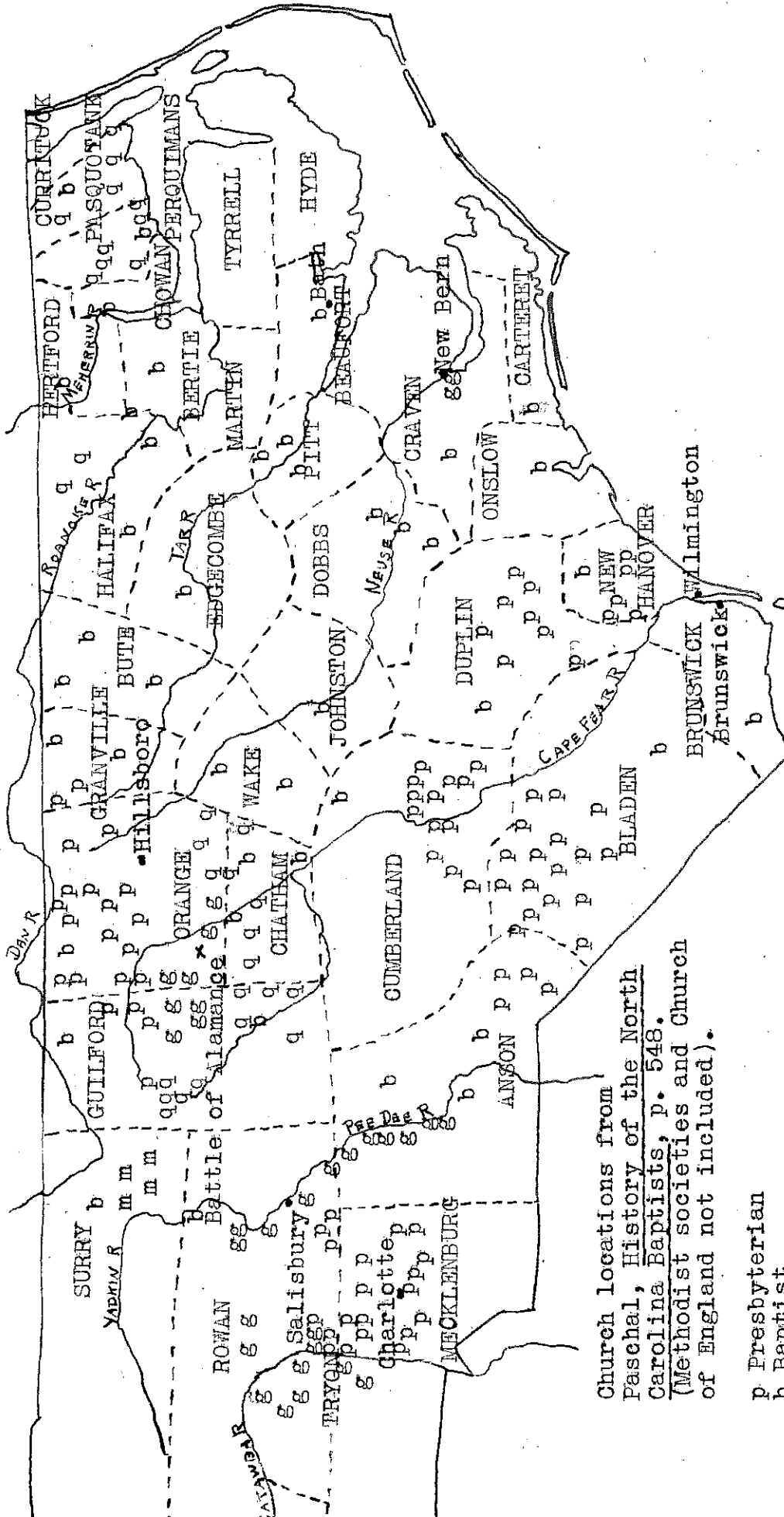


THE GREAT AWAKENING  
IN NORTH CAROLINA

Charles G. Sellers, Jr.

Colonial Churches in North Carolina

Counties as of 1775.



Church locations from  
 Paschal, History of the North  
 Carolina Baptists, p. 548.  
 (Methodist societies and Church  
 of England not included).

- p Presbyterian
- b Baptist
- g German (Lutheran or German Reformed)
- m Moravian
- q Quaker



## INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the eighteenth century, a wave of religious emotionalism swept over the American colonies. This colonial Awakening was part of an international quickening in religion which began in the late seventeenth century. Among German Protestants, it found expression in the Pietistic movement, which had its center at the university of Halle under the leadership of Spener and Francke. Emphasizing a warm, emotional type of religion, Pietism made its influence felt throughout the Lutheran and German Reformed Churches, but more particularly in the small sects; Dunkers, Mennonites, Schwenkfelders, and Moravians. The same tendency among French Catholics produced the Quietist movement. In Great Britain the Awakening took shape in the dynamic Methodist revival, whose leader, John Wesley, had been converted by a Moravian. George Whitefield, who was the other great evangelist of the Wesleyan movement and who ~~was to~~ <sup>became</sup> ~~be~~ the most effective <sup>preacher</sup> ~~evangelist~~ of the colonial Awakening, was profoundly influenced by the writings of Francke and other Pietists.

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in the colonies came in the years following 1720 under the preaching of Theodore Frelinghuysen, a German Pietist who was serving the Dutch Reformed churches in the Raritan Valley of New Jersey. His revival spread to the Presbyterians in the area, members of the New Brunswick Presbytery, who were to split the Presbyterians by their vigorous championing of the Awakening and to extend its influence throughout the Middle Colonies. At the same time, the preaching of Jonathan Edwards had caused a revival to spring up in western Massachusetts. When Whitefield arrived in America in 1739, a wave of religious excitement flamed up everywhere he went, and the various streams merged into a general movement, producing a <sup>series</sup> ~~series~~ of revivals, which were to be felt in every colony, and which would, in places, continue until the Revolution.

The influence of the Awakening reached North Carolina comparatively late. The province had begun to be colonized in the last half of the seventeenth century, largely by Virginians, but not until after the first decade of the eighteenth century, had settlement begun to spread very far beyond its extreme northeastern corner, the area around Albemarle Sound. <sup>3</sup> In the early years, Quakers <sup>been</sup> had <sub>A</sub> very numerous, and had had the religious field largely to themselves. William Edmundson, the Quaker missionary, and the founder, George Fox, had both visited the colony in 1672. Edmundson had come again in 1676, and by the end

of the century, travelling teachers were coming almost every year. With this encouragement, and with the aid of a Quaker governor, they grew rapidly, and by the turn of the century were quite powerful politically in the province.<sup>4</sup>

About this time, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel began to send over ministers of the Established Church from England, and a powerful party soon developed which was devoted to overthrowing the Quaker influence and securing a Church Establishment in North Carolina.<sup>5</sup> Quaker political power was finally destroyed when Cary's Rebellion was suppressed in 1711, and Quakers were legislated out of many political privileges.<sup>6</sup> This, coupled with the fact that they had never been very zealous in propagating their faith in the province, explains why their influence did not follow the line of the frontier as it began to advance up the river valleys. Instead, they diminished in relative importance, and retained their strength only in the areas of original settlement. The Established Church was equally ineffective in providing religious instruction for the growing colony, both because of the indisposition of the people to support ministers, and because of the indifference, or even venality, of the ministers sent out.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, except for the Quakers in the Albemarle region and the few people in the coastal region reached from time to time by the missionaries of the Established Church, the inhabitants

of the province were totally without religious ministrations and little interested in them.

This essay will attempt to describe how these conditions were radically changed by the extension into the province, under the influence of the Great Awakening, of the popular dissenting sects: Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists. The first to make their appearance were the Baptists. The Arminian General Baptists, the forerunners of the Awakening, appeared in the province about 1726, spreading first through the coastal region, and then following the advance of the frontier up the river valleys. As their zeal ebbed, their churches were taken over by the more aggressively evangelistic Particular, or Regular, Baptists, of Calvinistic principles, in the decade from 1750 to 1760. But the real Baptist Awakening began in 1755 under the auspices of the Separate Baptists, who sprang directly from the great Whitefield revival of 1740 in New England.

The second phase of the North Carolina Awakening came with the preaching of the New Light Presbyterian missionaries, who followed close on the heels of the Scotch Irish as they filled up the frontier along the Yadkin and the Catawba in the years after 1740. The final phase was the revival of the Methodists, who entered the province in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. Each of these movements will be described in turn, and an attempt will be made to assess the effect which they had on the development of the region.



## Chapter One

### THE BAPTIST PHASE

From the very early days of the Reformation, the Baptists had been regarded as a radical religious group, appealing primarily to the lower classes. Their distinctive principles were that only professed believers should be baptized, and that baptism should be by immersion, and they emphasized the personal approach of every believer in God.<sup>1</sup> These tenets, and organized bodies professing them, emerged gradually from the more pietistic Protestant sects, and by the seventeenth century, constituted a distinct body in England. These English Baptists had grown out of a group of Separatists, who had spent some time in Holland and had embraced Arminian beliefs. In addition to these General Baptists, there appeared before the middle of the century a group who held to Calvinistic doctrines and who were known as Particular, or Regular, Baptists. By the time of the Restoration, both groups were very numerous, and together they constituted a large element of the Dissenting body in England.<sup>2</sup> In early colonial times in America, the Baptists were neither very numerous nor very influential. They were strongest in the Middle Colonies, where, by 1707, they had organized the Phila-

delphia Association and had adopted a Particular Confession.<sup>3</sup>

The General Baptists were, except for the Quakers, the first group of Dissenters to appear in North Carolina, and in their popular appeal, can be said to represent the advance guard of the Great Awakening. There is reason to believe that there were Baptists among the earlier settlers, in the late seventeenth century. In 1704 a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in classifying the colonists religiously, reported, "A third sort are something like Presbyterians, which sort is upheld by some idle fellows who have left their lawful employment, and preach and baptize through the country, without any manners of orders from any sect or pretended church."<sup>4</sup> Subsequent reports and letters make no mention of Baptists, and it is probable that there was no regular church until the coming of Paul Palmer.<sup>5</sup>

Palmer was a native of Maryland, who had been ordained in Connecticut and who had worked in New Jersey before coming to North Carolina. He settled in Perquimans Precinct, north of Albemarle Sound, prior to 1720, and soon became a prominent and well-to-do citizen. He did not begin preaching until about 1726, but had probably been attending Yearly Meetings prior to that time with a little group of General Baptist congregations in Virginia. In 1727 he organized the province's first

Baptist church, in Chowan Precinct in the Albemarle region. Two years later, Palmer participated in the establishment of another church, to the east of the first one, this time in Perquimans Precinct. Elder William Burgas, in whose house the congregation was organized, became the first minister, and the church soon became a missionary center, organizing branch churches, or "arms", in all the region roundabout.<sup>6</sup>

Palmer did not himself settle down as minister of any particular congregation, but roamed the country as an evangelist, baptizing believers wherever he went, and organizing churches wherever a sufficient number of converts were situated conveniently together.<sup>7</sup> Our most revealing information of the spread of the General Baptists is from a letter of Governor Everard in 1729 to the Bishop of London, bewailing the lack of Established ministers, and complaining that, "...truly my Lord both Quakers and Baptists in this vacancy are very busy making Preselytes & holding meetings daily in every Part of this Government...My Lord, when I came first here, there was no Dissenters but Quakers in the Government & now by the means of one Paul Palmer the Baptist Teacher, he has gained hundreds."<sup>8</sup> It is not known how long Palmer continued this work. There is a record of his having been granted a license to preach in 1739,

under the British Act of Toleration, which probably indicates that the Baptists were beginning to be opposed by aroused Churchmen, since it had not been necessary for him to take out a license beforehand. But a number of Baptist churches in the northern half of the coastal region seem to have been formed by Palmer or his converts.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, the population was pushing up the valleys of the Roanoke, the Tar, and the Neuse into the interior. About 1730, Joseph Parker, who had been the pastor of the original church in Chowan, moved into the Indian country along the Meherrin River in the newly formed precinct of Bertie and there established a new congregation. The Meherrin Church served as a missionary base for spreading Baptist congregations all along the northern frontier. In the forties, the restless Parker pushed on to the southwest across the Roanoke into the new county of Edgecombe; after some years here, he moved on south across the Tar River. Through the whole region, a number of churches grew up which are probably to be ascribed to his activities.<sup>10</sup> The most important church west of the Roanoke, that at Kehukee in Halifax County, was begun in 1742 by a group of immigrants from Virginia, under the leadership of William Sojourner. Before his death in 1750, Sojourner baptized a number of prominent ministers, who founded churches all over the region.<sup>11</sup>

Another pioneer evangelist of the General Baptists was Dr. Josiah Hart. He left Beaufort County on the coast in the forties for the frontier in Edgecombe, where he organized a congregation at Fishing Creek in what is now Warren County. From this church a large number of preachers were ordained and sent out, and, led by Hart, they spread the Baptist faith over great reaches of the up-country.<sup>12</sup> The Baptist practice of ordaining laymen to the ministry, without imposing educational requirements, gave them a tremendous advantage over the Presbyterians and the Established Church in reaching the rough and scattered population of the frontier.

In 1755 there were sixteen General Baptist churches in the province.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there were great numbers of people who had been baptized by the itinerating evangelists, but who lived too far from a church to be regular members. Nevertheless, they considered themselves as Baptists and welcomed Baptist preachers into their neighborhoods; so that, in addition to the regularly constituted churches, there were a number of recognized preaching places throughout the country, many of which later developed into congregations. The Baptists were numerous in all the country along the coast, from the Albemarle region in the northeast to New River in Onslow County. In the interior, they were found along the upper reaches of the Roanoke, the Tar, and the Neuse, as far west

as Orange County, and as far south as Sampson.<sup>14</sup> Outside of the few areas where the Quakers and the Established Church were active, they were bringing to the people of the province the only preaching and religious influence they would receive prior to the influx of the Presbyterian Scotch and Scotch-Irish. In the vast territory south and west of the Roanoke, where they were most active, they were the only agents of organized religion.

One of the few effective missionaries of the Church of England, James Moir, wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel from Edgecombe County in 1748, "...many of our communion told me they thought it my duty to continue not only because they were pleased with my labors but more especially because a great number in the County had turned Baptist for want of a clergyman... The People seem much inclined to encourage Missionaries and often complain of their being pester'd with sermons of Baptist Teachers, whom I always found to be as grossly ignorant as those they pretend to teach."<sup>15</sup>

When the Presbyterian itinerant, Hugh McAden, skirted the Baptist area on his missionary journey into North Carolina in 1755, he delivered a sermon at the Baptist meeting house at Grassy Creek in Granville County, and found the people "very inquisitive about the way to Zion." The next day he went to the Baptist Yearly Meeting at

nearby Fishing Creek, where he preached for three days to "large and deeply interested audiences....Here I think the power of God appeared something conspicuous, and the word seemed to fall with power." But reproof of their Arminian principles is implied in his exhortation to them "that they should carefully guard against taking shelter under the shadow of their own righteousness." On his return journey, eight months later, he went considerably out of his way in order to preach to some of the Baptist friends he had made.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1750 and 1760, the General Baptist churches in North Carolina underwent a remarkable transformation to Calvinist principles and the Particular Baptist order. The looseness of their Arminian doctrines and their laxity of church discipline had had bad consequences, which were becoming apparent to all. The congregations were large, but they contained many unregenerate persons, whose loose conduct was demoralizing to the whole church.<sup>17</sup> Doctrinal excesses and absurdities grew out of a situation where an untrained ministry was proclaiming a flexible set of beliefs, which was nowhere formally stated. So that the field was prepared for change when, in 1750, the Rev. Robert Williams came among the Baptists, preaching Calvinism.

He was himself a native of the Roanoke country, and had gone to the Pee Dee in South Carolina, where he had been trained in the persuasions of the Particular Baptists of Welsh Neck. Returning to his old home, he advocated Calvinism with great effect, particularly in the neighborhoods of Fishing Creek and of Kehukee, whose minister, the influential Thomas Pope, embraced the new views. William Wallis, an artisan convinced by Williams, began working zealously in the churches of the region to bring about the change.<sup>18</sup>

Probably through the influence of Williams, the Philadelphia Association became interested in the situation in North Carolina, and in 1754 sent John Gano<sup>to the province</sup> as a missionary. ~~to North Carolina.~~ Gano was one of the most effective of the colonial evangelists. Growing up in New Jersey, under the influence of the Tennents' revival, he had originally intended to become a Presbyterian minister. But his doubts as to infant baptism had led him to join the Baptists, who were also participating in the Awakening.<sup>19</sup>

We know of his work in North Carolina from the account of Morgan Edwards, the first Baptist historian, who gathered his data on a visit to the province in 1771 and 1772. "On his arrival, he sent to the ministers, requesting an interview with them, which they declined, and appointed a meeting among themselves, to consult what to do. Mr. Gano, hearing



of it, went to their meeting, and addressed them in words to this effect: 'I have desired a visit from you, which, as a brother and a stranger, I had a right to expect; But as ye have refused, I give up my claim and am come to pay you a visit.' With this he ascended into the pulpit, and read for his text the following words, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?' This text he managed in such a manner as to make some afraid of him, and others ashamed of their shyness. Many were convinced of their errors, touching faith and conversation, and submitted to an examination."<sup>20</sup>

When Gano returned, the Philadelphia Association was persuaded to send two of its most outstanding preachers, Peter P. Vanhorn and Benjamin Miller, to carry on the work begun by him and Williams. Miller had had an irreligious youth in New Jersey, but was converted by Gilbert Tennent during the Awakening, and was encouraged by him to enter the ministry. He had already been in North Carolina, working in the Baptist settlement on the Yadkin. These two men arrived in the province in 1755, and went from church to church, reorganizing each along Calvinistic lines. Kehukee was the first congregation they converted to the Particular Baptist order, and the process they began went on until, in five years, only three General Baptist churches remained in the province. The churches

were reconstituted on the basis of the pastors, together with a tiny minority of the former members who had been convinced by the pastors. The bitterness aroused by this process survived in the Baptist areas for many years.<sup>21</sup>

.The procedure was to hold a congregational meeting at which the old order was dissolved. Then everyone who wished to come into the new order was subjected to a strict examination by the visiting ministers, in order to determine whether or not he had had a satisfactory religious experience before he had been baptized. The small number judged acceptable by Vanhorn and Miller in their reconstitution of Reedy Creek Church is quite typical. It is recorded that they received "all the baptized persons that in a judgment of charity were born again,"<sup>22</sup> and yet found only thirteen who could pass the test. Only the prestige of the local preachers, who were solidly for the change, made it possible for the reorganizations to take place and for the new churches to take over the church properties.

