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THE GREAT AWAKENING
A Thesis presented to the
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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Concordia Seminary
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Approved by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

page

FOREWORD	1
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. CAUSES:	
A. Religious:	
1. Religious Indifference of People	5
2. Formalism in Churches	6
3. Half-way Covenant	8
4. Fervid Preaching of the Revivalists	9
B. Economic:	
1. Indian Warfare	10
2. Wealth	11
C. Political	
1. Forcible Establishment of Anglican Church..	11
2. Union of Church and State	12
III. THE GREAT AWAKENING ITSELF:	
A. Beginnings	14
B. Freylinghuysen	14
C. Tennent	15
D. Edwards :	
1. His Life	16
2. His Revival Work	18
3. His Theology	20
E. Dickinson and Blair	22
F. Whitefield:	
1. His Life	23
2. His Revival Work	26
3. His Theology	28
G. End	29
IV. RESULTS:	
A. Good Results:	
1. Religion Became Important to the People ...	31
2. Growth in Church Membership	32
3. Missionary Interest	32
4. Educational Interest	33
5. Religious Liberty	33
6. Political Liberty	34
B. Evil Results:	
1. Emotionalism:	
a. Denial of Means of Grace	35
b. Emphasis upon Feeling	37
c. Emphasis upon Moral Reform	41
d. Insufficient Indoctrination	42
e. Not Lasting	42
2. New Theology	43
3. Unionism	46
4. Controversies	47
V. CONCLUSION	50

FOREWORD

Whenever the name of a great revivalist is mentioned in Lutheran circles, then the echo of "Kretzer" or "Schwaermer" can be heard rumbling through the room. George Whitefield, John Wesley, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday and the host of others are labeled enthusiasts, and the term enthusiast seems to indicate that these men were not servants of God. Consequently, they did more harm than good. However, much can be said in favor of the fervid evangelists. The writer was overjoyed to read the following article concerning Billy Sunday by the conservative Dr. Theodore Graebner in the March, 1939, issue of the Cresset:

"There was Billy Sunday. I cannot mention his name now in the class without causing a certain amount of merriment, which, I am afraid, sometimes becomes audible because of a conviction that it is the expected thing. Somehow the legend persists that Billy Sunday - I am sure the 'Billy' has something to do with it - was a mere bufoon, a clown in the pulpit, a sensational revivalist whom Providence had intended for a comedian, but who etc., etc. I am not so sure that if I went back twenty years I could not dig up some judgments of my own along much the same line to make my face red for the simple reason that I have since heard and seen the evangelist. I have seen him take off his coat, mount upon a chair, and thence upon a table. I have heard him excoriate vice in language that made use of slang (and that made sin real to people whom you or I could never reach with our Addisonian phrases). But he was not a clown. He was not funny. People laugh at clowns; people laugh at comedians. No one laughed at Billy Sunday. His extravagances of action and language were due to a most extravagant, a transcendent, matchless love for sinners. You who have not heard him will not understand. And you have never learned what emphasis is in public speech. You would probably

not agree with some clergymen of my faith who heard him, at a ministerial alliance dinner, a testimonial dinner to Rev. Sunday, flay for the space of half an hour the modernists who made up three-fourths of his audience, in language that flowed from 'a tongue touched by the avenging angel,' a most magnificent display of mastery of English and oratorical powers." 1.

Yes, much can be said for the revivalists. So, let us remove all prejudice from our minds, and remember that even the traveling evangelist did some good for the kingdom of God.

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1. Graebner, T., Cresset, March, 1939. Article: The Alembic. pp.25.26

I. INTRODUCTION

The Great Awakening was a religious revival which swept through our country during the middle of the eighteenth century. The revivalists who labored during this Awakening placed too much emphasis upon emotion. They stressed sanctification, "feeling", and moral reform. They preached the new birth, new life, regeneration. They emphasized the immediate working of the Holy Ghost. It seems that they tried to save by sensation.

However, man is justified, not by sensation, but by faith. According to the Bible the divine measures for converting sinners are the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments. Scripture teaches that the grace of God is gained for all men through the suffering of Christ and is transmitted and appropriated through certain God-ordained means. These means are the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Clearly St. Paul tells us that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1,16) Definitely the apostle of apostles repeats: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (John 3,5) To the Corinthian Christians the inspired Paul writes: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us

the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5,19) Men are brought to Christ through the preaching of the pure Gospel and the administering of the unadulterated Sacraments. The Lutheran Church approves of all methods which serve to bring men in contact with the means of grace. However, it condemns all measures which hinder or corrupt or eliminate the divine means.

The revivalists who worked during the Great Awakening neglected the means of grace and stressed emotion. They were filled with the spirit of fire. Through their fervid preaching they brought about a movement which came to be known, not merely as an awakening, but as the Great Awakening. It is well to study this movement.

First, the causes of this Awakening will be considered; secondly, the Awakening itself will be discussed; and thirdly, the good and evil results will be treated.

II. CAUSES OF THE GREAT AWAKENING

The Great Awakening was brought about through many and varied causes. It is difficult to place each cause into a special category and then to explain it, for the events which brought about this religious revival run into one another. However, for the sake of clearness a classification must be made. In general, the causes are these: the religious indifference of the people, the formalism in the churches, the Half-Way Covenant, and the fervid preaching of the evangelists. ---

RELIGIOUS CAUSES -- The chief cause of the Great Awakening was the spiritual coldness of the people in the colonies. The period which preceded the Awakening was unquestionably one of religious retrogression and indifference. People had neglected religion. They showed little interest in the teachings of the Church. The spiritual enthusiasm of the early settlers, of the Puritans and the Pilgrims, had spent itself. The children were not as religious as their fathers had been. The heroic age of conflict and of persecution and of emigration to a new country was past. A generation had grown up to whom the persecutions and conflicts and hardships were but legends. In New England a positive reaction had set in against the narrowness of the old Puritan regime. The young generation did not want and refused to be governed by

blue laws and fanatical tenets. The new generation did not like the Puritan ideas of religion and simply did not go to church to listen to the expounding of these ideas. "Dr. Bushnell says of the country at this period that 'barbarism was the next danger'; and the Presbyterian Synod laments that its Scotch-Irish adherents are in 'circumstances of darkness, which may render both them and posterity miserable pagans.'"⁽¹⁾ In Massachusetts "reforming synods had been summoned to devise means to improve the sad condition of New England." The general population was not interested in the teachings of Jesus. A Boston preacher wrote: "There has been a sad state of religion among us in this land for many years." "In 1725 Cotton Mather, in the name of all the Churches in Massachusetts, appealed to the legislature to use its authority to assist in checking the prevalent irreligion." "Dr. Trumbull, writing more especially of the situation in Connecticut, says that the present generation is 'inattentive to its spiritual concern, and manifests a great declension from the zeal of its ancestors.'"⁽²⁾

That the present generation cared little for the welfare of their souls was also the fault of the ministry. The dead formalism in the churches helped to bring about the spiritual indifference of the people, and thus can be named as a cause of the Great Awakening. The spark of life seemed to be missing in the ministry. The servants of God seemed to be cold and formal. They conducted church services which were long and tiresome and cheerless and unat-

(1) Miller, E.W., The Princeton Theological Review, Vol. II, 1904
Article: The Great Awakening, p. 546

