of First Church was against him.¹

In the ten days of his stay, he preached to four thousand at Dr. Colman's Church, and approximately fifteen thousand people heard him preach on the Commons. In this short period, he preached sixteen sermons and traveled one hundred and seventy miles.² His influence on the lives of all who heard him can never be tabulated. His preaching was soul searching and hundreds were converted. The ministers of Boston were inspired with new faith and life and power. Thomas Prince, Pastor of Old South Church, said, "Both people and ministers seemed under a divine influence to quicken each other. The people seemed to have a renewed taste for those old pious and experimental writers."³

He further wrote concerning Whitefield's influence;

Upon Mr. Whitefield's leaving us, great numbers in this town were so happily concerned about their souls, as we had never seen anything like it before, except at the time of the general earthquake. And their desires were excited to hear ministers more than ever; so that our assemblies both on lectures and Sabbaths, were surprisingly increased.⁴

Tyerman records that the movement begun by Whitefield continued for a year and a half after his departure. Indirectly his ministry was responsible for the change in Boston to evangelical Christianity. He says:

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1. Cf. Sweet, William Warren, Religion in the Middle Colonies, p. 284.
2. Cf. Gillies, op. cit., p. 50.
3. Prince, op. cit., p. 19.
4. Ibid., p. 20.

Thirty religious Societies were instituted in the city. Ministers, besides attending to their usual work, preached in private houses almost every night. Chapels were always crowded. The very face of the town seemed to be strangely altered. Even the Negroes and boys in the streets left their usual rudeness, and taverns were found empty of all but lodgers.¹

He left Boston for Northampton to visit Jonathan Edwards and the scene of the revival of 1735.² The religious conditions of New England were most favorable to Whitefield's evangelistic style of preaching, for the revival under Edwards had gradually died down. The people and ministers accepted his preaching willingly. Tracy, in quoting Edwards', gives us an insight into the influence Whitefield had on the people that October. He wrote:.

He preached here four sermons in the meeting house The congregation was extraordinarily melted by every sermon; almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of the sermon. Mr. Whitefield's sermons were suitable to the circumstances of the town; containing just reproofs of our backslidings, and in a most moving affecting manner, making use of our great profession and great mercies as arguments within us to return to God, from whom we had departed. ... The revival first appeared chiefly among professors, and those that had entertained the hope that they were in a state of grace; but in a very short time there appeared an awakening and deep concern among young persons that looked upon themselves as in a Christless state; and there were some hopeful appearances of conversion; and some professors were greatly revived.³

Thus at Northampton, as in the surrounding areas that he visited, Whitefield was the precursor of a revival that was to last for two years.

Leaving Northampton, he went south to New Haven, where he was received by Mr. Pierpont, the brother-in-law of Jonathan Edwards.

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 425.
2. Cf. Ante, p. 37.
3. Tracy, Joseph, The History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield, p. 193.

He preached to hundreds in the three days of his visit. His preaching service was visited by the governor, the council, and the members of the Lower House of the Assembly. When preaching to the students who came to hear him, he took the opportunity to speak of the evils of an unconverted ministry. Leaving New Haven, he preached with great success at Milford, Stratford, Fairfield, Norwalk, and Stamford, arriving in New York on October 30. From New York he started for the Orphan's-House in Georgia, preaching wherever he had the opportunity along the way. He stopped in New Brunswick long enough to ask Gilbert Tennent to carry on the work of God at Boston.¹

While the primary purpose of this trip had not been to promote the work of the Orphan-House, wherever he preached he asked for contributions. The conversion of souls was his first love, but he never forgot the cause which had brought him to the Colonies.