The meagre number who were "in a judgment of charity" considered to be truly regenerated, highlights the laxness in discipline and looseness in doctrine into which the General Baptist congregations had fallen. Hundreds had been baptized, of whom few were now able to give a satisfactory account of their conversion, or who had not backslidden in some way or other. In order to maintain

the purity and vigor of the new Particular Baptist order, a Church Covenant<sup>23</sup> was now drawn up and was accepted by all the members. The first section, a strong statement of rigid Calvinism, must have seemed a confusing array of dogma to many of those who were thus introduced to systematic theology for the first time. As a matter of fact, it eventually had a withering effect in many Baptist churches, where the Covenant became an end in itself and served to stifle any religious thought which would go beyond it. The disintegration of piety and belief among the General Baptists had demonstrated that some common standard of faith was necessary; but the Particular Baptists, in placing too much emphasis on the Covenant itself, tended to become dry and formal in their religion. A visitor among the Baptists in the eastern part of the state, in the early nineteenth century, was impressed both by the meagreness of their religious thought and by their shrewdness in defending their Calvinist tenets.<sup>24</sup>

The second section of the Covenant related to church discipline, and dealt principally with standards for admission, keeping the Sabbath, attendance at meetings, provision for reproof and disciplining of members, and regulations for governing the congregation. It was intended to insure that the church would always be in the hands of the truly elect, that it would be administered

in an orderly manner, and that its members would lead upright lives. The high standards of morality and church discipline instituted by the Baptist at this time were an innovation on the frontier, and their influence on frontier morals and manners was one of the important contributions of the Baptists.

Jonathan Edwards had described the great revival which broke out in New England under his preaching in 1734 as, in part, a reaction against the spread of Arminianism.<sup>25</sup> Gano, Vanhorn, and Miller, coming from the Middle Colonies, where the ferment of the Awakening had not yet subsided, had succeeded, in the space of a few years, in almost completely rooting out Arminianism from the Baptist churches of North Carolina, and had replaced it with the strictest of Calvinisms. The emphasis of the Baptist evangelists on a truly regenerated church membership was also characteristic of the Awakening. In securing this reform, they were more successful than Edwards, who had lost his church in 1750 in attempting the same thing.<sup>26</sup> The reformation of the General Baptist churches in North Carolina set the stage for the province's first great religious revival, which was to originate with a third group of Baptists and rapidly spread the influence of their emotional type of religion throughout the southern colonies.

The revival of the Separate Baptists was one of the most spectacular phases of the colonial Awakening, but it <sup>is</sup> one of the least known. The Separates had their origin in the awakening which began in New England in 1740 under George Whitefield and others. Many churches were split by ~~the~~ <sup>over the new evangelistic methods</sup> controversy, and the New Light, or Separate, party, in many cases, withdrew from the old order entirely, and formed Separate societies, which welcomed the revival and which admitted none but the regenerate to membership.<sup>27</sup>

One of the chief causes for the split was that the old churches would let no one preach who did not have a college training.<sup>28</sup> Holding religious zeal more important as a qualification than learning, the Separates licensed men without particular educational attainments. In this way, Shubal Stearns, a native of Boston who had been converted by Whitefield, became one of their ministers in 1745. In 1751 he became convinced of the error of infant baptism, and joined the Baptists, as many of the Separates were doing at the time.

These awakened Separates tended to have a strong faith in the direct interposition of God to control the destinies of the saints, and in 1754 Stearns became convinced that the Almighty was calling him to a great work on the southern frontier. So he set out, with a small

group of followers, on the long journey to western Virginia, where he settled and joined forces with his brother-in-law Daniel Marshall, who was also a minister.<sup>29</sup> The expected success did not materialize here, but some of his followers who had gone on into North Carolina informed him, "That the work of God was great in preaching to an ignorant people, who had little or no preaching for a hundred miles, and no established meeting. But now the people were so eager to hear that they would come forty miles each way, when they could have opportunity to hear a sermon."<sup>30</sup> Learning this, Stearns and his followers set out for North Carolina, where they established themselves on Sandy Creek in Guilford (now Randolph) County in the fall of 1755.

The original Sandy Creek Church had a membership of sixteen, consisting of eight men and their wives. Besides Stearns, Daniel Marshall and Joseph Breed were pastors, though they were both unordained. But it is likely that all of the sixteen original members took part in the widespread evangelical campaign upon which the little community immediately embarked. Morgan Edwards' account gives some idea of its success. He records that in a short time the membership of Sandy Creek rose from sixteen to 606.

"Sandy-creek chh is the mother of all the Separate-baptists. From this Zion went forth the word, and great was the company of them who published it: it, in 17 years, has spread branches as far as the great river <sup>Mississippi</sup> ~~Mississippi~~; south-

ward as far as Georgia; eastward to the sea and Chesapeake bay; and northward to the waters of Potowmack: it, in 17 years, is become mother, grand-mother, and great Grand-mother to 45 churches, from which sprang 125 ministers, many of which are ordained and support the sacred character as well as any sett of clergy in America; and if some have turned out bad, where is there a sett of clergy that can throw the first stone, and say, 'We all are good'? As for the outcries, epilepsies, and extacies attending their ministry they are not peculiar to them; the Newengland presbyterians had them long before; and in Virginia, it is well known that the same effects attend the ministry of some of the church of England, particularly Rev. mes. Devereaux Garret and Archibald McRoberts."<sup>31</sup>

Edwards has also left us a description of Stearns:

"Mr. Stearns was but a little man, but a man of good natural parts and sound judgment. Of learning he had but a small share, yet was pretty well acquainted with books. His voice was musical and strong, which he managed in such a manner as, one while, to make soft impressions on the heart, and fetch tears from the eyes in a mechanical way; and anon, to shake the very nerves and throw the animal system into tumults and perturbations. All the Separate ministers copy after him in tones of voice and actions of body; and some few exceed him. His character was indisputably good, both as a man, a christian, and a preacher. In his eyes was something very penetrating,

seemed to have a meaning in every glance..."<sup>32</sup>

In Edwards' account of the conversion of Elnathan Davis, we get a good picture of the mass effect of Stearns' methods: "His conversion came to pass in this manner-- He had heard that one John Steward was to be baptized such a day, by Mr. Stearns; now this Steward, being a very big man, and Shubal Stearns of small stature, he concluded there would be some diversion if not drowning; therefore he gathered 8 or 10 of his companions in wickedness and went to the spot. Shubal Stearns came and began to preach; Elnathan went to hear him while his companions stood at a distance. He was no sooner among the crowd but he perceived some of the people tremble as in a fit of the ague: he felt and examined them in order to find if it was not a dissimulation: meanwhile one man, leaned on his shoulder, weeping bitterly; Elnathan, perceiving he had wet his white new coat, pushed him off, and ran to his companions who were sitting on a log at a distance; when he came one said, 'Well, Elnathan, what do you think now of those damned people?' He replied, 'There is a trembling and crying spirit among them: but whether it be the spirit of God or the devil I don't know; if it be the devil, the devil go with them; for I will never more venture myself among them.' He stood a while in that resolution; but the enchantment of Shubal Stearns' voice drew him to the crowd once more. He had not been long there before the trembling seized him also, he attempted



to withdraw; but his strength failing and his understanding confounded he, with many others, sunk to the ground. When he came to himself he found nothing in him but dread and anxiety, bordering on horror. He continued in this situation some days and then found relief by faith in Christ. Immediately he began to preach conversion work, raw as he was, and scanty as his knowledge must have been."<sup>33</sup>

The fame of this sort of exhorting spread far and wide. Little groups of Baptists here and there, including many of the former General and Particular Baptist churches, sent to Sandy Creek for preachers. The branches which Sandy Creek Church had spread through the surrounding country were organized into regular congregations and began to send out their own offshoots. Deep River Church, which had begun as a branch of Sandy Creek, had become an independent church by 1757. It established one "arm" on Little River in Anson (now Montgomery) County, and in three years this congregation had five hundred members of its own, while in five more years it had founded four branches and was extending its influence throughout a very large area.<sup>34</sup> Another Baptist society springing from Deep River was that at Haw River in Chatham County. Stearns tells of preaching here in 1765 for six days to seven hundred people, and by 1772 the church had five branches.<sup>35</sup> In 1760 the pastor and most of the members of the original Deep River congregation

moved to the frontier of South Carolina, where they set up still another church, which itself soon had branches spread all about.<sup>36</sup> Many other congregations founded by Stearns and his associates had quite as extensive a progeny as Deep River. Daniel Marshall carried the revival into Virginia, where despite great persecution and abuse, the Baptists expanded over the whole province, and became very numerous, bearing the brunt of the difficult battle for religious liberty there. Later the indefatigable Marshall moved into lower South Carolina, and still later on into Georgia, where he planted the first Separate Baptist society.<sup>37</sup>

The extraordinary spread of the Separates can be accounted for only by the unusual zeal and enthusiasm which they possessed and engendered. Every convert became an evangelist, and every new church a base for further missionary operations. In addition to a regularly ordained minister, each congregation usually had several lay assistants, and they all spent much time itinerating through the country, in addition to preaching in the home congregation; so much was this true that Separate Baptist ministers came to be called "strollers" by the scornful.<sup>38</sup> Much of their success can probably be explained in terms of the social basis of their appeal. Their emotional methods reached the poor and illiterate in a way which the Presbyterian and Established ministers could never hope to match.

The Separate exhorters all imitated the holy whine,<sup>39</sup> a high-pitched droning style of preaching which Stearns had brought with him from New England.

A local Baptist historian has described the way in which the revival services were conducted. After the sermon, and as a hymn was being sung, the preacher would come down among the congregation. After the hymn, he " would extend an invitation to such persons as felt themselves to be poor, guilty sinners and were anxiously inquiring the way of salvation to come forward and kneel near the stand, or if they preferred to do so they could kneel at their seats, proffering to unite with them in prayer for their conversion. After prayer, singing and exhortation, prolonged according to circumstances, the congregation would be dismissed to meet again at night at the meeting house or at some private residence... In these night meetings there would occasionally be preaching, but generally they were only for prayer, praise, and exhortation, and direct personal conversation with those who might be concerned about their soul's salvation. In seasons of religious awakening large crowds would attend these meetings, which were blessed in the conversion of many souls. It was not uncommon for the brethren and especially the sisters to give expression to their feelings in outbursts of joy and praise, but it appears that they were free from those wild and fantastic exercises which prevailed in many other places."<sup>39</sup>

When the Separate Baptists began to penetrate the coastal region, they immediately incurred the hostility of the ministers of the Established Church who were

stationed there. The letters of these men to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London, which supported most of them, are full of alarm and recrimination at the "ignorant, censorious, and uncharitable"<sup>40</sup> New Lights. The pastor at New Bern complained in 1761 that, "The Methodists of late have given me a great deal of trouble, along the Borders of my parish by preaching up the inexpediency of Human Learning & the practise of moral virtue & the great expedience of Dreams, Visions, and immediate Revalations."<sup>41</sup>

He was mistaken in calling them Methodists, a practice to which Whitefield took exception on his visit to the province in 1764. However the mistake of the New Bern clergyman did have some basis in fact, as he claimed: "Tho' with submission to Mr. Whitefield, granting they were not his immediate disciples and followers, I do affirm they sprung from the seed which he first planted in New England and the difference of the soil may perhaps have caused, such an alteration in the fruit, that he may be ashamed of it, however upon the whole I think his discourse has been of some real service here, for he particularly condemn'd the rebaptizing of Adults & the doctrine of the irresistible influence of the spirit, for both which, the late Methodists in these parts had strongly contended & likewise recommended infant Baptism, &

declared himself a member & minister of the Church of England."<sup>42</sup>

So numerous did the Baptists become and such was their influence, that some of the Established clergy had to consent to baptize some of their own members according to the Baptist practice, in order to keep them. In 1760 the minister at Bath wrote to the Society: "When I mentioned that I baptized a person by immersion, I should be sorry that it should be thought by the society that it was either thro' affectation or singularity, I assure you sir, (tho' I know that it is conformable to our Rubric, to the practice of the primitive Christians of the Apostles & of the Jews before the coming of our saviour, generally to Baptize in that way) that it is only to keep people from falling off from our Church, that this person & some others not mentioned, have been baptized in that way by me, for of late years this province is overrun, with a people that at first called themselves anabaptists, but having now refined upon that scheme, have run into so many errors & have so bewildered & I may say almost bewitched the minds of the people, that scarcely will they listen to anything that can be said in defence of the church we belong to...such a spirit of rash judging & censoriousness, such a notion of Inspirations, impulses, visions, & of their sect being the peculiar elect of God is gone out among them that till time convinces them to

the contrary it is impossible that any abstracted reasons will..."<sup>43</sup> His last conclusion was doubtless drawn from his lack of success in convincing anyone, by means of the 400 pamphlets which he had written and gotten printed in ~~defense~~ <sup>support</sup> of the practice of infant baptism. Indeed, his defense of his baptisms by immersion sounds as if he were more than half persuaded by the Baptists himself.

Many of the Established pastors seemed to think that their most important duty was that of confuting the Baptists. However, one minister, in Johnston County in the interior, did credit some good influence to them: "My Communicants increase and I have the pleasure to see the anabaptist decline very fast, notwithstanding the difficulty of removing prejudice. I find that these preachers have been of great service to me in my office, for many of the back settlers who were in a manner totally ignorant of the Christian religion & overrun with sensuality have been brought to a serious way of thinking, and from hearing Enthusiastical incoherent harangues have been prepared for more solid and rational discourses."<sup>44</sup>

Hostility also existed between Baptists and Presbyterians. When Shubal Stearns first came into the province in 1755, the Presbyterian communities were still without settled pastors. As a result, the Baptists were able to gain some converts among them, and bad feeling was created. On his

missionary journey through the province in 1755, the Presbyterian, Hugh McAden, found a congregation on the Yadkin, where, "Many adhere to the Baptists that were before wavering, and several that professed themselves to be Presbyterians; so that very few at present join heartily for our ministers, and will in a little time if God prevent not, be too weak either to call or supplicate for a faithful minister."<sup>45</sup> The Baptist minister who had been active in the area was Benjamin Miller. When McAden met him on his return trip, he spoke favorably of him, and the two preached together.<sup>46</sup>

But it was inevitable that the Presbyterians, with their educated ministry and rigid doctrines and standards, should develop hostility toward the unrestrained Baptists. An observer, writing in 1776, after describing how the Presbyterians had settled on the frontier, continued, "For the Anabaptists of Pennsylvania resolving into a body & determined to settle their principles in every vacant quarter began to establish Meeting Houses also on the Borders. And by their address and assiduity have wormed the Presbyterians out of all their strongholds and drove them away. So that the Baptists are now the most numerous and formidable body of people which the church has to encounter with in the interior and back parts of the Province & the antipathy the two Sects bear each other

is astonishing. Wherefore a Presbyterian would sooner marry ten of his children to members of the Church of England than one to a Baptist. The same from the Baptists as to the Presbyterians--their rancour is surprising--but the Church reaps great good by it and through their jealousies gains ground on them very fast. But the Baptists have great prevalence & footing in North Carolina & have taken such deep root there that it will require long time and pains to grub up their layers."<sup>47</sup>

Shubal Stearns was more than a powerful evangelist; he was a good organizer as well. The Sandy Creek Baptist Association was organized in 1758 at a meeting, to which he had urged all the churches to send delegates. At least nine congregations were represented at this first meeting. Thereafter, the Association met for several days once each year, and these sessions were usually attended by great throngs of people from the surrounding area. The Baptists were jealous of the independence of the individual societies, and the Association functioned principally to provide preachers to fill vacancies and to itinerate. Another great benefit of the Association was the encouragement the ministers got from consulting with one another and from the accounts given by various brethren of the spread of religion. The Association also issued advice to the churches on doctrinal and procedural problems, in the form of replies to queries made by the



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churches in their annual letters.

In the early years, Association meetings were always held in Stearns' neighborhood. They were conducted at first without even electing a moderator, and all decisions had to be agreed to unanimously. In case of disagreement, the brethren would pray and fast until harmony was restored. One of the preachers at an early meeting says that, "The great power of God was among us. The preaching every day seemed to be attended with God's blessing. We carried on our Association with sweet decorum and fellowship to the end. Then we took leave of one another with many solemn charges from our reverend old father Shubal Stearns, to stand fast unto the end."<sup>49</sup>

At the second meeting of the Association, probably in 1759, the powerful Particular Baptist preacher, John Gano, who had returned to North Carolina to serve the church on the Yadkin, was present. Most of the ministers were hostile to him, but Stearns welcomed him and invited him to preach every day. Some of the younger Separate ministers were so abashed at hearing him, that they were afraid of him, and feared that they could never preach again. But he was finally received cordially, and reported of the Separates that, "doubtless the power of God was among them; that although they were rather immethodical, they certainly had the root of the matter at heart."<sup>50</sup>

The Particular Baptists had now begun to call themselves Regular Baptists. In 1762 the Charleston Association of

the Regulars ~~had~~ entered into relations with one of the offshoots of Sandy Creek in South Carolina, and appointed two of their ministers to attend the next meeting of the Sandy Creek Association to try to effect a consolidation. But we have no record of any further action.<sup>51</sup> Again, in 1769, the Kettocton Association of the Regulars in Virginia sent three of its members to Sandy Creek to propose a union. They asked, "If we are all Christian, all Baptists, all New-Lights, why are we divided? Must the little appellative names, Regular and Separate, break the golden band of charity, and set the sons and daughters of Zion at variance?" But their proposal was defeated by a narrow margin.<sup>52</sup>

The Separates in Virginia had already opposed union on the ground that the Regulars were not particular enough in such small matters as dress.<sup>53</sup> The Separate men cut their hair in a very severe manner, "like Cromwell's round-headed chaplains, and the women cast away all their superfluities so that they were distinguished from others..."<sup>54</sup> The individual Separate churches enforced the rules as to dress.