(2) Miller, E.W., Ibid., p. 547

tractive. Instruments of music were forbidden in many places. The singing of hymns was not allowed. However, the congregation was permitted to chant a psalm or two if it so desired. The sermons were metaphysical in character. The practical application of the Word of God to the lives of the people was almost entirely omitted. The preacher would ramble on for two or three hours discussing abstract thoughts which were very difficult for the hearers to understand. The theology of New England was ultra-Calvinistic. It amounted to the practical denial of human freedom. If God decides whether I am to be one of the elect or one of the damned, then why should I go to church at all reasoned many a sensible New Englander. The ultra-Calvinistic theology brought about cold, dead preaching. The preaching of doctrine was emphasized instead of the preaching of regeneration, new life, new birth. In general the preachers were lifeless, and the churches were dead. It is no wonder that fervid, enthusiastic revivalists found ready and eager ears all over the colonies. In the southern colonies the supply of ministers and churches and schools had not kept pace with the growth of the population. Many of the clergymen sent to the colonies were scarcely of a character to afford effective religious leadership. It is said that many of them had not experienced conversion. Gilbert Tennet preached a sermon on the "Unconverted Ministry". Leonard Woolsey Bason says that the Church had a clergy, and adds: "-- and such a clergy," with special emphasis upon the 'such'. The following

is a short account from Bacon:

"Transferring to America the most shameful faults of the English Establishment, it gave the sacred offices of the Christian ministry by 'patronage' into the hands of debauched and corrupt adventurers, whose character in general was below the not very lofty standard of the people whom they pretended to serve in the name of Jesus Christ. Both in Virginia and in Maryland the infliction of this rabble of simonists as a burden upon the public treasury was a nuisance under which the people grew more and more restive from year to year. There was no spiritual discipline to which this pre-traille was amenable. It was the constant effort of good citizens in the legislature and in the vestries, if not to starve out the vermin, at least hold them in some sort of subjection to the power of the purse."
(1)

A dead clergy brings on a dead church; and a dead church brings on spiritual indifference on the part of the populace. There were only scattered members of the Christian communities, who were waiting for the inbreathing of some quickening spiritual influence that might build the whole into a living church.

That the church was not a living church was also due to the measures of the Half-Way Covenant. The changes brought about by the Half-Way Covenant helped to bring about the great decline in religious interests, and thus aided in paving the way for the mighty movement which we call the Great Awakening. The Half-Way Covenant was adopted by the Synod of Massachusetts in 1662. It provided that the children of parents who had been baptized in infancy, but had not professed conversion, might receive baptism. It was expected that such parents would acknowledge their intellectual acceptance of the Gospel and their submission to the discipline

(1) Bacon, L.W., History of American Christianity, (American Church History Series, Vol XIII), Christian Lit. Co., New York, 1897

of the Church. All those who made such acknowledgement and presented their children for baptism were spoken of as members of the Church "by the Half-Way Covenant". These members, usually lukewarm or indifferent, ^{WERE} denied the Lord's Supper. The grandchildren were baptized on the strength that the parents were in the covenant relation. Matters became worse when Stoddard advocated that the unregenerate should be admitted to the Lord's Supper as a converting means. This resulted in the lowest depth in congregational doctrine and life. The Half-Way Covenant helped to bring about "spiritual death".

In this period of spiritual death the revivalists began to work. Their preaching of sin and grace found eager and anxious listeners. Their preaching was effective because it was good preaching. A definite cause of the Great Awakening was the powerful preaching of the revivalists. Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were fervid, effective preachers. Edwards made a special study of the psychology of revivals. The people of Northampton gave his sermons the most prominent place among the influences which started and maintained the revival. His sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, brought about immediate results. George Whitefield was considered the ablest preacher of his time. Benjamin Franklin paid tribute to the eloquence of this traveling revivalist by writing:

"The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was a matter of speculation to me (who was one of his number) to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admired and respected him,

notwithstanding his common abuse of them by assuring them that they were naturally half-beast and half-devil. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manner of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless and indifferent about religion, it seemed as if the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through Philadelphia in the evening without hearing psalms sung in different families in every street."

(1)

George Whitefield reached his peak in the year 1740; Jonathan Edwards preached his famous sermon in the year 1734. However, already in 1720 Domine Theodore J. Freylinghuysen preached with such fervor and earnestness that he awakened religious feeling in his own parish which overflowed the limits and became as one of the streams that made glad the city of God. The famous "Log College" preachers were known for their fervid and effective preaching.

The preaching of the revivalists, the Half-Way Covenant, the dead formalism in the churches, and the spiritual indifference of the people were the religious causes which helped bring on the Great Awakening.

ECONOMIC CAUSES - - The economic causes of this great revival were the Indian warfare and the increase in wealth. The continual wars with the redmen helped to bring about spiritual thoughtlessness. The colonist had to protect his home from the plundering of the Indian. He had to be on guard every minute of the day lest he be caught asleep when the redman yelled his war-whoop and was ready to sweep down upon him and his family. We can well remember the pictures of the Puritans going to church on Sunday morning carrying guns for protection. Not every Puritan was religious enough to take the

(1) Miller, E.W., Op. cit. p. 551

chance of attending services while his home lay subject to the ravages of the Indian. Often open warfare made it impossible even for the best of Christian to attend church.

"The Indian warfare had done much to distract and brutalize the life of the colonists and render them neglectful of such meager religious opportunities as were within their reach."

(1)

The second and third generation of colonists were interested more in economics than in religion. The desire to gain wealth had increased. The new country gave every man an opportunity to become rich. The generation became money-minded instead of God-minded. The desire for worldly goods kept people away from church, and so helped to bring about the religious declension in the colonies. The richer a man becomes the less he thinks of God. So, the more the colonists prospered the less they thought of God. This much for the economic causes of the Great Awakening.

POLITICAL CAUSES - - Now a word or two concerning the political causes. The political causes which brought about religious indifference were the forcible establishment of England and the Union of Church and State. The fact that the Anglican Church tried to force itself upon the colonists kept many of the colonists away from church and from God.-- The Established Church of England seemed to be under the impression that the English colonists could accept no other church than the Anglican. Through its missionaries it tried to push itself upon the colonists. "The Society for the Pro-

(1) Miller, E.W., Op.cit. p. 546

pagation of the Gospel was promptly in the field, with its diligent missionaries and its ignoble policy of doing the work of Christ and humanity with a shrewd eye to the main chance of making proselytes to its party."⁽¹⁾ However, the policy of force does not work. "The forcible establishment of the Church of England in colonies of which but a small proportion of the population was Episcopalean occasioned strife and delayed religious development."⁽²⁾ "In the Carolinas the attempted establishment of the English Church was an absolute failure. It was a church (with slight exceptions) without parishes, without services, without clergy, without people, but with certain pretensions in law which were hindrances in the way of other Christian work, and which tended to make itself generally odious."⁽³⁾ Force did not help. It brought about religious indifference.

This condition of spiritual indifference which brought about the Great Awakening was aided by the union of church and state. The royal governors sent over by England took it for granted that the English Church was the Church to which all should belong. The Church and the State worked hand in hand in governing or, better, misgoverning the people. -- Church membership was made a requisite to citizenship. The churches were supported by taxation. The attendance at services was compulsory by law. The colonists suffered under the tyranny of church and state. They began to complain. They refused to go to church. They began to show spiritual carelessness. "The English Church, enjoying the prestige of royal

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op.cit. p. 140
(2) Miller, E.W., Op.cit. p. 546
(3) Bacon, L.W., Op.cit. p. 148

favor and princely munificence,' suffered also the drawbacks incidental to these advantages - the odium attending the unjust and despotic measures resorted to for its advancement, the vile character of royal officials, who condoned the private vices by more ostentatious zeal for their official church, and well-founded popular suspicion of its prevailing antagonism to the encroachments of the British government." (1) Politics in the affairs of the church helped to keep people away from the church, and helped to bring about religious indifference. - This spiritual indifference was the chief cause of the Great Awakening.