He spent Christmas with his orphans, and appointed Mr. Jonathan Barber superintendent of the home. On January 16, 1741, he sailed for England, arriving at Falmouth on March 11.²

Whitefield was the greatest single factor in the Awakening of 1740. He had zealously carried the message of experimental Christianity up and down the Atlantic Coast to all of the Colonies from New England to Georgia. Among the revivalists his influence alone touched every section of the country and every existing denomination. He cut across all theological and denominational lines to preach the doctrine of the New Birth. In his extensive travels he united all

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1. Cf. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 427-436.
2. Cf. Gillies, op. cit., p. 55.

those who were like minded concerning the evangelical doctrines of Salvation.

2. Third Visit to America

In 1744 Whitefield returned to the Colonies. This visit gave added support to the revival that was now in full swing. He visited Portsmouth, Newburyport, Boston, New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia. In 1746, while in Maryland, he strengthened the evangelical position. He wrote:

Everywhere, almost, the door is opening for preaching, great numbers flock to hear, and the power of an ascended Savior attends the word. Lately I have been in seven counties in Maryland and preached with abundant success.¹

After preaching in Charleston, North Carolina, in January of 1747, he made short trips to New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. In March of 1748 he sailed for Bermuda because of ill health, and then on to England, arriving there in July.²

The activities of this trip serve to emphasize the fact that more than anyone else, George Whitefield was the unifying element among the American revivalist forces. His itinerant preaching brought him into close contact with men from every denomination and every walk of life, and this served to minimize accidental differences among the various revival groups.³ In addition, this mode of evangelism became the beginning of a transforming process in the nation's life. Thousands were given a new view of life's values, and in addition

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1. Whitefield, George, The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield, Vol. II, pp. 83-84.
2. Gillies, op. cit., pp. 106-107.
3. Cf. Maxson, op. cit., p. 143.

people were beginning to take an interest in what was happening to those in the other Colonies. Other gifted preachers soon followed the pattern set by Whitefield, and this movement from church to church established a stronger bond between them.¹

C. Direct Contributions of this Ministry

1. Social Influences

In an age which was generally unsympathetic to social obligations, Whitefield traveled up and down two great nations, teaching the people to see the perils of suffering humanity. The American Colonial Church was given its chance to demonstrate its Christian faith by works. This was accomplished by the collections he solicited for the Orphanage he had established in Savannah, Georgia.

a. Orphanage

The idea for an orphanage did not originate with George Whitefield. It was first mentioned by Charles Wesley after his trip to the Colonies in 1738. Upon his return from this land, he had plans for such a venture himself.² He mentioned it to Whitefield, and when the latter arrived in Georgia for the first time later that year, his heart was pricked by the social conditions he witnessed.

He said:

I found many orphans, who though taken notice of by the honorable trustees, yet through the neglect of persons that acted under them, were in miserable circumstances. For want of a house to breed them up in, the poor little ones were tabled out here and

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1. Cf. Ibid., p. 145.

2. Cf. Gamble, Thomas, Bethesda; and Historical Sketch of Whitefield's House of Mercy in Georgia, p. 15.

there, and besides the hurt they received by bad example, forgot at home what they learnt at school. Others were at hand services, and likely to have no education at all. Upon feeling this and finding that his majesty and parliament had the interests of this colony much at heart, I thought I could not better show my regard to God and my country, than by getting a house and land for these children, where they might learn to labor, read and write, and at the same time, be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.¹

He returned to England the same year to receive priest's orders and to ask for contributions for his favorite project. In January, 1739, he returned to Georgia and hired a large house. He then proceeded to gather all the orphans in the colony. The majority of them were poor cases and "three or four almost eaten up with lice."²

In March, with only about one hundred and fifty pounds in cash, he built a great house and called it Bethesda. It was his hope that this house would be a house of mercy to many souls.³ Whitefield's life from this time on was a constant and heroic struggle to support what is now recognized as the oldest charity in America.