A more fundamental difference between the two was probably one of theology. The Separates had never adopted any formal doctrinal statement, considering the Bible to be a sufficient standard of faith, and it is not surprising that, in view of their origin and methods, they tended strongly to Arminianism. Most of the participants

in the Awakening seem to have softpedalled rigid Calvinism, even when it was their official belief, so that we find even the New Side Presbyterians frequently having to deny charges of unorthodoxy. The Regular Baptists resented the practice of the Separates in going about ~~the~~ evangelizing so successfully, without ever stating their theological position.

However, after a time, the Separate societies, too, began to draw up covenants. The following from the records of one of the churches, is probably representative of their early faith: "Believing the Old and New Testament to be the perfect rule for life and practice and 2ly Repentance from dead works and 3ly Faith towards God and 4ly The doctrine of baptism and 5ly laying on of hands and 6ly the perseverance of the saints and 7ly The resurrection of the dead and 8ly Eternal judgment."<sup>55</sup> These crude statements of the various Separate congregations were in marked contrast to the rigidly Calvinistic Philadelphia Confession, to which the Regulars uniformly adhered. So that, in time, the latter, standing inflexibly, came to prevail over whatever doctrines were contained in the miscellaneous confessions of the Separates, and they, too, came to accept Calvinistic principles.<sup>56</sup>

The practices of the Separate churches were modelled strictly on Biblical injunctions. The covenants, into which

they entered, committed them to drawing apart and living precisely according to God's commands, admonishing and helping one another. The nine Christian rites which they found in the Bible were: baptism, the Lord's supper, love-feasts, laying-on of hands, washing feet, anointing the sick, right hand of fellowship, kiss of charity, and devoting children. Not all of these rites were observed by all of the congregations. Most of them held communion every week, in line with the practice of the Biblical church. Also most of them, in their church organizations, had deacons and deaconesses, and elderesses and ruling elders, the latter serving as lay assistants to the pastor.<sup>57</sup>

At the meeting of the Association in 1770, dissension cropped up, and the required unanimity could not be reached for three days. Finally, it was unanimously agreed that the Association should split up into three groups, one for each of the <sup>Provinces</sup> ~~states~~ of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, the North Carolina Association retaining the name Sandy Creek. The trouble seems to have arisen principally from the Association's interfering too much in the affairs of the individual congregations, particularly in the matter of ordination of ministers. Shubal Stearns was probably partly to blame, since, in the early days, he had determined himself who was to be ordained, and the Association had assumed the function from him.<sup>58</sup>

In the meantime, the Regular Baptists had themselves been influenced by the ardor of their Separate brethren.

In the 1750's, when the Baptist churches had been converted from General to Regular, they had become connected with the Charleston Association. But the distance to Charleston was great, and in 1765 the North Carolina Regular societies withdrew and in 1769 formed the Kehuksee Association.<sup>59</sup>

They immediately began to look toward affiliation with the Separates, and in 1771 appointed delegates to attend the meeting of the Separate Association of Virginia.<sup>60</sup> In 1773 the Separates again declined union, because of the laxity of the Regulars in dress, and, more important, because they were not strict enough in determining the genuineness of a person's experience before receiving him into church membership. Indeed, the Regulars admitted that their congregations contained <sup>individuals</sup> ~~persons~~ who had been baptized in a state of unbelief. It will be remembered that the Regular churches had originally been exceedingly strict in receiving members. But their ministers had fallen into the old General Baptist practice of accepting the desire for baptism as a sufficient evidence of conversion, with the result that their membership now included many unregenerate or lukewarm persons.<sup>61</sup>

Far from taking offense at the reluctance of the Separates to affiliate with them, many of the Regulars were so affected by their zeal and scrupulousness that they began to deplore the laxity in their own churches.

Among these was a young minister, Lemuel Burkitt, who was to be the most influential man among North Carolina Baptists for many years to come. Inspired by the Separates' call for a truly converted membership, he led a revival at his own church at Sandy Run in Bertie County in 1774, and reformed it along the lines of a purified membership.<sup>62</sup> The same thing took place in three other Regular congregations, at the same time, and the issue came up in the 1775 meeting of Kehukee Association.

The controversy was so heated that it caused a split in the Association.<sup>63</sup> The conservative branch continued to meet for a few years, but its churches were eventually absorbed by the more vigorous reforming Association. The new United Baptist Association contained some Separate societies from the very first. The Regular members had conformed to the Separate practice with regard to admission to membership, but the Separates, for their part, were now ready to accept a Covenant with the following article: "We believe, that God before the foundation of the world, for a purpose of his own glory, did elect a certain number of men and angels to eternal life, and that this election is particular, eternal, and unconditional on the creature's part."<sup>64</sup> By 1789 the last of the Separate and conservative Regular churches had come in, so that the Association, which soon reassumed the old name Kehukee, included practically all the Baptist congregations in eastern North Carolina and

in that part of eastern Virginia that lay south of the James.<sup>65</sup> Farther west, the Sandy Creek Association embraced most of the remaining Baptists in the state.

The General Baptists had first introduced evangelical religion into North Carolina. Their churches had been re-invigorated by a fresh impulse of the Awakening from the Calvinistic Regular Baptists of the Middle Colonies. Finally, the Separate Baptists, springing directly from the New England Awakening, and bringing the first great revival, had spread the Awakening throughout the province, and had brought all North Carolina Baptists to accept their type of vital, personal religion.

## Chapter Two

## THE PRESBYTERIAN PHASE

While the Baptists were carrying on their work, the frontier was being settled and pushed westward by the great migration of the aggressive Scotch-Irish, who were also to be important agents of the Awakening in North Carolina. The advance guard of these people reached North Carolina in 1736, when land speculator, Henry McCulloch, induced a colony to come directly from Ulster and settle on his grants in New Hanover and Duplin Counties in the southeastern part of the province. However, the greatest influx of Scotch-Irish was from the Middle Colonies, into which thousands of them were pouring every year from Europe. As Pennsylvania became crowded, whole neighborhoods picked up and set out down the Great Valley of Virginia for the cheap and fertile lands on the southern frontier. They spread first over Orange County, and in 1740 were beginning to fill up the unoccupied frontier between the Yadkin and the Catawba. A secondary stream landed at Charleston and pushed up the river valleys into the North Carolina back-country. As rapidly as the country was peopled, Presbyterian congregations were organized and calls were sent back to the Middle Colonies for ministers.<sup>1</sup>



Another group of Presbyterian settlers were Scotch Highlanders in the Cape Fear Valley west of the Duplin settlements. The first group appeared in 1739, but the movement did not really get under way until after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, when the defeated were forced to emigrate, and the Highlands were reduced to a state of extreme poverty. Shiploads of Highlanders continued to arrive in the province right up to 1776.<sup>2</sup>

At this point, it is necessary to look at the sweep of the Great Awakening through the Middle Colonies, under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent and a group of men who were mostly members of New Brunswick Presbytery, and who had been prepared for the ministry at the elder William Tennent's Log College at Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. These New Side men emphasized the need for a genuine religious experience, of an emotional nature, and insisted that, for pastors, this was a more important qualification than a conventional formal education. Their opponents criticized their revival methods and the "manifestations" they produced, and insisted that ministers should be trained at a New England or European college and adhere formally to the creed. The controversy caused a schism in the Synod of Philadelphia, the highest court of American Presbyterianism, in 1741, and in 1745 the revivalists organized their own Synod of New York. The powerful preaching of Whitefield was arrayed on their side, and, with the sweep of the Awakening through the colonies, they were soon outdistancing

the conservatives.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the settlers on the North Carolina frontier at this period came from this background of religious excitement in the Middle Colonies. The Awakening was carried on to them, in their new homes, by the itinerating evangelists of the New Side Synod. However, there were, also, some Old Side adherents among the new residents in Carolina, and some preachers were sent out to them by the conservative Synod of Philadelphia. The Old Side and the New Side missionary activities will be described in turn.

In 1744 the Synod of Philadelphia received a petition from some of the Old Side people in Carolina to take note of their desolate state. Accordingly, the Synod appointed John Thomson, one of their most prominent leaders and most active missionaries, to correspond with them.<sup>4</sup> Thomson had ~~been~~ come over from Ireland in 1715, and had been one of the most outspoken of the Old Siders in the controversy that led up to the schism. It was his insistence in 1727 on a literal subscription by ministers to the Westminster Confession, that led two years later to the compromise Adopting Act, and finally to the split in 1741. In 1738 he had travelled to the backcountry of Virginia as an itinerant, and in 1744 moved there so as to better carry on missionary operations. In that year he visited the North Carolina frontier, in response to the petition to Synod. In 1751

he again visited the settlements, and shortly thereafter settled himself in the bounds of Centre Congregation, on the Catawba, where he died in 1753.<sup>5</sup>

The next Old Side itinerant, of whom we have record, Samuel Black moved to Virginia to join Thomson and John Craig in the work on the frontier. He seems to have visited the churches in Orange County, and in 1751 there is record of instructions for him to supply Buffalo and adjacent congregations in northern Rowan.<sup>6</sup>

In 1753, 1755, 1756, and 1757 the Synod ordered certain members to go and preach on the Carolina frontier. It is probable that the 1755 appointments were not filled because of the Indian outbreaks, and, as we have no record of any of the missions being accomplished, it seems unlikely that many Old Side preachers ever got there.<sup>7</sup> However, there seems to have been some dissension between the Old Side and New Side parties in the province, since in 1756 the Synod recommended to the missionary appointed that year "...and all such as may be sent by us to supply these distant parts, to study in all their public administrations and private conversations, to promote peace and unity among the societies, to avoid whatever may tend to foment divisions and party spirit; and to treat every minister of the gospel from the Synod of New York, of the like principles and peaceful temper, in a brotherly manner, as we desire to promote true religion and not party designs. And the Synod

resolve to send a copy of these instructions to our brethren of the Synod of New York, hoping that they will recommend the like conduct to any they send thither."<sup>8</sup> In 1758 the union of Old Side and New Side took place, and further missionary operations were carried on by the united Synod.

The New Side party was much more active and successful in its attempts to reach the destitute congregations on the southern frontier. The first of the New Lights to visit North Carolina was George Whitefield himself in 1740. The great English evangelist was probably the most powerful preacher of the eighteenth century; ~~and~~ he passed through the coastal region of the province six times, in the course of overland trips between Georgia and the Middle Colonies. On the first visit, he spent nearly two weeks in North Carolina. At the hamlet of Bath he preached to a hundred people, though the usual congregation was scarcely twenty. At New Bern he attended the Christmas Day service in the Established Church and was appalled at the indifference displayed. "I cried mightily to the Lord in my secret devotions, and in the afternoon when I read prayers and preached, he was pleased to show that he had heard me, for I scarce knew when we had a more visible manifestation of the Divine Presence since our coming into America. The people were uncommonly attentive, most melted into tears, and showed what a great impression the Word made upon their hearts--I myself was much carried out. I felt the power of

God come upon me, and I spoke with demonstration of the Spirit to the hearers' souls.--After the sermon, a poor woman, with a heart full of concern, ran to me, desiring me that I would come and preach where she lived; another told me I had given him a home stroke; and indeed all, I believe, felt an unusual effect upon their minds...I really believe, whenever the Gospel is preached in these parts with power, it will be remarkably bless'd. I have scarcely heard of one faithful minister sent over amongst them." He also preached at Newtown, on the Cape Fear, where he found a number of the Scotch, newly arrived in America.<sup>9</sup>

The next trip was in the spring of 1746, but, "In North Carolina, where I stayed too short a time, little was done."<sup>10</sup> When he returned the next year, he was appalled that "These southern colonies lie in darkness, and yet, so far as I find, are as willing to receive the Gospel as others." \*He promised to return to North Carolina in the fall of the same year, and arrived in October, and spent two weeks "at my old delightful work, 'calling poor sinners to repentance.'"<sup>12</sup> His letters tell us that he found "hunting after sinners in the North Carolina woods" to be a pleasant occupation.<sup>13</sup> There was an abundance of unsaved souls "in these uncultivated ungospelized deserts.\*" People hear me with great attention, and I trust ere long news will be heard in heaven, that some North Carolina sinners are

born of God. I stayed but a short time in Virginia and Maryland that I might give this province the more time."<sup>14</sup>

Elsewhere, local ministers had caught the spark of the awakening from Whitefield, and great revivals had occurred. In the North Carolina coastal region, where the people had had practically no religious instruction, except for the occasional and indifferent ministrations of the Established clergy, Whitefield's preaching produced no awakening and no appreciable lasting effect. One wonders what the result might have been, if he had made his journeys farther inland, where the Baptist had been more active, and where the thoroughly religious Scotch and Scotch-Irish were settling.

By the time Whitefield returned to the province in the fall and spring of 1764 and 1765, the Awakening had long since swept through the upcountry, and, only then, spread from there to the coast, where he now found religious conditions greatly changed. "At Newbern last Sunday good impressions were made.<sup>15</sup> Several gentlemen after sermon escorted me out of town. From that place to this, I have met what they call New Lights almost every stage. At Lockwood's Folly (an unlikely place as Rome itself) there is to be a general rendezvous of them. This is grace indeed. I am to call tomorrow on a wealthy planter that seems to lead the van. There I shall enquire more particulars. I have the names of six or eight of their

preachers. This, with every other place, being open and exceedingly desirous to hear the gospel, makes me almost determine to come back early in the spring. Surely the Londoners, who are fed to the full, will not envy the poor souls in these parts, who scarcely know the right hand from the left." <sup>16</sup> He did return in the spring, and, at the request of the mayor and leading citizens, preached <sup>17</sup> at Wilmington.

The first of the Presbyterian New Light itinerants, William Robinson, was sent out by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in 1742, three years before the Synod of New York was organized. Robinson was born in England, and, on coming to America, began teaching school in New Jersey within the bounds of New Brunswick Presbytery, the storm center of the Great Awakening. Here he was converted and attended William Tennent's Log College, the nursery of the New Lights and forerunner of Princeton. He was licensed in 1741, and set out the next year to carry the Awakening of the southern frontier. He passed down the Valley of Virginia, preaching along the way, and then recrossed the mountains and entered North Carolina. Here he visited the churches along the edge of the frontier, through Orange County, and to the <sup>18</sup>Roanoke River. Probably he also reached the Presbyterian settlements in Duplin and New Hanover. Samuel

Davies, the leader of the Awakening in Virginia, tells of the labors of the first minister to penetrate so far into the wilderness. "He underwent great hardships in Carolina, without much success, by reason of the fewness of the inhabitants at that time; who were generally such uncultivated savages, that there was little prospect of doing them much service without continuing a long time among them to teach them the first rudiments of Christianity; and so scattered, that but very few of them could convene in one place to hear."<sup>19</sup>

The Peedee was practically the limit of settlement at that time, and the hardships Robinson underwent permanently undermined his health. On his return northward through Virginia, he visited Hanover County, where he found in progress a remarkable spontaneous revival, which was to come to full fruition under Samuel Davies and be felt even in North Carolina. Robinson settled in Maryland, where he promoted a successful revival in 1745, but he was unable to shake off the poor health which resulted from his North Carolina experience, and he died the following year.<sup>20</sup>

The revival which Robinson had come upon in Virginia greatly spurred New Side missionary activities in the South. The Synod of New York sent its leading ministers from time to time to work in this promising field, and in 1748 Samuel Davies arrived in Hanover County, to



serve as a regular pastor until his call to the presidency of Princeton in 1758. He was one of the great preachers of eighteenth<sup>century</sup> Presbyterianism. He travelled indefatigably over Virginia, and even into North Carolina, proclaiming the new vital religion everywhere he went. By his agency, the influence of the Great Awakening was spread over the entire area, and from this time on, the New Side was to be predominant in the Southern colonies. 21

It is probable that many of the ministers sent after 1745 to preach in the Virginia field penetrated into North Carolina, especially to the Presbyterian communities in Orange and Granville Counties, near the Virginia line. In 1748 one of the regularly settled New Side pastors in Virginia preached in the settlements on the Catawba, and married there. 22 In 1751 Davies himself entered the province and delivered sermons along the Roanoke; 23 it is unlikely that this was the only time his wide itinerations carried him into North Carolina.

Writing in 1751 of Robinson's work on the frontier, Davies said, "The case is indeed happily altered there since that time, as the inhabitants are vastly more numerous, and some persons that had a religious education are settled among them. A new congregation, I think upon Pee-dee River, sent a petition to me last year to be presented to New Castle Presbytery for a minister,

subscribed by more than a hundred persons, chiefly heads of families; and one of my correspondents there informs me, that they are very sufficient to maintain a minister. Our Presbytery appointed Mr. James Finley to visit them, but by indisposition he was prevented; so that they have lain wholly destitute hitherto, and are like to do so, unless they can obtain some foreign assistance, besides what our Presbytery can afford them. Besides this, I hear of sundry other places in North Carolina, that are ripening very fast for the gospel: And oh! that the Lord would thrust forth labourers into that part of his harvest, for I am afraid but few will go thither, 'till they are thrust and constrained by an irresistible zeal, and a providential concurrence of circumstances."<sup>24</sup>

By the 1750's congregations in North Carolina were making regular appeals to the Synod of New York, and the Synod was sending itinerants almost every year.<sup>25</sup> One of the two men sent in 1754 got as far as the limits of settlement in South Carolina, at the forks of the Broad and Saluda Rivers, where only six families were living, all of whom were driven out when Indian hostilities started the next year.<sup>26</sup> The 1755 assignments were not filled because of Braddock's defeat and the Indian danger.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time that the Synod of New York was providing for missionary work in the South, some of its

presbyteries were busily engaged in the same enterprise, though, through the loss of records, we know less about the men they sent out. In 1755 the Presbytery of New Brunswick reported that fourteen congregations in North Carolina were looking to them for ministerial supplies. <sup>28</sup>

In the same year the Presbytery licensed and sent to the South one of the most effective of all the itinerants, Hugh McAden, whose journal <sup>29</sup> is an important source of information as to religious conditions on the Carolina frontier. He was a thorough-going New Sider, having been graduated from Princeton in 1753, in the days of its infancy as a child of the Awakening. He took his theological training at the famous school at Fagg's Manor under John Blair, himself a product of the Log College and later a professor at Princeton. <sup>30</sup>

McAden was not turned back by the news of Braddock's defeat and the Indian incursions, as were Synod's missionaries. He had made his way down into the Great Valley of Virginia, preaching as he went. "Here it was I received the most melancholy news of the entire defeat of our army by the French in Ohio, the General killed, numbers of the inferior officers, and the whole artillery taken. This together with the frequent account of fresh murders being daily committed upon the frontiers, struck terror to every heart. A cold shuddering possessed every

breast, and paleness covered almost every face. In short, the whole inhabitants were put into an universal confusion. Scarcely any man durst sleep in his own house--but all met in companies with their wives and children, and set about building little fortifications, to defend themselves from such barbarous and inhuman enemies, whom they concluded would be let loose upon them at pleasure...I resolved to prosecute my journey, come what will, with some degree of dependence on the Lord for his divine protection and support, that I might be enabled to glorify him in all things, whether in life or in death, though not so sensible as I could wish for and earnestly desired."