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op.cit. p. 135

III. THE GREAT AWAKENING ITSELF

BEGINNING - - The year 1740 is the commonly accepted date for the Great Awakening. In reality it commenced in 1720 when Theodorus J. Freylinghuysen began his fruitful labors among the Dutch settlers along the Raritan. In 1734 the Awakening was given fresh impetus by the outbreak of the Edwards's revival in Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1740 George Whitefield made his first tour through New England. Because of the great results of this tour the year 1740 is usually given as central to the revivals in America. During the following year (1741) the Great Awakening may be said to have been at its height; it had now become a national movement, extending from Maine to Georgia. As a movement profoundly affecting the colonies at large the Awakening may be said to have ended about 1745.

FREYLINGHUYSEN - - In January, 1720, Theodorus Freylinghuysen, of Dutch Reformed connection, landed in New York, and became the apostle of revivalism to that sect. Freylinghuysen was not a Hollander but a German who had come under Pietistic influence in the fatherland. He spent his student days in Holland, and thus he became connected with the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1720 his fervid preaching stirred the Dutch and German Reformed of New Jersey into action. By 1726 his revival had not only gripped the Dutch settlers but was spread-

ing to the newly organized Presbyterian congregations in the valley. Freylinghuysen was known as the originator of revivals in America. His doctrines and revival methods were accepted by the Tennents, by Edwards, By Whitefield, and by the Wesleys. This fact places him, in point of time, at the head of the revivals. This early revival among the Dutch in central New Jersey attracted little attention in the other colonies. It probably would have been forgotten were it not for the revivals which followed.

TENNENT - - Another revival in New Jersey occurred under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent. Tennent, a neighboring pastor of Freylinghuysen, had a pastorate at New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was the eldest of four sons whom William Tennent, an Episcopalian minister from Ireland, had brought with him to America and educated at his Log College. Gilbert Tennent was much impressed with the work of the Rev. Theodorus Freylinghuysen. Falling under the Dutch revivalist's influence, Tennent began in 1728 a work of revival which extended into the adjacent parishes of his Presbyterian brethren. His fervid preaching made him the centre of the revivalist movement among the Presbyterians in New Jersey. "Tennent reflected the manner of the Pietists, without alleviating the tinge of cheerfulness which the Methodists got from the Moravians."⁽¹⁾ The preaching of Tennent was plain in its declaration of the hopeless condition of the unregenerate. He emphasized sin and the sinner; he merely mentioned grace and the Savior. Nevertheless, he be-

(1) Thompson, R.E., Presbyterians, (American Church History Series, Vol.VI) Christian Lit. Co., New York, 1894, p. 31

came one of the principal promoters of the revival among the Presbyterians.

EDWARDS - - When Gilbert Tennent was studying the revival work of Theodorus Freylinghuysen, in New Jersey, Jonathan Edwards was trying to decide whether to accept a call to a pastorate or not. After having declined various calls, he was ordained, on February 15, 1727, as pastor of the church in Northampton, Massachusetts. Jonathan Edwards was born at East Windsor, Connecticut, on October 5, 1703. He was the only son. He had ten sisters, some of whom became the wives of eminent men. In 1716, just before he reached the age of 13, he entered Yale College. He was an acute thinker and a distinguished scholar. Before he reached the age of seventeen his reflections on the mysteries of God, the universe and the human mind were such as to command the attention and respect of students of philosophy. In September, 1723, Jonathan Edwards, after graduation from Yale, accepted a call to serve at Northampton, Massachusetts, as a colleague with his celebrated grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. On July 28, 1727 he married the beautiful Sarah Pierrepont, then seventeen, the daughter of the Rev. James Pierrepont, of New Haven, Connecticut. The union proved a happy one, for Mrs. Edwards was the "consummate flower of Puritan womanhood, thenceforth the companion not only of his pastoral cares and sorrows, but of his seraphic contemplations of divine things."

(1) Mr. Stoddard died February 11, 1729, leaving the young minister in full pastoral charge. In the year 1734 occurred

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op.cit. p. 156

a remarkable awakening of religious feeling in his parish. He carried the church through two great periods of revival (1734-35, 1740-42), and added over five hundred and fifty names to its membership. This, however, represents but a small part of his influence. Both by his preaching at Northampton and elsewhere and by his published writings, notably his printed sermons and his works dealing with the revivals, he powerfully affected the currents of religious thought and life throughout New England and the neighboring colonies. The estrangement between Edwards and his people began in 1744, in connection with a case of discipline in which a large number of youth belonging to the leading families of the town were brought under suspicion of reading and circulating immoral books. Finally, on June 22, 1750, the Council, convened to advise on the matter, recommended, by a vote of 10 to 9, the minority protesting, that the pastoral relations should be dissolved. So, in his forty-seventh year Edwards was dismissed from his Northampton pastorate. He had accumulated no property for the support of his "numerous and chargeable family". He was compelled to receive pecuniary aid from his friends. In July, 1751, he was installed as pastor of a small Congregational Church in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and as missionary to the Housatonic tribe of Indians at that place. In 1754 he published the most celebrated of his works, his Essay on the Freedom of the Will. While living in a kind of exile as a missionary among the Indians he was invited to the presidency of the College at Princeton, New Jersey. He was elected to the office on the

twenty-sixth of September, 1757. He was inaugurated as president on the sixteenth of February, 1758. However, he died five weeks later on March 22, 1758.

REVIVAL WORK - - In the year 1734 the parish in Northampton seemed to show a new interest in religion. It was from the young people that there came the first response to Jonathan Edwards's preaching and personal interest. The young people became more attentive to religious things; they gave up their social frolics on Sunday evenings, and devoted their time to meetings of a religious nature in private houses. The young people made the beginning, and by the middle of the next year (1735), the entire community was aroused to the most intense spiritual interest. As one of the results of Edward's preaching a young woman, a leader in the village gaities, became serious and gave evidence of a heart truly broken and sanctified. Edwards estimated that more than 300 experienced conversion in a half a year, fifty of whom were over forty years of age. A hundred were admitted to the Church at one time, eighty at another, and this continued until nearly all the adults in the community were enrolled as communicants. In the year 1736 Jonathan Edwards published his Narrative of Surprising Conversions. This drew attention from all the English-speaking Christians to the New England revival, and profoundly influenced John Wesley and others of the evangelistic spirit in Great Britain. The intensely earnest sermons, the holy life, and the loving prayers of Jonathan Edwards bore fruit. Wholesale conversions attracted wide attention. The little town

of Northampton with its 200 families soon found itself the center of the eager interest of the whole country. Visitors came from a distance and attended the thronged services, in order to witness the change in the spirit of the town. As evidence for the miraculous change that occurred in Northampton we have the account of Edwards' Narrative. A paragraph reads:

"The work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer, anno 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never so full of love, nor so full of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in the families on account of salvation's being brought to them; parents rejoicing over their children as being new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands." (1) Another paragraph from Edwards' Narrative of Surprising Conversions reads: "Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, every one intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth." (2)

By invitation of the neighboring pastors Jonathan Edwards preached in many of the neighboring communities, which had heard of his wonderful work. In other communities the pastors themselves copied the style of Edwards' preaching, and tried to bring about their own revivals. Edwards states that the reports of the visitors who had come to Northampton were the means of starting "a swift and most extraordinary propagation" through the town of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Mr. Edwards was the leader of the revivalists in the colonies. He had studied the phenomena of the revival with the keenness of a philosopher.