From the beginning, the Orphanage was adequately staffed. There were two women to take care of the household work, and three men and two boys were employed about the plantation and in caring for the cattle. The magistrate allowed him to use two Dutch servants. As the Orphanage grew, a doctor, a tailor and other help were added to the staff.⁴

Being greatly concerned about the spiritual welfare of his charges he wrote:

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1. Whitefield, George, Works of the Rev. George Whitefield, Vol. III, p. 464.
2. Ibid., p. 465.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 466.
4. Cf. Ibid., p. 467.

As my design in founding the Orphan House was to build up souls for God, I endeavor to preach most of all to the children's hearts. But that they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, I constantly instruct them out of the Church of England's Articles, which I turn into catechetical questions.¹

Since wherever he preached he always asked for a contribution to the Orphan House, there were those who accused him of misusing the funds and being a beggar. To this attitude Whitefield replied that he felt the orphans were as a family given to him by God. It was his sole responsibility to provide for them as best he knew how. He believed that those who condemned his method of soliciting funds should be careful, for God had visibly bestowed His blessing upon this work. He also believed that it was his duty to recommend the work of the Orphanage to all the people to whom he was called to preach.²

While several times the financial situation at the Orphanage seemed hopeless, the constant itinerating in America and England kept people conscious of the needs of others. Whitefield's faith in God's ability to supply all his needs could not help but influence the people who heard him. Once, when questioned regarding the needs of the house he replied that he never failed in anything when his dependence was upon God. Whenever he relied upon men and their promises, bitter disappointment was often the result. He believed that whenever one person withdrew his support, God would speak to another to replace him.³

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1. Whitefield, George, A Continuation of the Account of the Orphan House in Georgia, From January 1740 to January 1743, p. vi.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 120.

In 1748 Whitefield tried to establish a higher institution of learning in conjunction with the Orphan-House. Almost twenty years later, in 1767, it seemed as though his plans would take on reality. A charter was to be granted somewhat like the plan for the College of New Jersey. However, the Archbishop of Canterbury insisted that the head of the College be a member of the Church of England and that its liturgy be used. Whitefield declined the offer under these conditions, for the greater part of the contributions for the Orphan-House came from "dissenters". Also, this condition violated his catholic attitude toward denominations.¹

The Bethesda Orphan-House was a great influence in the immediate surroundings both spiritually and physically. Since it was well known, strangers were constantly visiting the house, and Whitefield records that many people were brought home to God by receiving Christ as they visited.² Likewise, it was an economic asset to the colony of Georgia itself. This was one of the poorest of the Crown Colonies, and the land scarcely furnished the people with enough food. Whitefield did not see how the colony could exist much longer under these conditions. The people of the colony later testified to the trustees that if it had not been for the money spent in connection with the Orphan-House, the people of the northern part of the colony would have had to move to other lands.³

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1. Cf. Gamble, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
2. Cf. Whitefield, George, *A Continuation of the Account of the Orphan House in Georgia, From January 1740 to January 1743*, p. viii.
3. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. vii.

During the thirty years of Whitefield's work here the Orphanage played a direct part in the lives of one hundred and forty boys and forty-three girls by suitably clothing, educating, and maintaining them. When he died, he willed the institution to Lady Huntingdon and not to the magistrates of Savannah as they had expected. It was through Lady Huntingdon's efforts that the establishment later almost became a preacher's college. Bethesda for a time was the heart of a mission movement in the Colonies, where students were trained for the ministry.¹

This institution was undoubtedly one of Whitefield's greatest direct contributions to the Colonial Church. It certainly was the primary cause for his constant interest in the Colonies and his many extensive preaching tours. Through this work, the "beggar for orphans" became the means of rejuvenating the Colonial Church. It is appropriate to quote what Whitefield wrote concerning his work here. He said:

I am not ashamed to beg for God because my going to Georgia, and erecting the Orphan-House, was one great means in His hand of bringing me out to preach the everlasting Gospel in so many places, and to many thousands of poor perishing souls, who I doubt not (be it spoken with all humility) will evidence my commission there-to, by rejoicing in the last day.²

b. Champion of Slaves

George Whitefield was not restricted to the winning of souls, nor to promoting his Orphanage. He also felt a great concern over the other social issues of his day, and thus became one of the few public

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1. Cf. Gamble, op. cit., p. 68.