The Valley people provided him with a guard for crossing the mountains to Piedmont Virginia, through which he could make his way in greater safety to the quieter frontiers of North Carolina. When he reached his destination, he found a number of regularly organized Presbyterian congregations, all without pastors, and a few meeting houses, though most of his preaching was done in private homes or the open air. Much of the country through which he passed was in the throes of the great Separate Baptist revival. The dissension which he found between the Presbyterians and Baptists on the Yadkin has already been described. The Presbyterian insistence on an educated ministry was making it difficult, in some places, for them to hold their own,

without ministers, against the impassioned evangelism of the enthusiastic Separates.

McAden preached first in the Granville and Orange County areas, and then moved on to the southwest to the congregations on the Yadkin (Pee Dee) and Catawba. He and two companions crossed the Catawba, and, passing through the lands of the Catawba Indians, who gave them some trouble, reached the frontier settlements of South Carolina along the Broad River. Returning to the Catawba, he was urged to remain as minister for Cathey's and Rocky River Churches, but Old Side adherents caused some ~~trouble~~<sup>disagreement</sup>, and he decided that it was inadvisable. It will be remembered that it was in the following year that the Synod of Philadelphia instructed its itinerants to work for peace and unity in the frontier congregations, so that it can be inferred that differences carried to the frontier by settlers from the Middle Colonies were still causing dissension and bitterness.

From the Catawba, McAden moved down into the Highlander communities along the Cape Fear, and from there, on to the Scotch-Irish congregations in Duplin and New Hanover, which constituted the oldest Scotch-Irish area in the province. Here he was received so cordially that he was soon to return as their regular minister. Having travelled and preached through an

entire summer and winter, he returned northward through Orange and Granville back to Pennsylvania.

Another important event which occurred in 1755 was the organization of Hanover Presbytery by the Synod of New York, upon petition of ~~a~~ six New Side ministers in

Virginia.<sup>31</sup> The new presbytery was the first in the south, and immediately embarked on an extensive program of itineration through the North Carolina congregations

In the meantime, the Synod of New York continued to receive petitions for preachers from North Carolina, and to attempt to supply the destitute congregations. Assignments to itineration were made every year, but there is no record of how many of the assignments were carried out. In 1758 the two rival synods united as the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, with New Side men in the ascendancy, and it appears that from this time on, several of Synod's missionaries were in the field every year, in addition to those of Hanover Presbytery.<sup>32</sup>

In 1764 the Synod sent two ministers to North Carolina to "form societies, help them in adjusting their bounds, ~~to~~<sup>to</sup> ordain elders, administer sealing ordinances, instruct the people in discipline, and finally direct them in their after conduct, particularly in what manner they shall proceed to obtain

the stated ministry, and whatever else may appear useful or necessary for those churches and the future settlement of the gospel among them. And also, that they assure those people wherever they go, that this Synod has their interest much at heart, and will neglect no opportunities of affording them proper candidates and supplies to the utmost of our power." <sup>33</sup>

This mission marked a significant transition for North Carolina Presbyterians, from struggling frontier settlements, depending for preaching on occasional itinerants from the far-off northern synods and presbyteries, to regularly organized Presbyterian churches with the standard form of church government, with regular congregational bounds, and with regularly called and ordained ministers settling among them. The transition was completed by the organization in 1770 of Orange Presbytery, with a membership of the seven preachers in North Carolina, and including forty or fifty congregations, with some 2,000 members. <sup>34</sup>

The zeal of the tireless itinerants had put the stamp of the Awakening on North Carolina Presbyterianism, and had established it on a firm basis. These men had left the security and prestige of settled pastorates in the northern states, to travel for many months and hundreds of arduous miles, often through the wilderness,

in order to carry the new heart religion to the destitute congregations on the edge of the advancing frontier. The results of their work are seen in the subsequent vigor of the churches they served.

The seeds planted by the militant itinerants were brought to fruition by <sup>the</sup> a little group of equally militant men who were the first settled ministers of the North Carolina Presbyterian churches. The three pioneers, James Campbell, Hugh McAden, and Alexander Craighhead, all moved to the province soon after 1755.

James Campbell was a native of Scotland. He came to America in 1730, and took a congregation in Pennsylvania. In 1739, during the growing religious excitement which preceded Whitefield's visit, he became convinced that he had not had the truly vital religious experience which, under the influence of the Awakening, he had decided was necessary. For several months he did not feel that he was qualified to preach. An interview with Whitefield finally gave him the conviction which he needed, and he became an enthusiastic promoter of the revival. In 1757 he went to North Carolina and took up residence as the minister of the Gaelic-speaking Highland Scotch of the Cape Fear Valley. Their language isolated them from the influences



which operated on the rest of the province, but under the leadership of Campbell, their churches grew, and they experienced as vigorous a revival as any of the other congregations. From 1770 to 1773 he was assisted by John McLeod from Scotland, but for the rest of the time, up to his death in 1781, he supplied by himself the needs of a steadily growing number of Scotch communities, through the whole length of the Cape Fear Valley.

The other Presbyterians in the eastern part of the province, the Scotch-Irish of Duplin and New Hanover, obtained Hugh McAden as their pastor. They had received him hospitably on his missionary journey in 1755, and when they put in a call for his pastoral services two years later, he accepted. In 1768 his health was failing, and, believing it to be due to the climate of the lowcountry, he accepted a call from three of the congregations in Orange County. Ten years <sup>previously</sup> ~~before~~, he had laid before the Presbytery the concern he had felt for these people since his visit to them in 1755, "giving a moving representation of their difficulties." These Presbyterian communities had existed since 1739 or 1740, and had had only the occasional preaching of itinerants. McAden served here until his death in 1781, becoming a charter member of

Orange Presbytery in 1770. "He visited with his elders once a year, all the families in his congregations,-- and he would exhort and pray with them during his stay. He would collect all his congregations once a year at his churches, and hold an examination of those present. He administered the sacrament at each of his churches twice every year. He spent his life in attempting to convince all of their sins, and in rendering happy those who were members of his congregations." <sup>38</sup>

Alexander Craighead, the pioneer Presbyterian minister beyond the Yadkin, had had a stormy career in the Middle Colonies. He ~~was~~ <sup>had been</sup> the most extreme member of the New Side Party, and his troubles with his Old Side brethren were the immediate cause which led up to the schism in 1741. When the revival had begun to spread, the New Side men had felt called upon to carry it to people everywhere. In so doing, they frequently preached in the congregations of ministers who opposed the revival, usually with, but sometimes <sup>39</sup> without, their reluctant consent. Most of the New Side men were concentrated in the completely New Side Presbytery of New Brunswick in New Jersey. But Craighead's presbytery, Donegal, on the frontier of Pennsylvania, had only one other New Side man besides

himself. It was inevitable that these two men should come into conflict with Presbytery. It began when they refused to attend meetings of Presbytery, on the grounds that Presbytery was ordaining ministers without examining them thoroughly on their adherence to heart religion. <sup>40</sup>

The matter came to a head when a member of another presbytery complained to the Presbytery of Donegal that Craighead had been preaching in his congregation without his permission. When the Presbytery met, amid great excitement, at Craighead's church, to consider the charges, the members of the congregation abused them so, that they had to adjourn to another place. Craighead had just been preaching on the text, "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind," after which the church members had adjourned to an outdoor preaching platform, where David Alexander and Samuel Finley, later President of Princeton, had read a paper defending Craighead and attacking the coldness and opposition to the revival, <sup>of</sup> ~~by~~ the Old Side members of the Presbytery. The next day, Craighead, Alexander, and Finley entered the meeting of Presbytery and read the paper, whereupon <sup>41</sup> Presbytery suspended Craighead. He denied their authority to do so, and continued to itinerate, accom- <sup>42</sup> panying Whitefield through Chester County in 1740.

The dispute was carried to the 1741 meeting of Synod, where all the matters at issue between the two

parties came to a head under the question of whether Craighead should be seated as a member. No decision was reached after three days of debate, and the Synod adjourned over Sunday. On Monday morning a group of Old Side ministers brought in a statement which summarized their complaints against the New Side men, and then went on to deny them the right to sit as members of the Synod. Complete turmoil ensued, and when it was found that the Old Side had a bare majority, the New Siders withdrew and organized themselves independently.<sup>43</sup> In 1745 the Presbytery of New York, after attempting to mediate the dispute, joined with the New Side,<sup>44</sup> and the Synod of New York was formed.

Craighead cooperated at first with the New Side men, but he was primarily a Cameronian, or an extreme adherent of the old Scottish covenants, entered into by the Presbyterians, and binding them by a solemn oath to defend the true Reformed religion against any interference by either ecclesiastical courts or the state. One of the grounds of complaint against him in 1740 had been that he required members of his congregation to subscribe to the covenant. In 1741 he withdrew from the New Side Presbytery, after he had failed to persuade them to revive the Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>45</sup>

In 1743 a paper he issued was complained of by one of his Majesty's justices for Lancaster County, in a message to the Synod of Philadelphia. The Synod, of course, disowned the paper, declaring it full of "treason, sedition, and distraction, and grievous perverting of the sacred oracles, to the ruin of all societies and civil government, and directly and diametrically opposite to our religious principles;" they further stated that they detested it, and with it, "all principles and practices that tend to destroy civil and religious rights of mankind, or to foment or encourage sedition or dissatisfaction with the civil government that we are now under, or rebellion, treason, or any thing that is disloyal." <sup>46</sup> Therefore, from the very first, Craighead was conspicuous as a rebel, not only against religious orthodoxy and coldness, but also against both church and civil authority.

Six or eight years after this, he moved to the frontier of Virginia, where he had more freedom to preach and act as he pleased. He joined Newcastle Presbytery, and in 1755 was a charter member of Hanover Presbytery. After Braddock's defeat in 1755, he and most of his congregation were driven by the Indian danger from their exposed position on the Cowpasture River in the Great Valley. Retreating across the

mountains, they turned southward and sought new homes in the valley of the Catawba, on the quieter frontier of North Carolina, which was just beginning to be settled.<sup>47</sup> In the journal of his 1755 trip, McAden tells how, south of the Yadkin, he "came up with a large company of men, women, and children who had fled for their lives from the Cow or Calf pasture in Virginia; from whom I received the melancholy account, that the Indians are still doing a great deal of mischief in those parts, by murdering and destroying several of the inhabitants, and banishing the rest from their houses and livings, whereby they are forced to fly into desert places."<sup>48</sup>

Craighead had a free hand in his new home, far from officials, civil or ecclesiastical. Seven churches were fathered by him, and the principles of opposition to authority which he implanted in them, are to be seen in the leadership which this section exercised in the Revolution.<sup>49</sup> He died in 1766, but the evangelistic fervor of his preaching was carried on by successors who grew up in his congregations.

One of these was Joseph Alexander, son of one of the most influential families in the community, and one of the few young men on the frontier at the time who received a college education. The ministers were the

the most influential leaders in the frontier Scotch-Irish communities, and it was for the purpose of educating them that the Presbyterians were so active in establishing colleges. Alexander was graduated from Princeton in 1760, and in 1767 was licensed by New Castle Presbytery and installed as Craighead's successor. He is described as an animated and powerful preacher, and served the community until his removal to South Carolina in 1773.

Hezekiah Balch also grew up under Craighead's preaching. He was born in Maryland and moved with his family to North Carolina, where they joined one of Craighead's congregations. Graduating from Princeton in 1766, he was ordained in 1770 as an evangelist on the frontier of North Carolina, where he preached until 1784, when he removed to Tennessee, and became one of the pioneer ministers west of the Alleghanies. "His preaching was evangelical, hearty, and impressive," in the Craighead tradition.

Thus, by 1760, there were three regularly settled Presbyterian pastors in the province: one in the southeastern Scotch-Irish communities, one among the Cape Fear Highlanders, and one in the congregations on the Catawba. The addition of David Caldwell, James Criswell, and Henry Patillo, within the next

few years, brought a minister within the reach of almost every Presbyterian neighborhood.

David Caldwell, the son of a well-to-do farmer in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, had worked as a carpenter until the age of twenty-five, when he experienced conversion. Deciding to become a preacher, he persuaded his three brothers to help him finance his education, in return for his relinquishing to them his share of their father's estate. He had had little schooling, so, to prepare himself for college, he enrolled in the academy taught by Reverend Robert Smith, father of the eminent evangelists, John Blair Smith and Samuel Stanhope Smith. After teaching school for a year, he entered Princeton and graduated in 1761, the year of President Davies' death. He then taught at Cape May in New Brunswick Presbytery, in order to support himself while studying theology with neighboring ministers. After a year of this, he returned to Princeton, as a tutor in languages, where he completed his theological training.

New Brunswick Presbytery licensed Caldwell in 1763, and sent him the next year as a missionary to North Carolina. He seems to have located in the province soon after, since he was dismissed to Hanover Presbytery in 1765, though he was not formally ordained



to a specific pastorate until 1768. His churches were Buffalo in northern Rowan (soon to be set off as Guilford) County, and Alamance in western Orange County. Many members of these congregations had recently migrated from Lancaster County in Pennsylvania, where they had known Caldwell. Despite the fact that the members of Buffalo were predominantly Old Side and the members of Alamance predominantly New Side, he was able to serve to the satisfaction of both until his retirement, four years before his death in 1824.

Caldwell was a remarkably versatile man. He bought a farm shortly after coming to Carolina, and superintended it for the rest of his life. When he first settled in the community, the people were absolutely without any kind of medical care. Determining to make up the deficiency himself, he sent for some medical books, and was engaged in studying them, when a young physician arrived, and was induced to settle in the community. However, he soon became sick and died, and Caldwell took over his books and instruments, and thereafter assumed the responsibility for the physical, as well as the spiritual welfare of his congregations. He was a lifetime correspondent and intimate of the celebrated Benjamin Rush, who had

been in the preceding class at Princeton, and through him kept up with the latest advances in the infant field of professional medicine.<sup>55</sup>

In addition, he was an outstanding political leader in the province, representing the county in the Halifax Congress, which drafted the State Constitution, and in the convention called to consider the ratification of the Federal Constitution. His activities in the Revolution and his great achievements in education will be described at some length in a later section. When the University of North Carolina was organized, he was the first person considered for the presidency, and was one of the first to be granted an honorary degree, that of Doctor of Divinity, by the institution. All of these things were, of course, supplementary to his primary task, the spreading of vital religion. He was fervent in preaching, zealous in promoting the spiritual welfare of his congregations, and a leader in every revival that occurred in North Carolina during the period of his pastorate.<sup>56</sup> Dr. Caldwell was certainly one of the <sup>outstanding</sup> leading men of the province and state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Of James Creswell, we know less than we do of any of the other pioneer preachers. He was ordained

in 1765, and his field of work was in Granville County on the Virginia line. This area had been largely settled by people from Virginia, and his three churches had grown out of conversions by Samuel Davies and his co-laborers in the great Virginia revival of the forties and early fifties. Here Creswell served until his death in 1778.

Henry Patillo was born into a religious family in Scotland in 1726, and at the age of nine was brought to America by his brother. Upon settling in Virginia and becoming a merchant's clerk, he began to be conscious of the fact that he was succumbing to temptations, as a result of his removal from religious influences. He left the merchant and began teaching school, but his religious reflections bothered him more and more. He records that, "On the commission of sin, after I conceived the Almighty had partly forgot it, or his anger somewhat abated, I would go and confess it with many tears, and thus got some ease --encompassing myself with sparks of my own kindling. But I was taught by a book I got about this time, that I must go farther yet, and enter into special covenant with God. Well, after this, I felt pretty secure, till, by the kind providence of God, I was brought into a congregation of Presbyterians, where I had good books

and preaching pretty frequently." <sup>59</sup> Patillo's experiences at this time are typical of what was called, in those days, experimental religion, the religion of the Awakening, which emphasized the personal relation of the individual with God, as opposed to mere formal adherence to proper doctrine and moral conduct. These experiences occurred in the early forties, when the Awakening was just reaching Virginia, and he doubtless heard the preaching of some of the best men of the New Side party, on itineration from the Middle Colonies.

His inward struggles continued, and he moved his teaching activities to another congregation. "Here, by what means I cannot tell, it being so gradual, I got such astonishing views of the method of salvation, and of the glorious Mediator; such sweetness in the duties of religion; such a love to the ways of God; such an entire resignation to and acquiescence in the divine will; such a sincere desire to see men religious, and endeavor to make these so with whom I conversed, that after all my base ingratitude, dreadful backslidings, broken vows, frequent commission of sin, loss of fervor, and frequently lifeless duties since that time, I must, to the eternal praise of boundless free grace, esteem it a work of the Holy

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Spirit, and the finger of God." He then relates how he went on in this happy state for a year and a half, and began to exhort and persuade people with whom he came in contact, in order to bring them into such an experience themselves. "I can boast of but little success in these endeavors, yet my feeble attempts produced in me an indescribable desire of declaring the same to all mankind to whom I had access; and as I could not do this in a private station, I was powerfully influenced to apply to learning in order to be qualified to do it publicly." <sup>61</sup>

About this time, he came in contact with John Thomson, the Old Side missionary in Virginia and North Carolina, and made arrangements with him to go to Pennsylvania for his theological training. He actually started north, but was seized with an attack of pleurisy, and had to turn back. Shortly afterwards, in 1751, he met Samuel Davies, who was on a preaching tour along the Roanoke, and immediately arranged to move to Davies' home in Hanover County, Virginia and to study under him. He was here until 1753, when Davies went to Europe with Gilbert Tennent on a fund raising trip for Princeton College, and again, after Davies' return, from 1755 to <sup>62</sup> 1757.