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op. cit., p. 157

(2) Bacon, L.W., Ibid., p. 157

HIS THEOLOGY - - The revival in Northampton, Massachusetts began in December, 1734, while Jonathan Edwards was preaching a series of sermons on justification by faith alone. Edwards denied that any action "however good in itself, done by an unconverted man" could avail in procuring salvation. Salvation was a gift of God alone. "His whole existence was a conscious longing after the Divine, springing from a profound conviction of the painful reality of sin and the glorious reality of redemption." (1) Edwards saw "that the conversion required was a deep and prevailing, a divinely wrought work in the soul." (2)

"He believed that he had discovered a norm to which the religious experience of most might be expected to conform... There is first a concern for one's spiritual safety; this may deepen into torturing anxiety or fall into melancholy or change into resentment at God's dealings... This is followed by a realization of one's absolute dependence upon God's power and grace as revealed in Christ, and a recognition of his utter ill-desert and just condemnation before God. At this stage the subject might suffer great spiritual agony, but he was encouraged to hope that the divine mercy might abound toward him, and was urged to commit himself unreservedly to God's purpose for him... To this period of suspense ordinarily succeeded one of joy and peace in the assurance of God's pardon and acceptance... To have passed through such experience was, in Edwards' judgment, to possess 'conscious conversion,' and he classified his parishioners and encouraged them to classify themselves with reference to this criterion." (3)

In general, it may be said that Edwards was simply returning to the themes of the early Puritan preachers. He reverted to the old idea of the Church as the company of the regenerate, and conversion as the condition of admission to it.

- (1) Dorchester, D., Christianity in the United States, Hunt and Eaton, New York, 1890, p. 140
- (2) Foster, F.H., A Genetic History of the New England Theology, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1907, p. 54
- (3) Miller, E.W., Op.cit., p. 550

Jonathan Edwards found himself in the conflict between Calvinism and Arminianism. According to strict Calvinism God did all the work of salvation and damnation. So, why preach at all? If God is the absolute sovereign who determines beforehand who is to be saved and who is to be damned, then why encourage the people to join the church. This conflict between the doctrines of total depravity and free will caused Mr. Edwards to examine the doctrines carefully. The result was the New England Theology which tries to combine the Calvinistic and Arminian elements in conversion.

In his treatise on the Freedom of the Will Edwards

"propounded a distinction which was not correct or successful as he presented it, but which proved, with a better understanding, of great use to his successors -- that between natural and moral ability and inability. In a word, natural ability and inability arise from natural or physical causes; moral ability and inability, from motives, or states of the will which are resolvable, in the last analysis, into motives... Now, inasmuch as Edwards' 'motives' are true causes, moral inability does not really differ in essence from natural; for both are effects. Hence the distinction is sophisticated as presented in Edwards.... But in Edwards' followers it became correct and valuable, and was of use in distinguishing between what were described as the 'can't' of lack of power, and the 'can't' which is really 'wont'... Thus much light was shed at several points upon difficult doctrines. The old Calvinism had had no place for any ability to good, and this had been the paralyzing influence of the early days. Edwards introduced an ability, which in process of time became a true ability, under which revival preaching arose."(1)

Arminianism emphasized the inward side of theology too much, just as the extreme Calvinism of the early days had emphasized the godward side too much. The future lay with neither extreme. The New England theology was finally to attempt a

(1) Foster, F.H., Op.cit., p. 78

better adjustment of these two elements to one another; but it was indispensable that it should not first forget the divine side. "The mind of the age, as well as the experience of the churches, had come to the point where the old doctrine of sovereignty needed modification. More room was demanded for the activity of man."⁽¹⁾ The result was the New England Theology.

An excerpt from the sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, preached in 1741 by Jonathan Edwards throws some light upon his theology:

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times so abominable in his eyes, as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment; 'tis ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you was suffered to awake again in this world after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into hell since you arose this morning, but that God's hand has held you up."⁽²⁾

Edwards was a Calvinist who found it difficult to preach the strict sovereignty of God. He tried to give man some credit in his conversion. Thus he helped to bring about the new divinity which is known today as the New England Theology.

DICKINSON AND BLAIR - - The revival spirit of Edwards soon spread to various sections of the country. From Northampton the revival spread to Newark, New Jersey. There it reigned

(1) Foster, F.H., Ibid., p. 53

(2) Gardiner, H.N., Selected Sermons of Jonathan Edwards, MacMillan Co., New York, 1904, p. 88

under the leadership of Jonathan Dickinson. Dickinson was the pastor at Elizabeth, New Jersey, but his influence and activity extended through all that part of New Jersey. He easily became the leader of the rapidly growing communion of Presbyterian churches. This revival under Dickinson began in August, 1739. It was chiefly observable among the young people. By March, 1740, the whole town was brought under an uncommon concern about their eternal interests. In the spring of 1740 New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, a Scotch-Irish community, received as its pastor a fervid graduate of the Log College. This graduate was Samuel Blair, who brought revival meetings into New Londonderry. Dickinson and Blair, Freylinghuysen and Tennent, and even the great Edwards, brought about revivals which were confined to localities. It became the task of the master revivalist George Whitefield to bind these local awakenings into one unified whole.

WHITEFIELD - Life - - George Whitefield was born in Gloucester, England, in Bell Inn, a tavern, on December 16, 1714. His father was a tavern keeper, who died when George was yet young. George was educated by his pious mother. For a time his mother's business failed, and George was forced to quit school and to work in the inn which his mother was trying to keep from bankruptcy. For a while he seemed to have no interest in the welfare of his soul, but as time went on he did become more and more interested in eternal things. When his mother's business improved, George was sent to Pembroke College, Oxford. There he met the two Wesleys; and the three

of them formed a society. While at school, George was not conspicuous for his scholarship. But there was one phase of school life in which he excelled all others, and that was in speaking and acting. Dr. Benson, bishop of Gloucester, who was acquainted with this talented and pious youth, resolved to grant him ordination, and the solemn ceremony was performed at Gloucester on June 20, 1736. In 1738 Whitefield arrived at Savannah, Georgia. He started his campaign of preaching. In 1740 he made his first visit to New England. He met with a cordial welcome. At Boston all pulpits were opened to him, and the churches were thronged with eager and excited listeners.

Whitefield, above everything else, was a preacher. He contributed much to his preaching by giving people a chance to express their new religious enthusiasm. He collected money for his orphanage in Georgia. By turning the thoughts of the people to others' needs, and giving them a chance to do something, he prevented his audiences from centering their entire attention upon themselves in passive introspection or selfish religious rapture.

Receiving an invitation from the Erskines of Dunfermline, Whitefield left America and went to Scotland in the July of 1741. In November he went to Wales, where he married Mrs. Elizabeth James, a widow ten years his senior. Of his bride he wrote, "Once gay, but for three years last past a despised follower of the Lamb of God, neither rich in fortune nor beautiful as to person, but I believe a true child of God, and one

who would not, I think, attempt to hinder me in His work for the world."(1) His wife proved a worthy, affectionate, and loyal helpmeet, accompanying him on his journeys, and bearing him a son, whom, sadly enough, they had to resign to the "Father of Mercies" a few months after birth in 1744.

Losing his only child was not the only disappointment George Whitefield had to face. Even though he was met with joy and rejoicing by most of the people, there were some who hated and despised him. All great men must take the bitter with the sweet. Often Whitefield met with opposition and peril. This can be seen from the following incident:

"The late Rev. Henry Tanner, of Exeter, in the year 1743, removed to Plymouth, to obtain employment as a shipbuilder. Here it pleased God to call him by his grace, under the ministry of Mr. Whitefield. Being at work he heard from a considerable distance, the voice of that zealous man of God, who was preaching in the street, or fields, probably between Plymouth town and Dock; he immediately concluded that the preacher was a madman; and determined, with five or six of his companions, to go and knock him off from the place on which he stood; and for the purpose of more effectually injuring the mad parson, they loaded their pockets with stones. When, however, Tanner drew near, and perceived Mr. Whitefield extending his arms, and in the most pathetic language inviting poor lost sinners to Christ, he was struck with amazement. His resolution failed him; he listened with astonishment, and was soon convinced that the preacher was not mad; but was indeed speaking the words of truth and soberness." (2)

George Whitefield traveled extensively throughout the colonies and throughout England. Wherever he went he proclaimed the Word of God in all its power, and invited the lost sinners to return to Christ. His early visits to America were blessed with fruitful religious revivals. But his