2. Whitefield, George, A Continuation of the Account of the Orphan-House in Georgia From January 1740 to January 1743, p. 34.

figures to speak against the cruel treatment of the slaves. In a letter addressed to the people of Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina, he made the following statement quoted by Tyerman:

As I lately passed through your provinces, I was touched with a fellow-feeling of the miseries of the poor Negroes. ... How you will receive it, I know not; but whatever be the result, I must inform you, in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that I think God has a quarrel with you, for your cruelty to the poor Negroes. ... Your dogs are cared and fondled at your tables; but your slaves, who are frequently styled dogs or beasts, have not an equal privilege.¹

This letter was printed and distributed throughout the Southern Colonies, and resulted in a great deal of trouble for him. Whitefield's deep humanitarian attitude was far more advanced than the general calloused indifference manifest by the clergy of his time, but his preaching in the South did stir the hearts of many of the Church members. One of the first-fruits of this preaching was the movement among the plantation owners to have religious instruction for their slaves who hitherto had been devoted to worship of the fetishes brought from Africa.²

2. Educational Influences

Students of American History have usually overlooked the activities of George Whitefield in fields other than that of the pioneer evangelist. Few people therefore realize that he was deeply sensitive to the evils of illiteracy and endeavored to promote education wherever he went. Several of the educational institutions that emerged from the Great Awakening owe their existence to his

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 353.
2. Cf. Bacon, op. cit., p. 179.

generosity, while others actually owe their foundation to him.¹

Of all the eighteenth century educational institutions, the College of Philadelphia was non-denominational. It definitely emerged from the influence of George Whitefield during his second visit to Philadelphia in 1740. To accommodate Whitefield, Benjamin Franklin and others solicited funds for the erection of a building which was to serve as a place for his preaching, and also as a Charity School. For several reasons the school did not materialize. In 1749, Franklin and a group of men started an Academy which later grew into the College of Philadelphia and finally into the University of Pennsylvania.²

He also contributed to the establishment of the College of New Jersey. When William Tennent, Sr., died, the Log College ceased to exist. Several of the New Side Presbyterians saw the need for continuing the work of training an evangelical ministry, and under the leadership of Governor Belcher, a new college was founded in 1746. When Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies went to England in 1753 to raise money for the new college, their success was attributed to Whitefield's help. The latter's friendship with the nobility was a great asset whenever he championed the cause of any charity. He wrote letters of recommendation to the various nobles and introduced his friends to the Scotch Presbyterians. As a result of their visit, they obtained enough money to enable the trustees to build a dormitory building for the students. There was also enough money to provide an

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1. Cf. Belden, op. cit., p. 237.

2. Cf. Sweet, William Warren, Religion in Colonial America, p. 314.

endowment for the support of necessary instructors.¹

He was also a heavy contributor to the Indian Charity School in Connecticut.² In 1766, Samuel Occum, an Indian minister, came to England to seek contributions for the Indian Charity School. It was Whitefield's cooperation that made this mission the most successful one attempted by any man in the Colonial period. The contributions were so great that Rev. Wheelock, the head of the school, transformed it into a college and named it Dartmouth.³

Another Memorial to George Whitefield's influence upon the educational establishments of his day was in Northampton County, Pennsylvania. It was here that he attempted to establish a school for Negroes.⁴ He also contributed generously to the German schools in Philadelphia.⁵

It seems self-evident that a man who would support educational institutions would be an influential factor in the lives of their graduates. Since he knew the difficulties involved in providing an educated ministry, he did all that he humanly could to promote such endeavors, thus insuring the new churches the type of men they desired.