During this time, he kept a journal in which he recorded his religious state, much in the manner of

Jonathan Edwards' famous Diary. This daily concern with the state of one's soul, characteristic of the Awakened everywhere, comes out in the reasons Patillo gives for keeping a journal: "1st (the beginning of the sentence is missing)--my growth or decay in the divine life, and thus the blessing of God be actuated accordingly. 2dly, I shall thereby more accurately observe the workings of my own heart, and the methods the Lord may take for my reclamation in my strayings from him. 3dly, This may, through the divine blessing, have a tendency to promote my watchfulness and diligence, seeing I shall have a daily sentence against myself constantly before me, which I hope may tend to promote my humiliation. 4thly, By observing the dealings of God with myself, I may be the better enabled to deal with others, especially if the Lord shall carry me through learning, and call me to the work of the ministry. 5thly, To mention no more, it may be of service to me in giving an account of my state godward, if ever I should come on trial for the ministry."

Davies had wished Patillo to go on to Princeton, but financial difficulties stood in the way, and in addition, he wished to get married. He was deterred for a time by the objections of Davies as to the imprudence of such a step at that time, but finally went

ahead anyhow in 1755, believing, "That Mr. Davies was so well known in the learned world that a person finished by his hand, would not come under contempt any more than many shining lights now in the Church, who were educated before the college was erected."<sup>64</sup>

The attitude Patillo expressed in his journal in 1755 must have been representative of the cast of mind of Davies himself, and of the men of the Awakening generally; "...the principal blessings I am this day in pursuit of are--1st, Quickening and vivacity in religion; 2d, That I may pursue my studies assiduously, and that the great end of them may be the glory of God, and the salvation of men; 3d, That religion may revive where it is professed, and spread where not yet known."<sup>65</sup>

In 1757 Patillo was ordained by Hanover Presbytery, and preached in Virginia until 1765, when he accepted a call to Hawfields, Eno, and Little River in Orange County, North Carolina. In 1774 he moved southeast to Bute County, and in 1780 to Granville County, where he succeeded Creswell as pastor of Nutbush and Grassy Creek; he served there until his death in 1801. It is recorded that he "delighted to converse on subjects connected with experimental religion,"<sup>66</sup> and the zeal and methods of the Awakening<sup>67</sup>

were carried into the congregations he served, and spread through all the area surrounding them. Despite his lack of a college education, he had a great appetite for books and learning. He was a successful teacher, and published an elementary geography for his pupils. The first honorary degree bestowed by Hampden Sidney College was an M. A. awarded to Patillo<sup>68</sup> in 1787. He took a great interest in the spiritual welfare of the slaves in his congregations, and describes the methods he used with them, "Of the religious negroes in my congregation, some are intrusted with a kind of eldership, so as to keep watch over the others; any thing wrong seldom happens."<sup>69</sup> He was, moreover, a thorough democrat, and represented Bute County in the first Revolutionary Provincial Congress;<sup>70</sup> he even admitted that he had "often thought that the popular Congregational form, joined to the Presbyterian judicatures as a last resort, would form the most perfect model of church government that the state of things on earth admits of."<sup>71</sup>

These six men--Campbell, McAden, Craighead, Caldwell, Creswell, and Patillo--were an eloquent answer to Davies' call in 1751 for men "constrained by an irresistible zeal." Their lives dramatize the extent to which colonial Presbyterianism in North Carolina was



a transplanting of the Great Awakening from the Middle Colonies. Two of them were natives of Scotland, and three were probably born in Pennsylvania. Campbell studied in Scotland, and of Creswell's training we know nothing; but of the remaining four, three received their theological education in the Middle Colonies, under the influence of the Awakening, and two graduated from Princeton College. McAden was trained for the ministry by a Log College man, and Patillo was prepared by Samuel Davies, who in turn had studied under a Log College graduate; while Campbell was induced to resume preaching by Whitefield himself.

Under the preaching of these men, North Carolina began to produce ministerial aspirants of her own, who were usually sent back to Princeton for college and theological training, and by the time of the Revolution a generation of native ministers was sharing the work with the older men. The organization of Orange Presbytery in 1770 marked the inauguration of a period of great expansion and vigor among the Presbyterian churches of the province.

## Chapter Three

## THE METHODIST PHASE

In 1774 the missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Northampton County on the Virginia line, wrote to the Society, "We have been much perplexed of late with the sectarists, who sometime ago called themselves Anabaptists, but of late have assumed many different denominations, and have great influence over the weak part of the world, by persuading them that they possess a more extraordinary share of divine grace and favor than the rest of mankind accompanied by extraordinary influence of the holy Spirit, and pretend to a familiar intercourse with the Son of God.

"Never was the body of the blessed Jesus more torn by the cruelty of the Jews, than his Church is now rent by these people, who take judgment out of his hands, and anathematize every one who conforms to the doctrine of the Church of England, but at last they cannot erase nor break a pillar of that Church against which the Gates of Hell shall not prevail.

"We have a certain Mr. Devereux Jarrat Minister in Dinwiddie County Virginia, who travels about into every parish he thinks proper, in Carolina as well as Virginia, laying aside the service of the Church and making extensive use of extempore prayers and discourses, preaching up free grace, faith without works and other doctrines, very detrimental to a great many weak but well-disposed people. He has not yet been in my parish neither would I suffer him to preach in it, could I hinder him which I understand he says cannot be done, and that he has the authority to preach where he pleases of which I should be glad to be made acquainted."<sup>1</sup>

Only three years before, this same minister had complained to the Society of the very troublesome "New Light Baptists",<sup>2</sup> and now he found himself engulfed in still another wave of evangelistic zeal. This time the spirit of revival came from a reforming group within the Church of England, the Methodists, who took over the Awakening in the 1770's as the initial burst of enthusiasm among the Separate Baptists was ebbing.

Devereux Jarratt had come under the influence of the Great Awakening on the frontier of Virginia in the 1760's, through the agency of the itinerating New

Side Presbyterians and a stray copy of Whitefield's sermons. He intended at first to become a Presbyterian minister, but decided that he would have a greater opportunity in the Established Church, and <sup>in</sup> 1763 assumed charge of his first parish in Dinwiddie County in southern Virginia. Jarratt and his friend Archibald McRoberts were unique among the Established clergy for their evangelical preaching. <sup>3</sup> "Instead of moral harangues, and advising my hearers in a cool, dispassionate manner, to walk in the primrose paths of a decided, sublime and elevated virtue, and not to travel the foul track of disgraceful vice (the favorite style of preaching in that day), I endeavored to enforce in the most alarming colors, the guilt of sin, the entire depravity of human nature, the awful danger mankind are in, by nature and by practice, the tremendous curse to which they are obnoxious, and their utter inability to evade the sentence of the law and stroke of divine justice by their own power, merit, or good works." <sup>4</sup>

Jarratt's efforts were attended with great success, and the news of his revival was spread far and wide by strangers who were attracted to his services and then carried accounts back to their communities. Appeals for his preaching began to come in from the surrounding counties, and he "went out by day and by night, and at any time in the week, to private houses

and convened the people for prayer, singing, preaching,  
and conversation." <sup>5</sup> By the seventies, he had a regular  
circuit, extending into twenty-nine counties in Virginia  
and North Carolina, and was delivering an average of  
five sermons a week. His great revival was at its  
height between 1770 and 1772, and reached into the  
countries of Northampton, Halifax, Franklin, Warren,  
and Granville, in the northeastern section of North  
Carolina.

About this time, there came into North Carolina  
representatives of the Wesleyan movement, which was  
trying to do, on a large scale, the same job of awak-  
ening the Church of England, that Jarratt was trying  
to do in Virginia. Although George Whitefield, who  
sympathized with Wesley's aims, had been preaching in  
America since 1739, no regular Methodist society was  
set up here until the middle sixties. The Methodists  
did not at first try to set up ~~an~~ independent churches,  
but to organize, within the Established Church, socie-  
ties of people who were deeply concerned about the  
state of their souls. The Methodist preachers did not  
consider themselves regular ministers, and except for  
a single case, did not presume to administer the sacra-  
ments, until the Methodists had established themselves  
as a regular church in 1784 and provided for the

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ordination of their ministers.

The work was carried on by a zealous and consecrated group of men, who were continually on the move, spreading the doctrines of experimental religion, and establishing and guiding societies. In 1773 the little handful of Methodist ministers organized an American Conference to establish regular circuits for preaching, to license preachers and assign them, and generally to promote and regulate the spread of Methodism.

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The first Methodist (except Whitefield) to preach in North Carolina was Joseph Pilmoor, one of the two pioneer ministers sent to America by Wesley in 1769. In the autumn of 1772, he spent an arduous week preaching through the Albemarle region in the northeastern corner of the province. At one place, "the poor, ignorant people were greatly affected. One poor old man came to me with tears in his eyes, thanking me for what I had done." At another place, he delivered a sermon "to a large congregation of weeping sinners." In the following December and January, Pilmoor again passed through North Carolina, on his way to Savannah, and preached all through the seaboard area."

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When Pilmoor came to the South in 1772, he had been preceded in Virginia in the spring of that year by Robert Williams, who had been active in the Norfolk area.

Williams commenced his evangelistic work in Norfolk by taking his stand on the steps of the courthouse and beginning to sing. When a curious crowd had gathered, he kneeled and prayed, and then began his sermon. His hearers were so unused to his evangelistic style of exhorting, that they thought he was swearing when he used such words as "hell", "devil", and "damned."<sup>12</sup>

In 1773 he moved his seat of operations to Petersburg, and began to itinerate through the countryside, and so met Jarratt. Jarratt was much impressed with him and described him as "a plain, artless, indefatigable preacher of the gospel; he was greatly blessed in detecting the hypocrite, razing false foundations, and stirring up believers to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin."<sup>13</sup>

Williams immediately moved into the field of Jarratt's revival, and the two worked closely together in extending it. Jarratt was indispensable to the Methodists, in administering the ordinances to the converted, inasmuch as the Methodists were not ordained ministers themselves. They assured him that they had come "to build up and not to divide the church." and that "all who left the Church left the Methodists."<sup>14</sup> Jarratt did all he could to encourage them, even assisting in the organization of societies in his own parish.

After the first Methodist Conference in 1773, Williams was sent back to Virginia to organize a regular six weeks circuit, which extended "from Petersburg to the south over Roanoke River some distance into North Carolina."<sup>15</sup> This Brunswick Circuit reported 218 members to the Conference in 1774, and Williams informed Asbury that "...in some parts the congregations consist of two or three thousand people,"<sup>16</sup> an indication that the revival was having an effect far beyond the limits of the societies themselves. Jesse Lee, who was converted at this time, and who became the earliest Methodist historian, tells us that Williams "often proved the goodness of his doctrine by his tears in public, and by his life and conduct in private. His manner of preaching was well calculated to awaken careless sinners, and to encourage penitent mourners. He spared no pains in order to do good. He frequently went to church to hear the established clergy, and as soon as divine service was ended he would go out of the church, and standing on a stump, block, or log, began to sing, pray, and preach to hundreds of people. It was common with him after preaching, to ask most of the people questions about the welfare of their souls."<sup>17</sup>

The Methodists, unlike Jarratt, were Arminians in theology, preaching that grace was free to all who would believe. They had no elaborate credal system, and



invited all who were concerned over salvation to come  
 into their societies. <sup>18</sup> The democratic nature of their  
 appeal is revealed by Jarratt's remark that in the  
 private meetings, "the poorer sort, who at first may  
 be shy in speaking, soon wore off their shyness, and  
 spoke as freely as others." <sup>19</sup> Though the great Baptist  
 revival had covered this same area in preceding years,  
 there was still much for the Methodists to do. The  
 Baptists seemed to have lost much of their zeal for  
 evangelism. Asbury, on his trip through North Carolina  
 in 1780, thought that their Calvinism had been responsi-  
 ble. "The people are poor, and cruel one to another;  
 some families are ready to starve for want of bread,  
 while others have corn and rye distilled into poison-  
 ous whiskey; and a Baptist preacher had been guilty of  
 the same; but it is no wonder that those who have no  
 compassion for the nonelect souls of people should  
 have none for their bodies." <sup>20</sup>

In 1775 the revival burst out with new intensity.  
 Three additional itinerants had been sent to assist  
 Williams, and, as a result of their tireless travelling  
 and preaching, outbreaks of religious excitement began  
 to appear from place to place. In April Asbury received  
 from Williams "a great account of the work of God in  
 those parts." <sup>21</sup> Williams died in 1775 in the midst of

the abundant fruits of his labors. <sup>22</sup> In the summer of that year, Thomas Rankin, who had been converted in Scotland by Whitefield, made an evangelistic tour with Jarrett through southern Virginia and into North Carolina. <sup>23</sup>

But the outstanding preacher of the 1775 revival was George Shadford. Every sermon he delivered resulted in conversions, so that he could hardly believe it himself; and the awakening was always most intense in the areas where he was active. <sup>24</sup> Jesse Lee characterized it as "the greatest revival of religion I had ever seen. I have been at meetings where the whole congregation would be bathed in tears: and sometimes their cries would be so loud that the preacher's voice could not be heard. Some would be seized with a trembling, and in a few moments drop on the floor as if they were dead; while others were embracing each other, with streaming eyes, and all were lost in wonder, love, and power." <sup>25</sup>

In the winter and spring of 1776 there was again a new outburst of excitement, with Thomas Rankin this time doing the most effective preaching. <sup>26</sup> His journal describes how, "In every place the congregations were large, and received the word with all readiness of mind. I know not that I have spent such a week since I came to America. I saw everywhere such a simplicity in the people, with such a vehement thirst after the

word of God, that I frequently preached and continued in prayer till I was hardly able to stand. Indeed, there was no getting away from them while I was able to speak one sentence for God."

On July 23, "I crossed the Roanoke River, and preached in a chapel in North Carolina, and I preached every day to very large and deeply attentive congregations; although <sup>not</sup> without much labor and pain, through the extreme heat of the weather.

"On Tuesday, 30, was our quarterly meeting. I scarce ever remember such a season. No chapel or preaching place in Virginia would have contained one-third of the congregation. Our friends, knowing this, had contrived to shade with boughs of trees a space that would contain two or three thousand people. Under this, wholly screened from the rays of the sun, we held our general love feast. It began between eight and nine on Wednesday morning, and continued till noon. Many testified that they had redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. And many were enabled to declare that it had cleansed them from all sin. So clear, so full, so strong was their testimony, that while some were speaking their experience hundreds were in tears, and others vehemently crying to God for pardon or holiness."

Jesse Lee closes his account of the revival with the words, "My pen cannot describe the one-half of what I saw, heard, and felt. I might fill a volume on this subject, and then leave the greater part untold."<sup>28</sup>

The number of Methodists in Virginia was increased by the revival from 291 in 1774 to 2,456 in 1776. In the same period the North Carolina membership rose from none to 683.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this increase, a North Carolina circuit was set off in 1776, and three itinerants were appointed for it. These men and their successors in the next few years had for their territory all the area south and west of Virginia, as far as they were able to cover it.<sup>30</sup> By 1777 they had penetrated through the mountains to the valley of the Holston, in what is now Tennessee,<sup>31</sup> and by 1779 the field had expanded so that it was divided into three new circuits.<sup>32</sup> By 1783 there were 2,339 members in the state, and it was an important center of American Methodism.<sup>33</sup> Two years later the first conference of the independent American Methodist Episcopal Church was held in the state, which, by that time, had ten circuits and nineteen ministers.<sup>34</sup> The efficient central organization, revival-born zeal, and popular mass appeal of the Methodists, had enabled them to grow rapidly, even through the troubled period of the

Revolution, and to become within a few years one of the most important denominations and one of the most dynamic religious forces in North Carolina. But by coming late upon the scene, they played a smaller part than the Presbyterians and Baptists in the Awakening proper, and had a smaller share of influence on the development of the region in its formative period.

## Chapter Four

THE IMPACT OF THE AWAKENING

The influence of the Awakening reached into practically every corner of the province of North Carolina, and immediately affected a very large part of its population. The rapid expansion of the evangelical denominations is an index of its widespread influence.

Frederick Jackson Turner has pointed out how the conditions of frontier experience have, in every stage of American expansion, left their imprint on the life and institutions which have remained behind, as the frontier moved on to the west.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the colonies, the Awakening occurred in areas over which the frontier had already passed, and which were already taking on characteristic forms of life, thought, and institutions. But in North Carolina, the colonial Awakening overtook the frontier and was one of the most important elements in frontier life and development. The North Carolina Baptists followed closely and often led the early advance of the frontier up the river valleys from the coast; and their great revival took place in the recently settled country on the upper waters of the rivers. The Presbyterian militants

carried the Awakening farther to the west, along the valleys of the Yadkin and Catawba, organizing congregations at the edge of the wilderness. The Methodists, getting their foothold in an area not long <sup>peopled</sup> ~~settled~~, were within a few years itinerating through the newest settlements, beyond the mountain wall on the headwaters of the Tennessee.

The Carolina upcountry was a part of Turner's Old West, most significant of American frontiers, the area where Americans were first removed from the European influences and controls of the seaboard, and where frontier conditions and experiences operated freely, to produce peculiarly American traits and institutions, subsequently reproduced and modified on farther frontiers.<sup>2</sup> In North Carolina, more than anywhere else, the Awakening was a vital part of the Old West, and here, more than elsewhere, it entered into the social process which produced individualistic, anti-aristocratic, Revolutionary America. Here the Revolutionary movement followed more closely on the heels of both frontier and Awakening than elsewhere, actually partly overlapping both in point of time. Consequently, the relations of these three elements in the historical development to each other are particularly discernible. This final chapter will describe some of the various ways in which the influence of the Awakening was felt.