- (1) Hardy, E.N., The Religious Digest, Dec., 1938. Art. George Whitefield the Matchless Soul Saver, p. 90
- (2) Gillies, J., Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield, Hunt and Noyes, Middletown, 1838, p. 100

later tours in 1754, 1764, and 1770 were much less fruitful in religious excitement. Noticeably weak when preaching at Exeter on the twenty-ninth of September, 1770, Whitefield on that same night was roused from his bed by a crowd of people who urged him to preach to them. This he did. That night he suffered a severe attack of asthma. At six the next morning he was translated into the presence of his Master, whom he had served ardently for thirty-four years. He died saying, almost with his last breath, "Lord Jesus, I am weary in thy work, but not of thy work."(1)

Revival Work - - The man of God who passed away at Newburyport, Massachusetts, on that solemn morning in 1770 has been called the "greatest preacher of the century."(2) His revival work made him the greatest preacher. It became the task of this preacher to bind the different revivals into one whole. During the year following 1735 there were revivals in many churches in various parts of New England. They were loosely linked together. It was the great George Whitefield who became the chief personal bond among the revivalists. Under his leadership the small awakenings broadened out into a national movement. It was the work of this gifted Englishman that gave the Great Awakening the national character. In 1739 Whitefield came to America. The popular response given to the preaching of this youth, who was but twenty-five years of age, can be to some degree explained by the general interest which had been developed by the revivals already in progress, as well as by the sensation which

(1) Dorchester, D., Op. cit., p. 142

(2) Sweet, W.W., The Story of Religions in America, Harper and Bros., New York, 1930, p. 190

he had recently excited in England. In New York Pemberton, the Presbyterian minister, had welcomed him to his pulpit. From New York Whitefield turned southward and travelled by slow degrees through the colonies to Georgia. At each stopping place he found eager crowds awaiting his coming and ready to respond to his fervid appeals. On his way back to New York he visited the Tennents and found in them kindred spirits. He arrived in Philadelphia early in November, 1739, and at once began his remarkable evangelistic work, preaching to crowded churches and to thousands in the open air.

"From Philadelphia he went to New York, then to Philadelphia again, then to Chester, Pa., then to Delaware, then to Charleston, S.C., and Savannah, Ga., then moving to Philadelphia and New York, then to Savannah, and thence to New England, moving like an angel in the apocalyptic vision, his progress everywhere a spiritual triumph."(1)

In September, 1740, he arrived at Boston, Massachusetts. He had been invited there by Dr. Colman, a prominent pastor in the city. He was welcomed by most of the ministers and was shown every mark of reverent esteem by Governor Belcher. For more than two weeks he preached to crowded churches. Multitudes were melted to tears under his appeals, and they professed their determination to lead a better life. On his way back to New York and to the southern colonies Whitefield visited Northampton and was cordially invited to the home of Jonathan Edwards. His sojourn there had the effect of starting another revival in Northampton. His brief tour through New England was followed by very general revivals, many of them in communities which he had not visited. At the request

(1) Dorchester, D., Op. cit., p. 142

of Whitefield Gilbert Tennent commenced itinerant revivalistic work in Boston and vicinity. Many New England pastors, including Edwards became engaged in itinerant evangelism, as a result of his visits. For many years Whitefield threw himself unsparingly into the work of preaching, in town and country, traveling horseback, boat, and by foot. He was ever the fearless soldier of the cross, obeying the great command to "Go" into all the world, bearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In New England in July 1748, "Whitefield made the significant acquaintance of Lady Huntingdon, who by throwing her Chelsea mansion open to the elite that they might hear Whitefield there, induced religious thinking and conviction among the greatest men and women of the period."(1) The year 1740 and 1741 during which George Whitefield made his first tour through the colonies marked the climax of the Great Awakening. It was he who became the chief bond among the revivalists.

HIS THEOLOGY -- George Whitefield was a strict Calvinist. He believe wholeheartedly in the absolute sovereignty of God. His clash with John Wesley came when the latter tried to inject Arminian teaching into Calvinism. Whitefield believed that man could do absolutely nothing toward his salvation. God had done it all. He believed in the total depravity of the sinner. With his customary force, he characterized the natural man as "half-beast, half-devil." He believed in the doctrine of the new birth. This teaching, which he had experienced in his own soul became one of the chief themes of his sermons. Charles Wesley had recommended the book, "The

(1) Hardy, E.N., Op.cit., p. 91

Life of God in the Soul of Man", to Whitefield for reading. The perusal of this book filled Whitefield with joy when he read that true religion is the union of the soul with God or Christ formed in us.

"The doctrine of the new birth, which he now experienced in its incipient form in his own soul, became one of the main themes of his preaching to the end of his life. In his actual search for spiritual reality and peace in the two years following, Whitefield turned from faith in good works to Quietism, then to asceticism, which brought him to the sickbed, and while recuperating he meditated and, like a ray of divine light, the joyous vision of true faith in Christ came to him. And this was about seven weeks after the Easter of 1735." (1)

John Wesley was an Arminian. He believed that man could save himself. Jonathan Edwards was a Calvinist, but he, too, gave way to his natural feelings, and ascribed to man a particle of credit for his salvation. George Whitefield, however, believed that man could do absolutely nothing to gain heaven. Controversy had arisen between Whitefield and Wesley concerning the former's Calvinistic view and the latter's Arminian view on predestination. This dispute was never settled. Even though it was never settled, it little hindered the preaching work of Whitefield.

End - During the year 1741, when Whitefield made his famous tour through the colonies, the Great Awakening may be said to have been at its height. It had become a national movement, extending from Maine to Georgia, and engrossing the interest of hundreds of communities. But the work gradually declined after 1741, though waves of religious interest continued to pass over the colonies and important revivals here and there were occasional occurrences. As a move-

(1) Hardy, I.N., Op. cit., p. 83

ment which profoundly affected the colonies in America the Great Awakening may be said to have ended about the year 1745.

IV. RESULTS OF THE GREAT AWAKENING

GOOD RESULTS - - The Great Awakening had many good and many evil results. First, the good results will be considered.

As an important consequence of the Great Awakening religion became a vital element in the life of the people. For more than a decade religion was set in the forefront of popular attention. It became to scores of thousands a matter of serious personal consideration. Not only was the life of the Church renewed, but multitudes who had up to this time been wholly neglectful of the claims of religion were led to begin a new life. The Great Awakening had transformed many communities. It had everywhere drawn people together in large numbers. It resulted in the spiritual quickening of the churches. There were many pastors to whom the revival brought a more fervid zeal and new aggressiveness, if not their first experience of a true spiritual life. There was a quickening of new life in the unconverted members of the churches. The religious life expressed itself in new forms of activities. Devereux Jarrat, a convert of the revival, went to England for ordination, and returned to labor for the Episcopal Church in Virginia. By common consent the dangerous compromise of the Half-Way Covenant was given up. There came about the recognition of the need of cultivating the religious life of the communities. Spe-

cial emphasis was placed upon youth. Young People's Societies became a feature of the life of most of the American Churches. The generation began to think about spiritual and eternal things, and to dwell less upon the material side of life. Religion had become a necessary element in the life of the individual.

The interest in religion was attended by the growth in church membership. It has been estimated that as high as 50,000 in New England alone, and 300,000 in the country at large were won for the church.⁽¹⁾ All the denominations, even the Quakers, shared in the results of the revivals; but the denominations which profited most were the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, and the Baptists. Joseph Tracy, in his famous book, "Great Awakening", tells us that in twenty years ending in 1760 the number of New England churches had been increased by one hundred and fifty. In the middle colonies the Presbyterian ministry had grown from forty-five clergymen to more than one hundred.⁽²⁾ The gain, of course, was mainly in the New Side. The average man began to think concerning the welfare of his soul, and as a result sought membership in the church of his community. The appeals of the revivalists made whole families conscious of a living deity, and as a consequence whole families would seek to join churches.