D. Indirect Contributions of this Ministry

1. Ecclesiastical Influences

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1. Cf. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. II, p. 323.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 471.
3. Cf. Ibid., pp. 493-495.
4. Cf. Greenfield, Lessons From the Life of George Whitefield, p. 54.
5. Cf. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. II, p. 379.

a. Ecumenical Spirit

The second chapter revealed the religious conditions of the church prior to Whitefield's arrival in America. As previously stated, it had been the common practice of the church to allow the unconverted to become members. There were a large number of ministers, especially in New England, who were in a state of religious apathy. The Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies were on the verge of a schism due to the controversy between the conservatives and the evangelicals. When Whitefield appeared he displayed one dominant characteristic that was retained throughout his life. This was his ecumenical spirit which made it easy for him to cooperate with any church or minister who was interested in saving souls. This spirit of ecumenicity helped break down the traditional prejudices and provincialism that had characterized the Colonial Church before the Great Awakening. In this period sharp controversies developed, but the spirit of religious indifference could no longer continue. The following illustrations will support the claim that his broad catholic spirit helped eradicate traditionalism among the various denominations.

Whitefield, the Anglican priest, broke all traditional patterns by willingly communing with all denominations. He was invited to preach by the Dutch Reformed ministers who were interested in revival. The Log College men of the Middle Colonies found in him a strong friend who helped their cause. In 1739 he preached in New York. His desire to promote an ecumenical spirit among the churches left an indelible impression on the minds of his listeners. They went away from his services feeling that he possessed a catholic spirit, seeking only to bring men to Christ. There was no feeling

of obligation on the part of his converts to join the Anglican Church, but rather the attitude prevailed that new Christians should join the church of their own choice.¹

While traveling through the Colonies on his second visit, he preached to Baptists in Philadelphia, and to Moravians in Germantown. In Boston he preached in the fields to all types of people from every denomination. The crowd contained not only Christians, but also Jews and atheists.²

To present a clear picture of Whitefield's influence on the people of his day, Prince quotes an ingenious gentleman who says of him; "He breathes a most catholic spirit. He prays most earnestly that God would destroy all the bigotry and party zeal that has divided Christians".³

Opposition to the revival effort had caused ministers and laymen alike to take sides. Several denominations were split because of the internal disorder. Whitefield deplored the dividing of Christ's Church. In a letter to a friend he wrote:

It pleased me to find you breath so Catholic a spirit. O that bigotry and party zeal were not so much as once named among us, as becometh saints! Since Christ is not divided in himself, why should Christians be divided one amongst another? Bigotry, I am sure can never be the fruit of that wisdom which cometh from above -- no, it is earthy, sensual and devilish.⁴

In his itineracy he wanted to be the helper of all Christian denominations. Tyerman quotes a letter he wrote in July of 1741:

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1. Cf. Belden, op. cit., p. 81.
2. Cf. Prince, op. cit., p. 43.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
4. Whitefield, George, Works of the Rev. George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 142.

... God lets me see, more and more, that I must evangelize.
... I have no freedom, but in going about to all denominations.
I cannot join with anyone, so as to be fixed in one particular
place. Everyone has his proper gift. Field-preaching is my
place. In this I am carried as on eagle's wings. God makes
way for me everywhere.¹

When Whitefield arrived in America in 1744, the New England churches were sharply divided between the friends and the foes of the revival. To strengthen the Church, he wisely went on his tour as a pacifier. His attitude was one of meekness and sweetness, demonstrating the love of Christ. In spite of the opposition he received from certain Protestant ministers, he was always willing to fellowship with them. To offset the emotionalism that often followed a revival, he preached expository sermons. He recommended to all who had an emotional experience the Scriptures as a rule for the validity of such an experience. Should the individual experience conflict with Scripture, the experience was to be counted as a delusion. In every sermon he applied himself to the understanding of his congregation and thus drove home the application to their hearts.²

His true love of spiritual freedom and an honest reverence for religious equality became a decisive factor in making the Great Awakening an inter-colonial evangelistic movement.

b. Advance Courier of Methodism

Whitefield did not form any Methodist Societies. The majority of his converts joined the existing churches. However, he did indirectly prepare the way for Wesley's itinerant lay-preachers.