Of course, the primary influence of the Awakening was on the religious life of the people. While in other colonies the Awakening was a revival of churches already established, in North Carolina it brought the first significant religious influence into a religiously destitute region, so that the religious development of the province was stamped from its very beginning with the evangelical, emotional nature of its origins.

Just as everywhere else, there were those who criticized the revival for its emotionalism and excesses, particularly the ministers of the Established Church. They were continually complaining of the censoriousness of the revivalists, who were criticizing them for their formality and lack of religious feeling. Even Devereux Jarratt complained that, "In some meetings there has not been the decency and order observed which I could have wished."<sup>3</sup> But he was somewhat reassured by reading Jonathan Edwards' defence of the religious affections, and was forced to admit that the greatest results were obtained when the emotional element was most present. It is certain that the religious influence of the Awakening would not have spread so spectacularly throughout the province, had it not been for the contagious excitement of its emotional manifestations.

It is quite true that many of those converted under the excitement of the revivals fell away from



their convictions soon after the excitement passed. But it seems equally certain that many were permanently influenced, and that the Awakening produced a minor revolution in manners and morals on many parts of the frontier. The best evidence of this is the number of permanent churches left in the wake of which they exercised over their members. The early covenants, the revivals, and the strict discipline of the Baptist churches are notable for the determination they express, to "faithfully do by the help of God's Spirit, whatsoever our consciences, influenced by the word and spirit of God shall direct to be our duty both to God and man...watching over one another in the love of God, especially to watch against all jesting, light and foolish talking which are not convenient (Eph. 5:4)-- everything that does not become the followers of the holy Lamb of God...submitting ourselves unto the discipline of the church..."<sup>4</sup> Presbyterian congregations and Methodist societies also enforced high standards of morality and piety.<sup>5</sup> It cannot be doubted that these churches exerted a healthy influence on the frontier, where practically no other restraints were present, and where disregard of law and authority often had the support of public opinion.

Revivalism was to remain a permanent feature of religious life in North Carolina. This <sup>essay</sup> easily has

treated only the laying of foundations by the Awakening in the period prior to the Revolution. But revivals continued intermittently for the rest of the eighteenth century, culminating in the Great Revival of 1800, which can be said to be a sort of end product of the Great Awakening. The preaching of Presbyterian James Hall against the looseness and immorality left by the Revolution caused an outbreak of religious excitement along the Catawba.<sup>6</sup> James McGready, who had grown up under the influence of David Caldwell, caught the spark from the Virginia revival of John Blair Smith, and in 1788 awakened the Presbyterian churches in the northern part of the state.<sup>7</sup> Several revivals occurred among the Baptists of the Sandy Creek Association, but the larger and more Calvinistic Kehukee Association was praying in vain all through these years for a quickening of religion among them.<sup>8</sup> The Methodists were the most aggressive of the denominations in this period. They were organized for evangelism, with local preachers responsible for circuits, the presiding elder responsible for all the circuits in the district, and the bishop overseeing all the districts. Jesse Lee was one of their most successful itinerants, and Bishop Asbury made many trips through the state for the purpose of urging on the work.<sup>9</sup>

In 1800 the Great Revival began to sweep through the frontier settlements of Kentucky, and into Tennessee and Ohio. News of the great work soon reached North Carolina, and the churches began praying earnestly for its extension to the state. In 1800 the first signs of excitement appeared among the Sandy Creek Baptists.<sup>10</sup> Then, in 1801, Lemuel Burkitt made a trip to Kentucky and brought back to the meeting of Kehukee Association an account of the marvellous things he had seen. The ~~meeting~~<sup>gathering</sup> was thrown into great excitement, which soon spread through all the churches of the Association.<sup>11</sup>

Among the Presbyterians, the revival started at the close of a three day communion service at Cross Roads Church in Orange County. The minister rose to dismiss the congregation, disappointed that, despite earnest efforts, no manifestations had been felt, and then sat down again. Just as he was again about to dismiss the congregation, a young man who had seen something of the revival in Tennessee, cried out, "Stand still and see the salvation of God!" Immediately a wave of emotion swept over the assembly, and singing, prayer, and exhortation continued until midnight. The excitement soon swept through all the Presbyterian churches.<sup>12</sup>

The veteran New Light, David Caldwell, called a general meeting of all denominations to meet at Deep River in January, 1802, and Baptists, Methodists, and

Presbyterians all attended. Here the results were so great that even the more conservative ministers, who had previously been hostile to the revival spirit, were convinced that it was a genuine work of God, and great impetus was given to the movement. For the first time, the entire state and all religious denominations were rocked at once with religious excitement. Presbyterians and Methodists held union meetings, into which many Baptists entered as individuals, though they could not do so as a denomination because of their insistence on their own mode of baptism. Another distinctive feature of the Great Revival was the camp meeting, which seems to have originated in North Carolina, and which was to be a feature of the religious life of the region from that day to this. Thousands of people would camp on the grounds for a week or more at a time, living in tents or arbors, and participating in daily singing, prayer, and preaching.<sup>13</sup>

The Great Revival can be regarded as a culmination of the Great Awakening, not only in North Carolina, but in the West as well. Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Ohio Valley were largely settled by people from the older frontier of the upcountry of the South and they took with them the predisposition to emotionalism in religion which the Great Awakening had engendered east of the mountains.

In addition, many of the outstanding leaders of the Western revival were North Carolinians. The central figure

in the whole movement was James McGready, the North Carolina Presbyterian, who had gone to the West because of the opposition to his revival in the state. The Presbyterians continued to lead the Great Revival in the West, and all of their principal figures, William McGee, William Hodge, and Barton Stone, a product of Dr. Caldwell's school, were originally from the state. The Methodist leaders were John McGee, a native of the state, William Burke, who had done some preaching there, and William McKendree, who had held one of the first camp meetings, in Lincoln County, North Carolina in 1794. Most of the Baptist leaders were from Virginia. The whole movement, with its typical revival manifestations and its camp meetings, illustrated how behaviors and institutions which were first developed in the Old West, reappeared on the new frontier. The religious traits developed by the Great Awakening in North Carolina and in other parts of the Old West, particularly the Virginia upcountry, were among the more important elements which went into the life that developed across the mountains, and later, in still farther Wests.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most perplexing problems connected with the Awakening is that of the relation of theology to revivalism. On the one hand, the Awakening is described as a reaction against a growing Arminianism in religion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as a return to religious vitality via the reassertion of Calvinism.

It is doubtless true that Arminianism, proclaiming that God's grace was free to all who would embrace it and lead righteous lives, often became a rather lifeless matter of formal morality, which concerned itself very little with the relation of man to God. This is the kind of thing to which the reformers objected in the Established clergy, and it was doubtless the tendency which made way for laxity and lack of vigor among the General Baptists in the province, <sup>and which made</sup> ~~making~~ their conversion to Particular Baptist principles so easy.

Jonathan Edwards in New England, the New Side Presbyterians in the Middle Colonies, and George Whitefield throughout the colonies proclaimed a Calvinism which emphasized the importance of man's <sup>subordination</sup> ~~relation~~ to God, as the way to lead men from Arminian errors back to a vital piety. Making men wholly dependent on the capricious will of an all-powerful deity for salvation from the horrors of the hell which they described so vividly, they aroused the emotions of their hearers to a burning concern for the state of their souls. Despite the fact that these Calvinistic evangelists could not assure their listeners that even their most sincere efforts would result in salvation, they were undoubtedly successful in arousing them to make the attempt, and were themselves fairly confident of their ability to distinguish conversions as true works of grace.

The fact is that they were quite as eager to enlist the emotions of their hearers in the cause of their own salvation as were any of their Arminian co-laborers in the Awakening. Jonathan Edwards was almost unique among them in understanding the logical difficulties of their position and in working out a defence of their methods, which was consistent with orthodox Calvinism, as well as with the latest advances in philosophical speculation. But for most of these Awakened Calvinists, it is probably true that they were primarily concerned with spreading vital religion as far as possible, without being bothered by the necessity for working out a logical scheme which would justify their methods of arousing the emotions as a system of "means" fitted into the Calvinistic system. The speculations of an Edwards were pretty elusive to master, especially for uneducated Baptists, or even unphilosophical Presbyterians, on the North Carolina frontier.

They were not much hampered by theology while they were making converts, but when they began to set up creeds and covenants for their converts and successors to accept, there was the danger that the theology would become an end in itself, and that evangelistic zeal would be dampened. To assure the convert that few are to be saved, and that he is one of the few, is not likely to

spur him on to save souls himself. The season of religious excitement soon passed, but the creed remained, telling the elect that the rest of mankind, from whom they were set apart, were beyond the possibility of salvation, by the will of God. This may be putting the matter a bit harshly, but there is evidence that this is just what happened in North Carolina.

The New Side Presbyterians were continually being charged by their more conservative brethren with being unorthodox, or at least with not being concerned about theology, as indeed they were not. They had seen a great light and were terribly interested in saving souls, and were willing to forget theological complications for a while. In fact, the more zealous evangelists among the Presbyterians sometimes abandoned Calvinism completely. In 1792 Rev. Robert Archibald, a staunch revivalist and promoter of Watt's hymns at two churches in Mecklenburg, began preaching universal salvation, and was expelled two years later by Orange Presbytery.<sup>15</sup> Even Henry Patillo was suspected of unorthodoxy.<sup>16</sup> After the Great Revival, Barton W. Stone, a native of North Carolina and an enthusiastic revivalist, led the "New Light" secession from the Presbyterian Church, abandoning Calvinism and declaring the Bible to be the only rule of faith and practice.<sup>17</sup> Another schism growing out of the Great Revival led to the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.



Its leaders had been among the foremost promoters of the revival, and they now announced reservations as to the doctrine of predestination.<sup>18</sup>

The rapid tapering off of the original enthusiasm among the rigidly Calvinistic Particular Baptists is a case in point. The loss of zeal by the Separates is probably at least partially explained by the fact that they were moving from their early Arminianism toward the theology of the Particulars. Alone among the denominations, the Calvinistic Baptists had no important revivals between the Revolution and the Great Revival. Here the lack of education probably operated to encourage a literal subscription to a formal theology, which, being little understood, became even more of an end in itself than would otherwise have been the case. <sup>Consequently,</sup> ~~So that~~ in this period, the Methodists became very strong in the areas where the Baptists had formerly been predominant.

The Calvinism of the Presbyterians probably accounts for the fact that the Presbyterian congregations never in the whole period carried the Awakening very far beyond their own bounds. The New Side evangelists were able to awaken the Presbyterians themselves, but never inspired the elect to evangelize others. Indeed, their own enthusiasm was frequently not very lasting. John McLeod, who came in 1770 to succeed New Light James

Campbell in two of the churches on the Cape Fear, said that, "he would rather preach to the most polished and fashionable congregation in Edinburgh than to the little critical carls of Barbecue," so well-informed and critical were they on doctrinal points.<sup>19</sup>

As a matter of fact, most of the evangelizing of "waste places" in the province was done by Arminians. The General Baptists, the Separate Baptists, and the Methodists all offered the grace of God freely to all who would receive it. That Arminianism had its pitfalls, has already been pointed out. The General Baptists became so lax that the heart of conviction went out of their religion, and the vigorous Particular Baptists were able to move in and take over their churches. The Separates, without any credal statement at all and with an uneducated ministry, soon came, almost unconsciously, under the influence of the rigid creed of the Particulars.

But the Methodists, with their efficient centralized organization and insistence on discipline, were able to avoid these pitfalls, and, starting after the other denominations were well established, they were able to extend themselves throughout the state. Having been founded for evangelism, and their type of organization having been planned for that purpose, they retained their enthusiasm while others lagged, so that by 1860 they

led all denominations in the state in number of churches and were second only to the Baptists in membership.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that, while religious zeal flourished among both Calvinists and Arminians, and while both Calvinism and Arminianism were subject to tendencies which dried up the springs of vital piety, still, the rigid theology of the Calvinists seemed always to be an incubus to the spirit of evangelistic enthusiasm which characterized the Awakening and made it such a potent force in the life of colonial North Carolina.

One of the most important results of the Awakening was the contribution which it made to education. The Presbyterians were most prominent in establishing schools. Prior to their coming, the people of the backcountry had had no teachers whatever, and even in the coastal region education had been available only intermittently and to a fortunate few. Some planters had been able to afford tutors for their children, lay readers of the Established Church had occasionally conducted schools, the Presbyterian <sup>minister,</sup> Rev. James Tate, had begun teaching in Wilmington in 1760, <sup>20</sup> and academies had been set up in Newbern in 1766 and in Edenton in 1770. <sup>21</sup>

But when the Presbyterians began filling up the frontier, they established schools everywhere they settled.

Their attitude toward education is illustrated by an extract from the minutes of Synod of 1785, "Resolved, also, that it be enjoined on all congregations to pay a special regard to the good education of children, as being intimately connected with the interests of morality and religion; and that, as schools under bad masters and a careless management, are seminaries of vice rather than of virtue, the session, corporation, or committee of every congregation, be required to endeavour to establish one or more schools in such place, or places, as shall be most convenient for the people..."<sup>22</sup>

In 1755 Governor Dobbs found on his lands southwest of the Yadkin seventy-five families of "what we call Scotch Irish Presbyterians, who with others of neighboring tracts had settled together in order to have a teacher of their own opinion and choice."<sup>23</sup> Inasmuch as educated and dependable men for teaching were extremely hard to find, the Presbyterians relied largely on their ministers to superintend the schools, and their educational efforts were greatly handicapped until regular ministers settled among them.

Crowfield Academy, one of the earliest schools, was begun in 1760 between the Yadkin and the Catawba.<sup>24</sup> <sup>in 1767</sup> Joseph Alexander <sup>began teaching</sup> taught in Craighead's old congregation; ~~until~~ Queen's Museum, <sup>another academy,</sup> was chartered in 1771 at Charlotte in Mecklenburg, ~~at~~ <sup>when</sup> ~~which time~~ he took charge of the instruction there. Despite the annulment of its charter by the king in 1773, the academy

continued to operate, providing a classical education for many, and preparing some for Princeton. In 1776 the name was changed to Liberty Hall Academy, and it continued to function until the invasion of Cornwallis in 1780.<sup>25</sup>

Other well-known academies were conducted in the Revolutionary period by Presbyterian ministers: Samuel McCorkle who prepared six of the first seven graduates of the state university at Zion Parnassus Academy on the Yadkin;<sup>26</sup> Robert Archibald in eastern Mecklenburg;<sup>22</sup> James McGready in Orange;<sup>28</sup> and Henry Patillo in Orange and Granville.<sup>29</sup> James Hall, a graduate of Princeton who later received honorary degrees from both Princeton and the University of North Carolina, opened, during the Revolution, the best scientific school in the state at Clio's Nursery in western Rowan (now Iredell) County. He wrote a grammar for his pupils, started a circulating library in the neighborhood, and encouraged debating societies.<sup>30</sup>

By far the best known of these Presbyterian academies was the one conducted by David Caldwell at his home in Guilford County. A Princeton graduate, he commenced his school soon after his installation as minister in 1768, and continued to teach until about 1820. During this period the fame of his school spread far and wide, and he had students from every state south of the Potomac, as well as from every part of North Carolina. There were seldom less than fifty pupils in attendance, and often sixty or more. Five of his students became governors of states, many

more members of Congress, and a large number judges, physicians, lawyers, and ministers.<sup>31</sup>

Naturally, religious influences were strong in the school, and revivals were frequent. Many of the students decided to become ministers, without having had the faintest intention of doing so when they came to the academy. Mrs. Caldwell, the daughter of Alexander Craighead, was so successful in persuading students to enter the ministry that it was commonly said at the time that, "Dr. Caldwell made the scholars, but Mrs. Caldwell made the preachers."<sup>32</sup> The school produced at least fifty Presbyterian ministers, a vast majority of those in the region at that period, so that it was to the South what the Log College had been to the Middle Colonies. Some of these men were merely prepared by Dr. Caldwell for entrance into college, particularly Princeton or the new state university at Chapel Hill, but many of them received their entire academic and professional theological training from him, and later ranked among the most distinguished members of the profession. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Rhetoric, and the sciences were the basic curriculum, and moral philosophy was taught from a syllabus of Witherspoon's lectures.<sup>33</sup>

When the state university at Chapel Hill, the first in the country to open its doors, began in 1795, it was

under strong Presbyterian influence. The provision in the state constitution which had directed the establishment of the university, had apparently grown out of instructions to the delegates to the constitutional Congress of 1776 from predominantly Presbyterian Mecklenburg, that the constitution should provide for the establishment of a college in that county.<sup>34</sup> The first president was a Presbyterian minister, and the first instructor was a graduate of Presbyterian Princeton, on which ~~institution~~ the new college modelled itself for many years. In 1796 the University secured the services of Rev. Joseph Caldwell, who had been educated at Princeton under Witherspoon, and who was to guide the new college for forty years and make of it an outstanding institution in the ante-bellum South.<sup>35</sup>

The Methodists were handicapped educationally by being late in the field, and more particularly, because most of their ministers were not highly educated. But they did show an early interest in promoting learning. In 1780 Bishop Asbury found subscriptions being taken in North Carolina for a school; the building was delayed for some years, but by 1793 Cokesbury School was flourishing on the west bank of the Yadkin in what is now Davie County, with a regular minister detailed to superintend it.<sup>36</sup>

The Baptists, on the other hand, had been hostile to education. This was partly because they made their

appeal to the poorest and most backward elements of society and absorbed their prejudices, and partly because of their hostility to the formalism of the educated ministry of the Established Church. It will be recalled that the principal reason given for the secession of the Separates from the churches in New England was that the old churches would ~~only~~ allow <sup>only</sup> those with college training to preach. But in the early nineteenth century, ~~this became~~ <sup>The encouragement of education became</sup> a main point of controversy among North Carolina Baptists, and in a split the majority followed the liberals and led the other denominations in a large-scale promotion of denominational schools and colleges. <sup>37</sup>

In the eighteenth century the Presbyterians provided most of the educational facilities available to the people of North Carolina, and were responsible for much of the impetus for the establishment of a state university. In the nineteenth century they were joined by the more popular denominations in establishing academies and colleges. In the early ante-bellum period the only other schools were scattered private academies for the children of the well-to-do, usually under the care of ministers, and it was not until 1840 that the state began to assume in a meagre way a part of the educational burden.