The realization of the importance of religion resulted in great missionary activities. There was an increase in missionary interest, especially among the Indians. Edwards

(1) Miller, E.W., Op.cit., p. 554

(2) Bacon, L.W., Op. cit., p. 172

cites the conversion of Indians and negroes as one of the particulars in which the work of the revival was glorious. In 1734 David Brainerd, a convert of the revival, began extensive missionary labors among the Indians. He carried the Gospel to the tribes in eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Also in Massachusetts and in Connecticut work among the Indians was carried on. Jonathan Edwards wrote an Account of the Life of David Brainerd. Henry Martin read this book. The reading of it affected him so much that he became the first missionary to the Mohammedans, and thus modern missions, in part at least, are the fruit of the Great Awakening.

Another good result of the Great Awakening was the advancement of education. The forming of new churches called for a sudden increase of men for the trained ministry, and the consequence was the quickening of interest in education. Princeton College owes its origin to the Awakening. The friends of the revival established this school. Dartmouth College is the result of the Awakening. A convert of the revival at Norwich, Connecticut, was Samson Occum, a Mohegan Indian boy. He helped to found the school for Indians, which later developed into the famous Dartmouth College. Besides the colleges many academies and secondary schools were founded. Education was stimulated through the revivals.

The Great Awakening made important contributions to the forces which were to confer upon this nation the blessings of religious liberty. Toleration in religion was brought a-

bout through the diversity of beliefs. The revivalists caused divisions in the established churches, and brought about the formation of new ones. It was the number and the diversity of religious sects in the colonies that forced upon our forefathers the experiment of complete separation of Church and State and the voluntary support of religion. Although the intrusion of the preachers and the establishment of the new churches in small parishes was far from being an unmixed blessing, yet it afforded the liberty so essential to true religion in this country. The Awakening made a permanent place for the travelling evangelist and insured the blessings of free preaching in American Christianity. In New England the Awakening destroyed the unity of the Congregationalists, and in the middle colonies, and in the southern colonies it increased the strength of the other denominations. The result was that Congregationalism could not force itself upon the people of the south. The "law" of religious toleration won out.

Freedom in religion accompanied freedom in politics. The revivalists helped in the cause for political liberty. The Great Awakening was the first agency in creating a conscious national unity among the scattered colonists. Often the interests of the colonists clashed. Other than a common ancestry there were few bonds that bound them together. The colonists had not come to the consciousness of their common life and destiny. This consciousness was awakened by the wave of religious enthusiasm which swept over the country, from Georgia to Maine. George Whitefield, who excited pop-

ular enthusiasm as few men have ever done, was the personal bond between the revivals in one colony and those in another. He and Edwards and Tennent, and the other evangelists in a less degree, were the first men to gain and hold the eager attention of all the colonies. They became the centers about which the awakening sense of national unity rallied.

"As such they preceded Franklin and Washington and Henry and Adams as the makers of the nation."⁽¹⁾ In the glow of the revival the continent awoke to the consciousness of a common spiritual life. This consciousness helped greatly in the fight for political freedom. That the Great Awakening helped in the fight for political freedom is a good result. Now let us turn to the evil results, for the Awakening was also attended by many evil results.

EVIL RESULTS - - Many evil results attended and followed the Great Awakening. One of these is emotionalism. By emotionalism we mean that the revivalists stressed the immediate working of the Holy Ghost on the heart of man. Most of the revivalists denied the means of grace. Most of them put too much emphasis on feeling. Most of them stressed moral reform. The revivalists laid emphasis upon conversion and so neglected indoctrination.

The revivalists, by and large, denied the means of grace. The measures of God for converting sinners are the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments. For clearly St. Paul declares in Romans 10,17: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Revivalism

(1) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 562

"insists that special measures must be resorted to in order to frighten men into doing their share of conversion, and to produce the emotional and neurotic conditions which warrant assurance of grace. As such measures it prescribes emotional appeals, shrieking and shouting in preaching and praying, special prayer-meetings, the anxious bench, protracted meetings, camp-meetings, etc."(1)

Revivalism brands men as spiritually dead who base their assurance of grace, not on supposed feelings, but on the clear promises of God in His Word and Sacraments. During the revivals no point of Christian doctrine was more dwelt upon than the necessity of conversion by the Holy Ghost. The revivalists demanded a clear experience of conversion on the part of the believers. Tremendous emphasis was placed on the necessity of conversion in order to gain salvation, upon faith as the sole ground of our justification, upon punishment due to unforgiven sin, and upon the justice of God in the damnation of unrepentant sinners. "The excellency of Christ is also set forth in a most winning manner, and with tender solicitude men are urged to 'press into the kingdom,' to give no rest to their souls, leave no means untried that they might gain assurance of their acceptance by Christ." (2)

"'Jist git the spirit started,' said a Methodist to C.P. Krauth, 'and then it works like smoke'. 'Very much like smoke, I guess,' answered Krauth." (3) The doctrines to which the conservatives of the Great Awakening objected were the doctrines which denied the means of grace. These doctrines are: "That secret impulses rather than God's Word were looked upon as the rule of conduct; that only those who

(1) Bente, F., American Lutheranism, Vol. II, Concordia, St. Louis, Mo., 1919, p. 77

(2) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 549

(3) Bente, F., Op. cit., p. 77

know when they were converted have been converted; that assurance is the essence of saving faith; that sanctification is no evidence of justification."⁽¹⁾ Josiah Cotton, the grand-son of John Cotton, asked that a church meeting be called to consider the following points:

"Whether a sudden and short distress and a sudden joy amount to the repentance described and desired in 2 Corinthians 7, 9-11. Whether judging and censuring others as unconverted, against whose lives and conversation nothing is objected, be not pharisaical, and contrary to the rule of charity prescribed in the Word, and a bold intrusion into the divine prerogative. Whether that spirit which leads us off from Scriptures, or comparatively to undervalue them, be a good spirit; as for instance the disorder and confusion in our public meetings, contrary to the Scripture rule in 1 Corinthians 14." (2)

The revivalists, as a whole, neglected the means of grace through which the Almighty has chosen to effect his work of converting sinners, and laid too much stress on emotionalism.

The emphasis put upon emotions is an evil which attended and followed the Great Awakening. The work of the revivalists spread to a great number of towns and was accompanied by strange and excessive emotional manifestations, and by many of the evils engendered by mob psychology. Dr. Timothy Cutler, the rector of Yale College, and later the Episcopalian minister of Boston, wrote:

"It would be an endless attempt to describe that scene of confusion and disturbance occasioned by him (Whitefield): the division of families, neighborhoods, and towns, etc.... In many conventicles and places of rendezvous there has been checkered work indeed, several preaching and several exhorting and praying at the same time, the rest crying or laughing, yelping,

(1) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., pp. 558-559

(2) Busfield, T.E., Colgate-Rochester Divinity School Bulletin, Vol. VIII, Nov. 1935, No.1. Art.: The Great Awakening, p.37

sprawling, fainting, and this revel maintained in some places many days and nights together without intermission; ... After him came one Tennent, a monster, impudent and noisy, and told them they were all damn'd, damn'd, damn'd; this charmed them, and in the most dreadful winter I ever saw people wallowed in the snow night and day for the benefit of his beastly brayings, and many ended their days under these fatigues. Both of them carried more money out of these parts than the poor could be thankful for." (1)