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1. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p. 495
2. Tyerman, Luke, Life of George Whitefield, Vol. II, p. 145.

There is some evidence that "Societies" for religious purposes did spring up here in America. These "Societies" often were absorbed by the Methodist organization in 1771. When Whitefield was in New York in 1741, he noticed that there were several of these "Societies" in town. There was a society for men, one for women and also one for girls and boys. He regretted that he was unable to visit them at the time, but he did hope that God would send them elders to lead them into the truth.¹

In the Southern Colonies he was instrumental in the conversion of many people. Robert Strawbridge built the first Methodist Church in Frederick County, Maryland, in 1764. As he itinerated over the same areas where Whitefield had been so successful, "doubtless, he gathered not a little of the fruit where Whitefield had shaken the boughs".²

In reference to Whitefield's extended activity in the Colonies from 1739 to 1770 and especially in the decade of 1740 to 1750, Bacon says, "It was destined to impress upon the American Church in its various orders, for a hundred years to come the character of Methodism."³

Whitefield, the itinerant evangelist, had set the pattern for Methodist itineracy. In America he had laid the foundation of the Methodist Societies. The way had been prepared by his powerful preaching. The Colonies were ready to receive the zealous lay-

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1. Cf. Tees, Francis H., The Beginnings of Methodism in England and in America, p. 74.
2. McTyeire, Holland N., A History of Methodism, p. 253.
3. Bacon, op. cit., p. 176.

preachers sent over by John Wesley.

2. Homiletical Influences

George Whitefield was a born preacher and orator. His vivid use of imagination in his sermons held the attention of all who heard him. Preaching was his first love and he would never turn down an opportunity to preach the truth of the Gospel. Gillies writes:

... he preached upwards of eighteen thousand sermons in the course of his ministry, which included thirty-four years and a quarter; which was somewhat more than five hundred sermons a year.¹

Whitefield's imagination and picturesque style of preaching were a welcome relief to the colonists. Sermons were read in a dry unappealing manner, and were not adapted to convicting the people of their sins. The sermons contained very little gospel but rather presented fine pictures of moral virtues and uninteresting contemplations.²

In contrast to this, Whitefield could so vividly picture heaven that the scene seemed to be actually in front of the congregation. Wakeley says:

His eyes, upturned, seemed to the beholder to penetrate the very throne of God. He saw, so it would seem, the celestial host. He addressed Gabriel, as if familiar with that bright Archangel. He bade him suspend his flight and receive the news, and bear it upward, that one more sinner had repented.³

Sometimes at the end of a sermon he would project himself in the role of a judge pronouncing sentence. With tears in his eyes, and after a pause in his preaching he would say, "I am now going to put on my

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1. Gillies, op. cit., p. 273.
2. Cf. Gewehr, op. cit., p. 38.
3. Wakeley, op. cit., p. 33.

condemning cap. Sinner I must do it. I must pronounce sentence upon you."¹ After describing the eternal punishment he would recite the words of Christ, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."²

To properly estimate the power of Whitefield as a preacher, one would have to see him in the pulpit. The sermons that were published were not eloquent and cannot reveal the great impressions they made on the minds and hearts of the hearers.