The Awakening in North Carolina was also important for the part it played in the struggle for religious freedom. The idea of the complete separation of church and state was a peculiarly American contribution, in which the colonies of Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, ~~Virginia~~, and North Carolina led the way.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, even the coastal region of the province was isolated geographically, and developed those traits of independence and resentment of authority which are characteristic of frontiers everywhere. In the early period, the Quakers were very numerous and politically powerful in the province, and they led the fight against a church establishment, assisted by a powerful group of settlers who were not particularly religious, but who opposed the setting up of any sort of authority which could tax them and enforce conformity. So that despite the provisions in the original proprietary charters for a state church, none was set up until 1701, when the governor, "by a great deal of care and management," was able to defeat the Quakers in the Assembly and get the first Vestry Act passed.<sup>38</sup>

The Establishment was greatly aided about this time by the formation in England of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which immediately began to

send Established ministers to the province. But the opposition was so great that, in most places, it was impossible to elect vestries that would levy a sufficient tithe to support a clergyman; even when the tithe was levied, it usually proved impossible of collection. Moreover, the missionaries themselves were not willing to undergo, for the sake of religion, the hardships of the new country and the meagreness of the subsistence which they got from the Society, and few of them lasted longer than a year or two. Most of them seem to have been pretty ineffective, and some, who were downright vicious, hurt the cause of the establishment more than they helped it.

The governors and the Church party in the Assembly were continually trying to get more effective church laws passed. In 1710 this was an important factor in Cary's Rebellion, in which the dissenters were defeated.<sup>40</sup> But the next year they were given legal status by the declaration that the British Toleration Act of 1689 was to apply in the province. This act did not relieve them from the levies for the Establishment, but it did allow them to preach, provided that their ministers and meeting houses were licensed by the county courts, and

provided they left their meeting houses unlocked at all times.<sup>41</sup>

In the interior, where the dissenters were in a majority, they were not much molested, but in the coastal region their freedom to worship depended on a fair interpretation of the law. In 1740 a German Reformed congregation in New Bern obtained permission from the county court to build a chapel, which was also to be used by the Established Church. But in the same year a group of Baptists brought in a similar petition and had a great deal more difficulty. On the first day the court grudgingly admitted that the petition was in order under the Toleration Act, but delayed the matter for two more days, hoping to find some way to prevent its being granted. On the third day one of the three members<sup>of the court</sup> joined in securing an indictment of the petitioners for "several misdemeanors committed by said petitioners contrary to and in contempt of the laws now in force," probably for having worshipped previously without the required license. They were then bound over to appear at the general court of the province, to be held at New Bern, and also required to give bond to the county court for "good behavior", that is, not to continue preaching and holding services. The indicted men were tried, and three of them seem to have been

punished by whipping and three months imprisonment.

However, a slightly different group of men brought in another petition, asking, not for a license for a church, but merely for permission to hold services under the provisions of the Toleration Act. This permission was granted after they had subscribed to the Test Oath, which repudiated the doctrine of transubstantiation, and to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Established Church, being allowed to dissent from the Thirty-Sixth, which approved infant baptism, and part of the Twenty-Seventh, which affirmed the truth of all written in the homilies.<sup>42</sup>

Another case came to light in 1742 in the petition of the Protestant Dissenters of Bay and Neuse Rivers to the Chief Justice of the Province, relating how their meetings have been frequently broken up, and their petition to the county court at Bath the previous year for a meeting house denied.<sup>43</sup>

In the meantime, the efforts of the governors to get the Establishment in operation had been continually thwarted by the opposition of the vestries and the refusal of the Assembly to pass the necessary laws for its encouragement. Dissenters and others who opposed the Establishment were getting themselves elected vestrymen and then refusing to qualify, or qualifying and then

refusing to organize the parishes. In 1715 a Vestry Act was passed which imposed a fine of three pounds on vestrymen, except known dissenters, who refused to take an oath of absolute allegiance to the Crown and an oath not to oppose the liturgy.<sup>44</sup> It was reenacted in 1741 without the oath of allegiance.<sup>45</sup> When opposition took the form of refusing to vote for vestrymen, the Assembly passed an act in 1764 fining all, except Quakers, who refused to vote, twenty shillings. Dissenters who were elected and refused to qualify were fined three pounds.<sup>46</sup>

By the time of Governor Dobbs' administration in 1754 a new source of trouble arose in a dispute between local Churchmen and the Crown over presentation, or who was going to appoint and supervise the local ministers. The Crown disallowed the Vestry Act of 1754 because of the presentation clause, and it was not until the administration of Governor Tryon in 1765 that the combined opposition<sup>of dissenters and local Churchmen</sup> could be overcome and a Vestry Act satisfactory to the Crown passed.<sup>47</sup>

William Tryon was an able and determined man, and a zealous protagonist of the Establishment. Having gotten a satisfactory Vestry Act, he soon realized that the vestries could not be depended upon for the support of ministers, so he induced the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to supply a stipend for the clergymen it

sent over. On taking office, Tryon had found five ministers in the province, but within five years he had parsons in eighteen of the thirty-two parishes. In this program he was supported by the pro-Church party in the East, and strongly opposed by practically all of the inhabitants of the upcountry.<sup>48</sup>

The Baptists and Presbyterians were very numerous in the interior, and were growing more active and powerful every year. In 1766 an Established minister arrived, assigned to Mecklenburg County in the West, but the account he received of the numbers of dissenters in that area and their hostility to the Establishment deterred him from even going there. The minister who was sent to Rowan County found that his vestry would not at first qualify; and when he did get a vestry, they refused to support him, and dismissed him after a few years. Even in the East, the ministers were continually complaining of lack of support and of the activity of the dissenters.<sup>49</sup>

One of the devices used by the authorities for suppressing dissent in the province was modelled on the British Schism Act of 1714, which provided that no one could teach school without authorization from the Bishop of London. The act was repealed for Britain in 1718, but its provisions appeared in the instructions of five governors of North Carolina between 1730 and

1771.<sup>50</sup> Its intent would seem to be to allow no schools to operate which would propagate principles of dissent, or train dissenting ministers. In the dearth of educational activity in colonial North Carolina, it was applied but three times. The Presbyterian minister, James Tate, taught after 1760 in Wilmington without molestation, and other Presbyterian ministers were beginning to teach at this time in the back country, where they could not have been reached by the law in any case.

But when the charter was enacted for the academy at New Bern in 1766, it provided that the master had to be a member of the Church of England. The same question arose in the Assembly over the charter <sup>for</sup> ~~of~~ an academy for Edenton in 1768. The council insisted that the restriction be inserted, but the lower house resisted successfully and passed the bill without it. Governor Tryon vetoed the bill, and two years later was able to get one passed with the objectionable restriction included.<sup>51</sup>

But the intentions of the British government came out most clearly in the case of Queen's Museum, an academy in Presbyterian Mecklenburg, which was granted a charter in 1771. The Presbyterians had agreed that a Churchman should be president of the institution, but the instructors and trustees would be mostly Presbyterians. The act was sent to England, and the Board of Trade advised the king that, "we think it our duty to submit to

your Majesty, whether it may be advisable for your Majesty to add encouragement to toleration by giving the royal assent to an establishment, which in its consequences promises with great and permanent advantages to a sect of Dissenters from the Established Church who have already extended themselves over that province in very considerable numbers."<sup>52</sup> The charter was revoked.<sup>53</sup>

The dissenters were also discriminated against in the matter of exempting ministers from militia musters. The Established clergy were exempt by 1746, at least, and in 1764 the exemption was extended to "regularly called" Presbyterian ministers. Quakers were finally excused in 1770, out of respect for their pacific principles, provided they were enrolled to serve in case of insurrection or invasion; but the Baptists, who were lowest in the social order, were never given any consideration.<sup>54</sup>

The oppression to which the dissenters would have objected most, if the laws had been strictly carried out, was the levying of tithes by the vestries for the support of the Established clergy. But as a matter of fact, the levies were seldom imposed, even in areas where the dissenters were not dominant; and the records of the Quakers, which can probably be taken as representative, show that the dissenters did not suffer greatly from this cause.<sup>55</sup>



The restriction which stirred up the most dissatisfaction was that on marriages by dissenting ministers. According to the Marriage Act of 1741, marriages were to be performed by the Established minister, and if there were none, by a magistrate. The Presbyterians seem to have ignored the law from the very first, and the Quakers were allowed to marry by their own usages without molestation. Some of the Baptist ministers became justices of the peace, and were able to perform legal marriages. Marriages by dissenting ministers became so frequent that in 1762 the governor and council tried to get an act passed imposing a fine of fifty pounds for the offense, but the lower house would not consent. The marriage fee was large, going partly to the minister and partly to the governor, and this probably accounts for some of the eagerness to enforce the law.<sup>56</sup>

Dissatisfaction continued to increase, and in 1766 an act was passed allowing "regularly called" Presbyterian ministers to marry by license only, provided the fee was paid to the minister of the Established Church. The singling out of the Presbyterians in this act is indicative of the animus toward the Baptists; Governor Tryon admitted that, "Another tendency of this Act was to prevent the frequent abuses by rascally fellows who travelled through the province under the title of ministers of the Presbyterians and other sectaries and who being beggars in

conscience as well as in circumstances sought all opportunities to perform that sacred office to the great prejudice of the country."<sup>57</sup> But the Presbyterians were far from mollified by the act, and petitions of objection came in from several of the western counties. They objected first, because the act characterized the previous Presbyterian marriages as disorderly, though it legalized them. Also, they were now required to marry by license, instead of by publication of banns, as they had been doing. Finally they were not happy about collecting fees for their marriages and then turning them over to the Established clergy.<sup>58</sup>

In the meantime, the Regulator troubles were becoming more serious, and Tryon was anxious to try to align as many elements on his side as possible, especially in the upcountry. So in the Assembly of 1770, in which the dissident elements of the interior had a strong representation, he made a show of acceding to the demands of the Presbyterians, and sponsored a marriage act without the objectionable features. The Council was even then so stubborn in its opposition that the act was not approved until the Presbyterians in the lower house had refused to consider any other legislation before their bill was passed; and then, it contained a clause suspending it until it was approved by the king.<sup>59</sup>

Tryon sent the bill to England with a letter making it clear that the act was disadvantageous to the Establishment; two of his friends in the Established clergy also wrote letters making his opposition to it apparent. One of these letters reads in part, "Upon the fate of this other Bills were dependent, and it was good policy to keep the Dissenters in as good humour as possible at such a critical juncture. Should this Act receive the Royal assent, it would be a fatal stroke at the church of England, but as the insurrection is entirely quelled I flatter myself with hopes the Act will meet with a repulse."<sup>60</sup> It is not surprising that it was disallowed.

At no time had the slightest concession been made to the Baptists. They were very numerous among the Regulators, and in two petitions in 1769, one from Anson, and one from Orange and Rowan, the Regulators requested that all dissenting ministers be allowed to perform marriages according to the rites prescribed by their own denominations.<sup>61</sup> A bill to this effect was introduced in the same Assembly that extended the privileges of the Presbyterians, but it was rejected by the Council. With the Regulation crushed, the reforming party was ousted from the Assembly, and the marriage question took its place among the unsettled grievances that led to the Revolution.<sup>62</sup>

Its importance there is indicated by the fact that the first two items in the set of instructions drawn up by Mecklenburg County for its delegates to the Halifax Congress of November, 1776, instruct them to endeavor to have all the old vestry and marriage laws abolished, and to obtain such a law "that Gospel Ministers regularly ordained, whether by Bishops, or Presbyteries, or by Associations of regular ministers, shall have the Legal authority to marry after due publication of banns where the parties live."<sup>63</sup> However the actual resolution in the Provincial Congress, that "All regular ministers of the Gospel of every Denomination shall be empowered to celebrate matrimony, according to the rights [sic] and ceremonies of their respective churches," was introduced by the Baptist minister, Henry Abbot, who also played an important part in embodying religious liberty in the State Constitution and Bill of Rights. This declaration by the Congress effectively repealed the colonial marriage laws, though new laws were not formally adopted until April, 1778.<sup>64</sup>

Toward the close of Tryon's administration, the resentment of the Establishment had become merely a part of the larger quarrel of the people with the governor and with Great Britain. The ministers in Granville and Duplin Counties were forced to leave their parishes, after serving as chaplains with the militia forces led by the governor against the Regulators.<sup>65</sup> Such was the hostility, that Governor Martin, who succeeded Tryon in 1771, thought it

impolitic to try to introduce additional clergymen. The Vestry Act of 1768 was to run for five years, and the Establishment officially died when the renewing Vestry Act of 1774 provided only for the vestries' functions in caring for the poor. As the Establishment went down, the work of even those of the ministers who sympathized with the patriot cause was rendered ineffective by the outbreak of the Revolution.<sup>65</sup>

As Revolutionary North Carolina began to shape its own laws and institutions, the idea of a church establishment was one of the first targets for attack. Orange Presbytery, at the instance of David Caldwell, applied to Waightstill Avery, a prominent representative from Mecklenburg County in the Halifax Provincial Congress of April, 1776, to secure relief from the oppressions which dissenters suffered from the Establishment; but the matter was carried over to the Halifax Congress of November, which was to frame a Constitution and Bill of Rights.<sup>67</sup>

In this November Congress, two different ideas of church-state relations were represented, that of the Presbyterians and that of the Baptists. An extreme form of the Presbyterian view is put forward in a set of proposed instructions drawn up by John McKnitt Alexander, a prominent leader in Mecklenburg County, for the county's delegates to Congress. It instructs them "to oppose to the utmost any particular clergyman or set of clergymen being invested with power to decree rites and ceremonies and to decide in

controversies of faith to be submitted to under the influence of penal laws." However, it was not proposed that religion should have no place in the government. The Presbyterians thought a proper religious influence essential to the state's welfare, and Alexander proposed that the delegates should see to it that the Protestant religion was made "the Religion of the State, to the utter exclusion forever of all and every other (falsely so called) Religion, whether Pagan or Papal, and that the full, free, and peaceable enjoyment thereof be secured to all and every constituent member of the State as their unalienable right as Freemen, without the imposition of rites and ceremonies, whether claiming civil or ecclesiastical power for their source, and that a confession and profession of the Religion so established shall be necessary to qualifying any person for public trust in the State."<sup>68</sup>

These propositions were modified in the county public meeting, and the final resolutions provided that no one who denied the being of God or the divine authorship of the Old and New Testaments, or who was a Roman Catholic should be eligible for office. They also provided that no professing Christian should be compelled to pay taxes toward the support of any other denomination; and finally, "That all professing Christians shall enjoy the free and undisturbed exercise of religion, and may worship according to their consciences without restraint except idolatrous worship." So that the delegates were left free to vote for Alexander's Protestant state religion, subject to these

conditions. Similar resolutions were sent from Orange County, where, also, Presbyterianism was strong.<sup>69</sup>

The Baptists in the new state, influenced by the stirring fight their brethren in Virginia were making for religious liberty, stood for complete liberty of conscience and the severance of any connection between church and state. A Baptist minister, Henry Abbot of Pasquotank, had been in touch with the situation in Virginia and was very much concerned about the question of religious liberty. He was elected to the Constitutional Congress and appointed to the committee which drafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights; and the articles relating to religion seem to have originated with him. Article Nineteen of the Bill of Rights says, "That all men have a natural and inalienable right to worship Almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences."<sup>70</sup>

Article Thirty-four of the Constitution proper says, "There shall be no establishment of any one religious church or Denomination in this State in Preference to any other, neither shall any person, on any pretence whatsoever, be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his own Faith or Judgment, or be obliged to pay for the purchase of any Glebe, or the building of any House of Worship, or for the maintenance of any Minister or Ministry, contrary to what he believes right, or had voluntarily and personally engaged to perform, but all persons shall be at liberty

exercise their own mode of worship. Provided, that nothing herein contained shall be considered to exempt preachers of treasonable and seditious Discourses from legal trial and punishment."

These articles establish full liberty of conscience, as contrasted with Alexander's proposals. Furthermore, when the draft was reported to the floor, it contained none of the religious restrictions on office-holding which the Presbyterians had proposed, and which must have been strongly urged and still more strongly opposed in the committee. But after a hot fight on the floor, the following article was inserted, "That no person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant Religion, or the divine authority of the Old and New Testament or hold religious principles incompatible with the Freedom and Safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, of place of Trust or Profit, in the civil Department within this State."<sup>71</sup>

Tradition has it that this article was introduced by the veteran David Caldwell, who was a member of the Congress; and although it is very similar in language to the Mecklenburg resolutions, it is in accord with his known views, and he must have been prominent among its proponents.<sup>72</sup>

In the Convention to ratify the Federal Constitution in 1788, he fought for a similar religious test for office-holders. With this one defect, North Carolina preceded Virginia



by nine years in establishing full religious liberty, despite the greater renown of Jefferson's Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom.