George Whitefield, the master preacher, played upon the emotions of his hearers. The students at Harvard heard him; and were greatly moved. Under the spell of his matchless oratory men wept, women fainted, and hundreds professed conversion. Belcher, the royal governor, fairly slobbered over Whitefield, with tears and embraces and kisses. The pious Governor Talcott, at New Haven, gave God thanks, after listening to this preacher. From Whitefield's comments we may infer that Gilbert Tennent's preaching was more severe than his own. Whitefield called Tennent "a son of thunder, whose preaching must either convert or enrage hypocrites." (2) At Northampton people publicly made vows to renounce their evil ways and put away their abominations from before their eyes. Under Edward's preaching "Men claimed to have visions of heaven and hell in which Christ showed them their names written in the Book of Life." "When Edwards preached at Enfield, Conn., on July 8, 1741, taking as his theme, 'Sinners in the hands of an angry God,' 'there was such a breathing of distress, and weeping, that the preacher was obliged to speak to the people and desire silence that he might be heard.'" (3) Jonathan Edwards himself writes in his Narra-

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op. cit., pp. 169. 170

(2) Thompson, R.E., Op. cit., p. 31

(3) Walker, W., Congregationalists, (American Church History Series, Vol. III), Christian Lit. Co., New York, 1894, p. 259

tive of Surprising Conversions: "The assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the Word was preached, some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors." (1)

There were a number of successful revivalistic preachers. Under the preaching of Eleazer Wheelock and Joseph Bellamy physical demonstrations were common in many communities; strong men fell as though shot, and women became hysterical. The revivalist Andrew Croswell, who followed Tennent, "preached and exhorted in so wild a manner as to throw the whole village into the utmost confusion, declaring that three-fourths of the church members were unregenerate, continued the meetings at times the whole twenty-four hours with little intermission, and was so lost to propriety as to admit children and negroes to the pulpit to exhort to repentance." (2) The dramatic exhortations were common. When Jonathan Parsons "discoursed at Lyme on May 14, 1741, he tells us that 'great numbers cried aloud in the anguish of their souls. Several stout men fell as though a cannon had been discharged and a ball had made its way through their hearts. Some young women were thrown into hysterical fits.'" (3)

One of the chief offenders in manners and spirits was the Rev. James Davenport, the great-grand-son of John Davenport of New Haven. Wherever James Davenport preached the scene of preaching was almost a riot. Under the control of impressions and impulses, he seemed to be bent upon

(1) Bacon, L.W., Op.cit., p. 157

(2) Busfield, T.E., Op. cit., p. 37

(3) Walker, W., Op. cit., p. 258

upon a schism.

"A striking instance of the lengths to which he (Davenport) was willing to go was the bonfire he made on the wharf in New London, Conn., of articles his converts had delighted in, and which he thought might lead them into idolatry. He had them bring to him their wigs, cloaks, breeches, hoods, gowns, rings, jewels, necklaces, and the books he considered it unsafe for them to possess, and all were given to the flames. Among the books thus burnt were Beveridge's Thoughts on Religion, Dr. Chauncy's sermon on Enthusiasm, one piece of Dr. Increase Mather, one of Dr. Colman, and one of Fr. Joseph Sewall... So intemperate in speech and reckless in manner was Davenport that he was adjudged insane."(1)

The preaching of all the revivalists was accompanied by physical demonstrations which manifested the high pitch of spiritual excitement prevailing among the listeners. The traveling revivalists put too much emphasis upon emotions.

However, a few words must be said in defense of them. Jonathan Edwards admitted that there were cases of self-delusion, extravagance, and excesses. He and his co-workers freely confessed and deeply mourned this fact; but they faithfully analyzed and exposed them. We know that "Edwards discouraged all physical demonstrations in his meetings."(2) "In the pulpit he (Jonathan Edwards) was quiet, speaking without gesture, and in a voice not loud, but distinct and penetrating. It was the content of his sermons, filled as they were with fire and life, combined with the remarkable personality and presence of the preacher which accounts for the results which now began to be manifest among his hearers."(3) The excitement which attended the first revivals was intense, but was largely controlled by the Puritan sense of decorum. "The 'bodily exercises' which are sometimes

(1) Busfield, T.E., Op. cit., p. 41

(2) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 550

(3) Sweet, W.W., Op. cit. pp. 187.188

represented as a conspicuous feature in the revival belong mainly to a later period and occurred under less judicious leadership."⁽¹⁾ All the revivalists were not interested in shouting, shrieking, and squirming. Dorchester claims that "it was Whitefield's mission to revive in the churches faith in Pentecostal power and results."⁽²⁾ If this is understood correctly there is nothing wrong with it.

The revivalists put too much emphasis upon moral reform. They insisted that those who had been converted should abound in good works, and then they considered these good works the essence of Christianity. They insisted on a conscious experience of a change in man's relation to God as the only proof that a man was truly a Christian. It is significant that Jonathan Edwards regarded the greatly improved moral condition of the community as the most convincing proof of the genuineness of the revival. "Nine years after this (1734) revival Edwards attested that 'there had been a great and abiding alteration in the town; 'more general seriousness and decency in attending public worship, 'less vice than for sixty years before, 'and a more 'charitable spirit toward the poor.'"⁽³⁾ The revivalists were happy when the converts promised in all dealings with their neighbor to be governed by rules of honesty, justice, and uprightness. Gilbert Tennent "began to agitate in the Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia for the requirement of evidences of experimental religion in candidates for the ministry."⁽⁴⁾ Sanctification was stressed to the exclusion of justification.

(1) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 550

(2) Dorchester, D., Op. cit., p. 142

(3) Dorchester, D. Ibid., p. 141

(4) Newman, A.H. Op. cit., p. 241

The emphasis on moral reform was accompanied by lack of indoctrination. The revivalists infatuated the people. They did not educate them. Revivalism "condemns and ridicules the old methods of catechetical instruction, doctrinal preaching, and of administering the Sacraments as spiritually ineffective and productive merely of head Christianity and dead orthodoxy."⁽¹⁾ The rapid progress of the revivalists proves that they had little time for indoctrination. They did not teach religion. There was a lack of education among the laity, and even among the ministry. The graduates of the famous "Log College" were referred to as "half-educated enthusiasts."⁽²⁾ The many new churches formed brought about a need for new ministers. New preachers were needed in a hurry. There was no time for education. The "emphasis upon conversion in a minister led to a neglect of other qualifications; and partially educated youths, full of revival enthusiasm, but without theological training, became pastors of the new churches."⁽³⁾

This lack of indoctrination and this stress upon emotions brought about the straw-fire revivals which did not last. It is not strange that the revival interest passed away almost as quickly as it had arisen. In December, 1734, a remarkable revival occurred at Northampton, Massachusetts. "By May, 1735, the excitement began to die down, probably because the 'Physical power to endure excitement was exhausted.'⁽⁴⁾ Busfield claims that "following the excitement there came years

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- (1) Bente, F., Op. cit., p. 77
(2) Sweet, W.W., Op. cit., p. 204
(3) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 558
(4) Sweet, W.W., Op. cit., p. 189

of reaction and spiritual deadness, and for the four years ✓
from 1744 there was not a single applicant for admission to
the Northampton church."⁽¹⁾ That the revivals were not last-
ing is proven by an excerpt from an article by Nathanael
Leonard in the Christian History, which was issued in 1743
and which was one of the earliest of American religious
periodicals:

"Some that were awhile under awakenings at length
got rid of them, and are now returned as the dog to
his vomit. Some that we thought at first savingly
changed, have since given reason to fear that they de-
ceived themselves as well as others.... But Christ-
ians are not so lively as they have been; the convinc-
ing Spirit seems in a great measure withdrawn; ini-
quity begins to grow bold of late; and I am afraid a
day of sore declension is coming upon this place."⁽²⁾

Straw-fire Christianity cannot last.