It was not only the masses that were affected by Whitefield's preaching but also scholars and preachers. The conservative historian-preacher, Thomas Prince of Boston, spoke approvingly of his presentation, when he visited his city on September 14, 1740. Prince referred to him as one who preached as having the oracles of God. He was greatly impressed by the way Whitefield made his application. It was in such a tender and moving manner, inviting the people to become acquainted with Christ as their Redeemer, that he melted the congregation to tears.³

Whitefield's power of persuasion is clearly illustrated by Benjamin Franklin's testimony. Franklin did not approve of the plan to build the orphanage in Georgia, but suggested that it be built in Philadelphia. Whitefield rejected this advice, and consequently Franklin planned to withdraw his support. He would have, had it not been for his friend's forceful appeal. He writes of this experience thus:

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1. Gillies, op. cit., p. 264
2. Ibid., p. 264.
3. Prince, op. cit., p. 8.

I happened, soon after, to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I have in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistols of gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper; another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket into the collector's dish, gold and all.¹

Whitefield seldom concluded a sermon, whether on an evangelistic theme or other, without pointing out a place where their Christianity might be practiced. He would make his customary appeals for the Orphanage, or bring to the attention of his followers the need for Christian charity in the relief of the sufferers of the terrible fire in Boston or the damage done by fire to Harvard College.²

What was his source of power? It is best summarized in a statement he made himself. Gillies quotes it thus:

'The only Methodism I desire to know' says he, 'is a holy method of dying to ourselves, and living to God' ... By 'living to God' he meant a constant endeavor after conformity to the divine will of things.³

His power was a result of an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a recognition of his own sinfulness. The messages he preached reflected his own personal experience. There were four main things he never lost sight of in his sermons. These were: man's sinfulness and corruption of heart; the redemption of man by Christ and justification before God by faith in Jesus; entire renewal of heart and life by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit; and man's unworthiness to deserve the name of Christian unless he is dead to sin and tends to live a holy

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1. Gillies, op. cit., p. 266.
2. Cf. MacConnell, Francis John, Evangelicals, Revolutionists and Idealists, p. 9.
3. Gillies, op. cit., p. 270.

life.¹

This preaching had tremendous effects. Thousands of people came to know him in a real way. Barclay quotes Thomas Taylor, a Methodist layman in New York, as having written the following account to John Wesley:

...during his visit fourteen or fifteen years ago, there was a considerable shaking among the dry bones. Divers were savingly converted, and this work was much increased in his last journey, about fourteen years since, when his words were really like a hammer and as a fire. Most of the adults were stirred up; great numbers pricked to heart; and by a judgment of charity, several found peace and joy in believing. The consequence of this work was, churches were crowded, and subscriptions raised for building new ones.²

Whitefield's preaching was personal and often emotional. His emphasis on experimental Christianity and his devotion to Christ were a source of inspiration to clergy and laymen alike. His style of preaching has affected American pulpit delivery to this very day.

E. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to discover the influence of George Whitefield on the American Colonial Church. It has surveyed his activities as an itinerant evangelist, and in this phase of the study his relationship to the revival efforts of the evangelical ministers was stressed. In this regard, it was found that he was the key figure in the Great Awakening of the Eighteenth Century, and was directly responsible for leading thousands to Christ.

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1. Cf. Ryle, J. C., *The Priest, The Puritan and the Preacher*, p. 180.
2. Barclay, Wade Crawford, *Early American Methodism, 1769 to 1844*, p. 15.

His travels were prompted by the needs of an orphan's home he established in Georgia, and through this itineracy, he came in touch with the social needs of the day. Consequently he became the champion of many social services, including the cause of the poor Negroes, and the fight against illiteracy. He was the founder of two universities. He, more than any other person of that century created within people a sense of responsibility for the needs of others.

Along more subtle lines, he was the possessor of an ecumenical spirit that in no small measure produced a true love for spiritual freedom and a reverence for religious equality wherever he went. In his work with the various denominations, he never favored one above the other, and by his life he demonstrated that all those in Christ are truly brothers. His style of preaching gave the ministers a new challenge.