The dissenting sects planted in North Carolina by the Awakening played an important part in both the Revolution and the uprising of the Regulators which preceded it. The Stamp Act and the duties levied after its repeal under the principle of the Declaratory Act were felt hardly at all in the interior; the determined and successful resistance to these measures came from the merchants and gentry of the trading towns of the coastal area, who stubbornly maintained that only the colonial Assembly had the right to levy taxes for the province.<sup>73</sup>

The Regulator movement in the upcountry grew out of local grievances, and in these matters the coastal gentry sided with the royal governor to suppress the rebellion. The Assembly and the governor appointed all the county officials, and these local courthouse rings, by the use of patronage and political machinations, had been able to control the elections for Assemblymen. These county officials, particularly the clerks of court and registers of deeds, had been exacting as much as four times the legal fees. The taxes laid by the Assembly were poll taxes and it was found that in every county the sheriff had been collecting

amounts in excess of the actual levies. Taxes were imposed for what were considered extravagant expenditures, as in 1768, when every taxable in the province was required to pay two shillings six pence for the construction of an impressive governor's palace. It was found that in some cases where special levies had been made for special purposes, as for example, to pay the costs of the French War, a sufficient amount had been collected, but the special taxes were still demanded. The scarcity of specie in the upcountry made the tax burden even more onerous, and men were losing their property because they could not find currency with which to pay the sheriff. Other grievances arose from abuses in the land offices of Lord Granville, who held all the land in the northern half of the province, as a result of which, all land titles were thrown into confusion, and many people were uncertain in their possession of property on which they had lived for many years.<sup>74</sup>

Discontent was apparent in the upcountry by 1765, and in 1766 an Association was formed to call the local officials to accounting. In 1768 the Regulators, as they came to be called, entered into an oath-bound agreement to pay no taxes until ~~an~~ satisfaction was secured. From 1768 to 1771 the interior was in a state of tumult, with the Regulators insisting on redress, and the governor insisting that they abide by the laws and at the same time making a feeble show of trying to improve conditions.

Some measure of reform was secured when the dissidents were able to defeat some members of the courthouse gangs in the elections for the Assembly of 1770, but most of the abuses continued, as did riots, beatings, refusal to pay taxes, breaking up of courts, and general lawlessness. The governor twice led the militia to Hillsboro in the center of the disaffected area. On the second occasion, in May, 1771, a pitched battle was fought at Alamance Creek in western Orange County, at which time the Regulators were crushed and forced to submit and take an oath of allegiance.

Governor Tryon demonstrated his political astuteness throughout the controversy, in retaining the support of the lowcountry leaders against the Regulators, at the same time he was opposing them on the Parliamentary taxation question. He tried to play the same kind of game with the Presbyterians, in order to divide the upcountry. He had given them special privileges in the Marriage Act of 1766, and in 1768, after the Orange County militia had failed to turn out to his call, he tried to get troops in Mecklenburg County, which was predominantly Presbyterian, and in Rowan County, where the Presbyterians were an influential element.

The Presbyterian Scotch-Irishmen, by virtue of their aggressiveness and zeal for education, had assumed a position of social pre-eminence among the dissenters. In the counties where they predominated, they had been able to keep political control in their own hands, so that they didn't suffer as

much from abuses as the other upcountry counties, and also had considerable influence in the Assembly. Now Tryon appealed to their social prejudices, telling them that the Regulators were "a Faction of Quakers and Baptists, who aimed to upset the Church of England, &c."<sup>75</sup> The Presbyterian ministers, Patillo, Creswell, McAden, and Caldwell, expressed their disapproval of an armed revolt against the government in a letter to the Presbyterian inhabitants of North Carolina, which deplored the fact that some Presbyterians had engaged in the Regulation, assured them that redress could be obtained by legal means, and urged them to abandon the movement, even if it meant breaking an oath. They also assured the governor of their loyalty.<sup>76</sup>

But Tryon did not fare quite so well with the Presbyterian militiamen. In Mecklenburg he found that they refused to take the oath to maintain the government against the disturbers of the peace, and so he had to postpone his call for volunteers until a later date, and even then got only about a third of them. A somewhat better response was obtained in Rowan. The Regulators were overawed by this show of force, but the situation had changed by 1771, when Tryon again called for troops.

He had continued to woo the Presbyterians in the Assembly, passing a more liberal marriage act in 1770 and chartering their academy at Charlotte in 1771. But the

continued abuses and the failure of the governor to take any effective steps to relieve the situation had aligned most of the people of the West on the side of the Regulators, though many of them deplored the excesses and violence which had occurred. This time Tryon sent General Waddell through the southern and western counties to collect the militia and to approach the Regulators from the rear, while he advanced on them by way of Hillsboro, with the militia from the East. This time Waddell was able to secure only a hundred men from Mecklenburg and two hundred from Rowan. When he crossed the Yadkin, he found his way barred by a strong force of Regulators. He then discovered that the men he had were unwilling to fight the Regulators, and he had to retire back across the river. In the meantime, a supply of powder on its way to his army had been seized in Mecklenburg and blown up.  
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Many of the Regulators engaged in the Battle of Alamance were Presbyterians from the congregations of Caldwell, McAden, and probably Patillo. Caldwell was himself present at Alamance, and was sent by the Regulators just before the battle to try to negotiate with Tryon. When he learned that Tryon was determined that they should submit, he urged them not to fight and promised to try to secure a settlement for them.

After the battle, when six of the lesser leaders had been sentenced to hang, he went to Hillsboro to try to save their lives, but his efforts were of no effect. James Hunter, who was one of the principal leaders and who was outlawed after the battle, had been a member of one of Caldwell's congregations; many other members of Caldwell's congregations were prominent among the Regulators, as was doubtless true of members of other Presbyterian churches in the area.

Herman Husband, the leading man among the Regulators, was a deeply religious individual, and in 1761 published an account of his spiritual progress. He had been brought up in an Episcopalian household in Maryland, and had been conscious of religious promptings from his earliest years. But it was not until he heard Whitefield preach in 1739 that he began to understand the way to salvation and became an enthusiastic New Light. "Our Minister, or the Church Minister (so called) would now and then preach in our Neighborhood, who I went also to hear, from whom I could learn little or nothing at all, for the New-Lights (as they began to be called) would tell us the Marks, at least some Marks of a Christian, and that we must be born again of the Spirit, and proving it from Scripture,

and explain the Works of Conversion, describe the State of the new Man by Similitudes and Parables, thunder against sin with some Life and Power, But the Church Minister seemed to know nothing at all about the Matter, nay he would speak against it, and signify as much as that Water Baptism was the New Birth, and that a Life of Morality was a Christian Life, without any sensible Workings of God's Spirit on the Soul; so that I got quite sick of him..."<sup>80</sup>

Husband's experiences convinced him that he must always follow exactly the promptings of the Spirit within him, and he describes how, after much soul searching, he finally decided that even the New Light Presbyterians were too much inclined to shackle the untrammelled dictates of the inner light by insisting on adherence to formal "means." Consequently, he finally became a Quaker, determined to follow at all costs the promptings of the Spirit within him as to what was God's will. He was a chronic rebel all his life, and sacrificed everything to this inner conviction of right and wrong. When he fled from North Carolina with a price on his head after the Battle of Alamance, he went to Pennsylvania, where he became involved in 1794 in the Whiskey Rebellion. He was arrested and again sentenced to die. But David Caldwell, who was in Philadelphia at the time, got up a petition on his behalf, and he was pardoned

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by Washington.

It can be assumed that the religious motive was prominent with other Regulators. The center of disaffection was in the area where Shubal Stearns had settled only ten years before the Regulation movement started, and it is probable that the majority of the Regulators were Baptists, or had at least been exposed to the influence of their great revival. Tryon had already characterized the Baptists as "enemies to society and a scandal to common sense,"<sup>82</sup> and his bitterness toward them probably accounts for some of his harshness toward the Regulators throughout the conflict. This was Husband's opinion: "...Though we will not say, that there was not a design formed particularly against Orange County, because the body of its Inhabitants were Dissenters from the established Church of England. If there was no such Design, why were not Granville, Brunswick, and Cumberland, where Quakers and Baptists are not so numerous, treated with lenient measures of Powder and Ball."<sup>83</sup>

Husband also believed that Tryon's appeal to the Presbyterians, including his weaseling support of the charter for Queen's College in Mecklenburg in the Assembly of 1770-1771, was part of the same design against the Quakers and Baptists. "What was this for, but to bring over the Presbyterians to his side,



against their Brethren of other Denominations. And with the same spirit and Design, the Gov. gives Commissions making one Col. Alexander, and another Capt. Alexander, and another Alexander Esq. Justice of the Peace, &c. &c.--and all this to take in a large body of Presbyterians, settled in Orange-county since the last War, that they might be ready Tools of the Junto, to serve as Pack-horses, to do their drudgery..."<sup>84</sup>

The Sandy Creek Association did in 1768 threaten to excommunicate any of the Separate Baptists who took up arms against the government or aided those who did so.<sup>85</sup> But there is abundant evidence that this had little effect. It will be recalled that resentment at usurpation of authority by the Association caused it to be broken up in 1770, and it is probable that this was one of the principal reasons for dissatisfaction with it. Two Baptist ministers signed one of the Regulator papers, and many Baptist names are found on others. The Regulators held meetings at Rocky River Church, and one of the exhorters of Sandy Creek Church was with the dissidents at Hillsboro in 1768.<sup>86</sup>

Most convincing evidence of all, is the great exodus of Baptists from the province after the Battle of Alamance. Morgan Edwards was in the area immediately

afterwards, and reported that the mother church at Sandy Creek had been reduced from 606 to 14 members. "The cause of the dispersion was the abuse of power which too much prevailed in the Province and caused the inhabitants to rise in arms, and fight for their privileges; but being routed, (May 16, 1771), they despaired of seeing better times, and therefore quitted the Province. It is said that 1,500 families departed since the battle of Alamance; and, to my knowledge a great many more are only waiting to dispose of their plantations in order to follow them." <sup>87</sup> He mentioned several other removals of whole Baptist communities. These people <sup>established themselves</sup> ~~settled~~ along the whole frontier of South Carolina, and furnished the bulk of the population which flowed across the mountains in these years and <sup>88</sup> settled on the upper waters of the Tennessee.

The outbreak of the Revolution four years after Alamance found the dissenters of the upcountry in the front ranks of the patriots. The importance which the Awakening had ascribed to the soul of each individual had fostered a respect for individual rights in government as well as in religion. The fight for religious liberty and against the Establishment was a logical forerunner to the fight for political liberty. The pure democracy of the local Baptist churches,

and the representative democracy of the Presbyterian polity were even more significant than the colonial Assembly in educating the mass of the people in democratic institutions. The tradition of church covenants, which the Presbyterians preserved from their Scotch origins, and the covenants entered into by the Baptists emphasized the idea of government by consent. Especially among the Presbyterians, the idea of a mutual obligation to resist all oppression was emphasized. These elements, brought to North Carolina by the Awakening, interacted with other powerful forces in frontier life that made for democracy; the outstanding role which the dissenting sects played in the Revolution is evidence of the importance of the religious elements.

The most Presbyterian area in the state and, according to Cornwallis, "the most rebellious section of America"<sup>89</sup> was Mecklenburg County on the Catawba, where the intransigent Covenanter and New Light, Alexander Craighead, had begun preaching about 1755. As soon as the news of the battle at Lexington reached the county, a county convention met and adopted a set of resolutions <sup>(the Resolves of May 31, 1775, not the spurious "Mecklenburg Declaration" of May 20)</sup> suspending all Crown authority, vesting all power in the Provincial Congresses, and constituting a virtual declaration of independence. Of the twenty-seven members of this convention, one, Hezekiah James

Balch, was a Presbyterian minister, and nine others<sup>90</sup> were elders in the Presbyterian church.

In 1780 after the British victory at Camden, Lord Cornwallis moved his army into Mecklenburg County. His cavalry commander relates the difficulties the British had with the unorganized people of the area, "It was evident and had been frequently mentioned to the king's officers, that the counties of Mecklenburg and Rohan were more hostile to England than any others in America. The vigilance and animosity of these surrounding districts checked the exertions of the well-affected, and totally destroyed all communication between the king's troops and the loyalists in other parts of the province... ~~the~~ the town and its environs abounded with inveterate enemies...the foraging parties were harrassed every day by the inhabitants, who did not remain at home to receive payment for the product of their plantations, but generally fired from covert places, to annoy the British detachments..."<sup>91</sup> Receiving news of the defeat of a detachment of his army under Ferguson at Kings Mountain, Cornwallis was obliged to retreat back to South Carolina, and leaving at night, lost fifty wagons of supplies in the swamps.<sup>92</sup>

In Western Rowan, to the north of Mecklenburg on the Catawba, the Presbyterian ministers were active

patriots. Rev. Thomas McCaule went with General William Lee Davidson and other militiamen from his congregation to meet Cornwallis' second invasion of North Carolina, and was at the general's side when he fell in the Battle of Cowan's Ford.<sup>93</sup>

Reverend James Hall, who was educated at Princeton under the prominent patriot, Dr. Witherspoon, was, early in the war, chaplain of the army sent against the Cherokees. When the British invaded South Carolina in 1779, he raised from his congregation and led, with the rank of captain, a company of cavalry; and in 1781 he again mustered the men of his church to meet the British at Cowan's Ford.<sup>94</sup>

Farther north, in Guilford County, David Caldwell preached constantly on the rights of the colonists in their dispute with the mother country. In the only one of these sermons to come down to us, he describes the oppressions which the colonies have suffered, and then concludes, "If I could portray to you, in any thing like their reality, the results of your conduct in this great crisis in your political destiny; or if I could describe with any tolerate degree of correctness, the feelings which you will have of reproach, shame and regret, according to the part you act--whether as men and as patriots, or as cowards and traitors--I should have no difficulty in persuading you to shake off your

sloth, and stand up manfully in a firm, united, and persevering defence of your liberties; but I would hope that enough has been said--enough in reason--enough for my purpose; and we expect that none of you will be wanting in the discharge of your duty, or prove unworthy of a cause which is so important in itself, and which every patriot and every christian should value more than wealth, and hold as dear as his life." <sup>95</sup>

Caldwell's activities in behalf of the patriot cause made him a marked man when the British occupied the country at the time of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in 1781, and he was forced to hide ~~in~~ in the woods for some time, having several narrow escapes. The British encamped on his place, ransacked his house, and burned his library. After the battle he assisted <sup>96</sup> in caring for the wounded.

The other members of Orange Presbytery were patriots also, and were likewise active. Henry Patillo was the chaplain of the first Revolutionary Provincial Congress in 1775. The official position of Presbyterianism was expressed in a pastoral letter sent out by the Synod of New York and Philadelphia on May 20, 1775, at the very outset of hostilities. It was written long before independence was seriously talked of, and expressed allegiance to the king, "who

had probably been misled into the late and present measures by those about him." But it goes on to urge the fullest support to the Continental Congress: "...adhere firmly to their resolutions; and let it be seen that they are able to bring out the whole strength of the country to carry them into execution."<sup>97</sup> The Scotch Highlanders of the Cape Fear should be noted as an exception to the general Presbyterian attitude. Isolated by language differences from the rest of the state, and feeling still bound by the oath they had taken after their defeat at Culloden, they formed the core of Tory strength in North Carolina.<sup>98</sup>

The Baptists, more than any other sect, had been persecuted in North Carolina by the colonial government and the Establishment. Evidence of the Baptist position in the Revolution is found in a letter from Washington to a group of Virginia Baptists: "When I recollect with satisfaction, that the religious society of which you are members have been throughout America, uniformly and almost unanimously, the firm friends to civil liberty, and the persevering promoters of our glorious revolution, I can not hesitate to believe that they will be the faithful supporters of a free yet efficient government."<sup>99</sup>

A study of the various records of the Baptists for the Revolutionary period reveals that a surprising number of those whose names are found there, are also men who came to light during the period as ~~some~~ active patriots holding responsible positions in the Revolutionary cause. <sup>Whereas</sup> ~~Whereas~~ the Baptists had been universally shunned in public life during the colonial period, seventeen Baptist ministers occupied public positions during and immediately following the Revolution. This rise in public esteem and influence was to a great extent due to their zeal for the patriot cause. <sup>100</sup>

Few Baptist laymen are known to have been Tories, and only three ministers were ever under the suspicion of the vigilant Committees of Safety. Of these, only one was a Tory, and he quickly recanted. The other two had religious scruples against taking up arms, and were accused of being dangerous propagandists. This was not the official Baptist position, and it seems that some of the Baptist ministers actually <sup>101</sup> joined the army. It is the Baptist historian Paschal's view that, with the possible exception of the Presbyterian settlements, the part of the state where the Kehukee Association was strongest, was the most undivided of all in its patriotism. In Bute County, where the Baptists were very strong, "The



king had no friends, except a few Scotch merchants,  
 and vagrant peddlers." <sup>102</sup>

The case with Methodism was quite different. It had entered the state only a few years prior to the Revolution. Many of its foremost preachers had only recently come to America from England, for the sole purpose of saving souls, and they did not feel like siding with the colonies. The situation of the native Methodists was made even more difficult by Wesley's opposition in England to the Revolution. Besides this, many Methodists had scruples against fighting. Jesse Lee, who was to become one of their most prominent preachers, refused to bear arms when he was drafted into the militia in 1780, but was finally allowed to drive a wagon instead. On the other hand, many Methodists were prominent patriots. Green Hill, a preacher, was a militia major and represented Bute County in three Provincial Congresses. Phillip Bruce, another prominent preacher, was also an ardent patriot and participated in the Battle of Kings Mountain. But as a group, the Methodists were too new in the field and too much disorganized themselves by <sup>103</sup> the war to exert much influence one way or the other.

The Awakening had enrolled the entire upcountry in the ranks of dissent. The Presbyterians and Baptists had heightened the frontiersman's sense of his individual

importance, provided working models for democracy in their forms of church government, and encouraged men to insist on their rights in the fight for religious liberty. The spirit of dissent had fused with the spirit of political grievance in the Regulation, and by the time of the Revolution, the dissenting sects were preaching the principles of political as well as religious liberty. In the West, the Presbyterians were the very backbone of the Revolutionary movement. At the same time, farther east, the formerly despised Baptists were so active in the patriot cause, that the War for Independence was for them a social revolution also, elevating them for the first time to a position of respectability and responsibility in the community.

The Revolution merely highlights the impact of the Awakening. By the time hostilities began, the frontier had passed, and in the immediately preceding period, North Carolina life had assumed the characteristic aspects which, while changing and evolving, would nevertheless continue to be distinctive of the region from that day to this. And in these pre-Revolutionary formative years, North Carolinians were moving on to new frontiers, carrying these characteristics with them, to leave their stamp on new Wests and on the nation. In these years, the Awakening

was one of the major social forces shaping the region, molding its social behavior and attitudes, determining its patterns of religious life, educating its leaders and laying the foundations for its future educational development, and profoundly influencing the evolution of its political ideas and institutions.

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