The Great Awakening not only brought about an unholy
stress upon emotions, but it also helped in the formation ✓
of a new theology. It helped the cause of the liberal theo-
logians which finally led to Unitarianism, and it aided the ✓
cause of those who formed the New England Theology. "It is
not affirmed that the Great Awakening was responsible for
these two diverse and permanent movements in American thought,
but it did unquestionably accelerate these movements and
sharpen the line of cleavage between the parties responsible
for them."⁽³⁾

The intensified evangelical spirit led to the modifica-
tion of the Calvinistic theology, and helped to produce what
came to be known as the New England Theology. This theology
was expressed in its various forms by Jonathan Edwards, Bella-

(1) Busfield, T.E., Op.cit., p. 42

(2) Busfield, T.E., Ibid., p. 40

(3) Miller, E.W., Op. cit., p. 560

my, Hopkins, the Younger Edwards, Timothy Dwight, and Nathaniel W. Taylor. It later came to be the dominant theological thought of Congregationalism. The harder and colder and more critical spirit, which was in opposition to the revival awakening, led slowly and gradually to an Arian and finally a Socinian position, the generally prevailing theological thought of modern Unitarianism. On the one hand the Great Awakening assisted the cause of the anti-Trinitarian writers, and on the other hand it assisted in the development of a counter movements in theology, known as the New Divinity. The New Divinity was a departure at many points from Calvinism of the Westminster standards, but its aim was rather to adapt than desert the essential Calvinistic elements. Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins and their successors offered modifications of the historic Calvinism so important as to make them explorers in the field of theology.

With the New England Theology there came also the counter-movement of "liberal theology". "Thus arose the so-called 'Liberal Theology', which, beginning as a revolt from certain features of the Calvinism of the early Puritans, became confirmed in the spirit of dissent by the Great Awakening, and diverging even more widely from the old orthodoxy developed ultimately into Unitarianism and separated from the great body of the Congregation Church."⁽¹⁾ The Great Awakening did not start the new movements in theology, but it did help to speed up their course.

(1) Miller, E.W., Ibid., p. 559

Another evil result is unionism. The revivalists were willing to preach anywhere and anyplace. It made no difference to them whether they preached in Presbyterian or in Episcopalian pulpits. They were ready to go wherever they were able to go. They shook hands with the Baptists, the Quakers, and the Lutherans. Theodorus Freylinghuysen gave every assistance to his young Presbyterian friend, Gilbert Tennent. It made no difference to him that Tennent was of Presbyterian connection. Freylinghuysen encouraged his own members to subscribe towards Tennent's salary, permitted him to use the Dutch-meeting houses, and sometimes held joint services with him. George Whitefield was one of the most catholic-minded ministers of his time; he was willing to cooperate with Quakers, Baptists, Lutherans, Moravians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Dutch Reformed and all others as long as they like himself advocated vital religion and preached conversion. The following is an interesting illustration of Whitefield's unionism:

"On one occasion, preaching from the balcony of the court-house in Philadelphia, Whitefield cried out: 'Father Abraham, whom have you in Heaven? Any Episcopalians?' 'No.' 'Any Presbyterians?' 'No.' 'Have you any Independents or Seceders?' 'No.' 'Have you any Methodists?' 'NO, no, no!!' 'Whom have you there?' 'We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians -- believers in Christ -- men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the world of his testimony.' 'Oh, is this the case? Then God help us, God help us all, to forget party names, and to become Christians in deed and in truth.'" (1)

Whitefield, as most of the revivalists, was an extreme unionist. Unionism was an evil which attended the Great Awakening.

(1) Sweet, W.W., Op. cit., p. 17

Another evil which accompanied the revivals was bitter controversy. The revivalists roused opposition in the ministry because they continually spoke about the dangers of the unconverted ministry. Gilbert Tennent had written and preached a sermon on "An Unconverted Ministry"; Tennent

"was uncharitable to the ministry, and some of his sermons abounded with slanderous epithets which he applied to them. In a sermon preached at Nottingham he calls ministers hirelings, caterpillars, letter-learned Pharisees, plastered hypocrites, varlets, the seed of the serpent, foolish builders whom the devil drives into the ministry, and many like names."(1)

James Davenport left his Long Island parish and thrust himself uninvited into the parishes of other ministers, denouncing the pastor as "unconverted" and encouraging the people to desert both pastor and church. Busfield claims that the popularity of Whitefield "naturally somewhat turned his head, and he developed an uncharitableness and censoriousness, which made enemies and marred his work."⁽²⁾

Whitefield is said to have regarded it his duty to rebuke publicly those whom he considered to be "Blind leaders of the blind". To add to the confusion caused by the traveling preachers, ignorant laymen assumed the function of itinerant evangelists and invaded the parish of many a faithful minister and sowed the seeds of contention among his people. Many communities were divided into hostile factions; and unnecessary churches were formed in many parishes. Many ministers rightly opposed the revivalists. They opposed their work on principle, believing that the doctrines being emphasized by them were either untrue or unwisely presented.

(1) Busfield, T.E., Op. cit., pp. 36.37

(2) Busfield, T.E., Ibid., p. 35

Others opposed it from policy, fearing the excitement and disorder which it might cause. Dr. Charles Chauncey, pastor of the First Church in Boston, was a leader in the anti-revivalistic party. A war of pamphlets was waged. The New England ministers were practically forced to align themselves either for or against the revivals. The controversy was waged between the "Old Side" and the "New Side" groups. The "Old Side" claiming that no evangelist had the right to come, uninvited, into another man's parish, as if this was mission ground. The advocates of the revivals in the Congregational and Presbyterian churches endeavored to commit their denominations to the endorsement of revivals, with the result that the latter was divided for seventeen years and a breach was made in Congregationalism which widened until it, too, divided. Those who did not approve of the revivals did not quietly sit by and take the attacks. They preached against the revivalists, held meetings, and passed resolutions hostile to them, and published tracts assailing their doctrines and practises. "In the Synod of 1740 Tennent and Blair presented papers which drew a black picture of the character of the ministry as a body, and, when challenged to substantiate their charges, they had to admit that they had not investigated the reports they accepted, nor had they spoken privately, as Christ requires, to these alleged offenders."⁽¹⁾ A certain Robert Cross of Philadelphia protested against Tennent and Blair. He accused them of "overthrowing the authority of Synod by confining its powers to advice; for disorderly interruptions into other

(1) Thompson, R.E., Op. cit., p. 32

men's congregations; for censorious judgments of those who did not walk with them, resulting in the disturbance and division of congregations." ⁽¹⁾ The censoriousness of the revivalists became so obnoxious that even the great Whitefield

"as again in Boston in 1744, but so great was the opposition created among moderate men by the emotional excesses and disturbances of the revival, and the intolerance and censoriousness of the now famous preacher and his satellites, that a pamphlet war was fiercely waged, testimonials against him were published by the faculties of Harvard and Yale, and by associations of ministers, and sharp personal letters were addressed to him by Dr. Charles Chauncey of the First Church, Boston, and by others."(2)

The bitter controversies which attended and followed the Great Awakening were not for the glory of God. They belong in the category of evil results.

(1) Thompson, R.E., Ibid., p. 32

(2) Thompson, R.E., Ibid., p. 32

V. CONCLUSION

The movement which is known as the Great Awakening had its beginning in the year 1720, reached its hieght in the year 1740, and came to its end during the year 1745. It was caused by the religious indifference of the multitudes, by the dead formalism in the churches, by the Half-Way Covenant, and the fervid preaching of the revivalists. Theodorus Freylinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield are the men who were the shining lights in the Awakening. Different revivals broke out in various sections of the country. Freylinghuysen started revival work in New Jersey; Tennent worked in New Jersey; Edwards labored in Massachusetts, and the great George Whitefield spent his time in binding these revivals into one unified whole. Many good and many evil results accompanied and followed the Great Awakening. The chief good result was that people began to consider religion as a vital element in their lives, and the chief evil result was the unholy stress laid upon emotionalism. All in all, the Great Awakening was a great movement.

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