The underlying result of Whitefield's work was the rejuvenating of the Church in the Colonies, and the variety of his activities and the overlapping of his influences serve to emphasize the all inclusive effects of his life upon the American Colonial Church.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The purpose of this study has been to discover the influence of George Whitefield upon the American Colonial Church. In order to better understand why he was an important figure in this phase of America's history, this study started with a brief survey of the contributing factors in the religious development and the evangelistic fervor of the man. His early life in England was reviewed, keeping in mind the turning points in his development. Emphasis was given to the friendship that existed between young George and John and Charles Wesley, for it was through these friendships that he received his missionary call to Georgia. By noting his response to ordination and his success as an itinerant preacher in England, one can better understand the nature and success of his work in the Colonies. His first visit to Savannah, Georgia, convinced him that God was calling him to service in the "New World".

Before considering the results of his ministry in the Colonies, a study of their historical background prior to his coming was made. This was done in order to reveal the need for a man such as Whitefield in this era.

It was pointed out that the trend of the first half of the eighteenth century was away from religion. Certain problems were discovered that characterized the major denominations. Briefly they were as follows:

The rapid immigration from the Continent resulted in many

ethnic groups without adequate ecclesiastical supervision and discipline. This resulted in a weakening of the religious life among the people. The shortage of ministers caused many to lose the strong religious convictions of their ancestors.

In the New England Colonies, creedalism had taken the place of experimental Christianity. The "Half-Way" covenant made it possible for the unconverted to become church members, and Stoddard's policy of admitting non-Christians to Holy Communion quickened the church's decline. Similar conditions were found in the other colonies.

However, in the midst of these conditions, one did find faithful men who were doing their best to promote the spirit of revival. Their way was not easy, as was pointed out in the case of the Presbyterian group in New Jersey. The emphasis on experimental Christianity caused a split in the church. The conservative group became known as the Old Side Party, and insisted that assenting to a creed was all that was necessary for church membership. On the other side of the issue was the evangelical group, or the New Side Party who insisted that one must first profess an experimental knowledge of Christ. The latter group was led by William Tennent, Sr., and to prevent him from educating men for an evangelical ministry, the Old Side Party influenced the Synod to pass a ruling concerning the educational requirements for the ministry. Thus they were able to bar Log College graduates from ordination.

In spite of such attempts to curtail their efforts, revival sparks were being kindled in all of the Colonies under the leadership of men like Theodorus Frelinghuysen, William Tennent and his sons, and

Jonathan Edwards. These revival efforts were attempts to rejuvenate the religious life of the people, and slowly the Colonial Church was being resuscitated from its state of religious indifference. This then, was the religious situation in the Colonies at the time of Whitefield's second visit to America. The seed had been sown and was now ready for the harvest.

The final phase of this study considers the specific influence of Whitefield on this half-awake American church. His itineration renewed the revival spirit. He promoted evangelical Christianity in all parts of the country, and gave it universality and unity. In the Middle Colonies his influence gave support to the New Side Party in their struggle against the conservatives of Synod, and in general strengthened their cause. His frequent travels over a period of some thirty years did not allow the evangelical interests of the churches to subside.

Throughout his many years of service, his work with the orphan's home in Georgia, and his crusade for the betterment of the conditions for Negroes ~~were~~ a direct contribution to the church. He made an indifferent society conscious of its social obligations. He associated justification by faith in Christ with practical charity, and in this the Orphan-House was a principal tool wherever he went.

His personal support was a real boon in the interests of education. Not only did he aid private schools, but he was also instrumental in the founding of two universities.

The ecumenical spirit he manifested proved to be one of the aids in uniting all denominations in the cause of revival with the

exception of the Episcopal Church. He prepared the way for the founding of the Methodist Church in America. He laid the foundations of Methodism upon which Wesley's lay-preachers were later to build.

Homiletically his influence affected laymen as well as preachers. His ministry made central personal regeneration as a basic requirement in real Christianity. His style of preaching, vivid and picturesque, influenced the preaching of other ministers of his day, and his sermons became the chief means of rejuvenating the American Church.

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