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## Calvinism in a New World

### *The Failures of the Huguenots*

Five hundred years after the Viking visits to Vinland the rediscovery of America by Christopher Columbus heralded the age of European exploration and settlement in the New World. During the next two and a half centuries both the national rivalries and religious conflicts of the European nations were reflected in the history of colonial America, although the religious factor was subordinate to the political during the sixteenth century. The vast territorial expansion of Spain in Central and South America, and particularly the wealth of gold and silver that flowed from those Spanish colonies, early aroused the envy of other monarchies in western Europe. The failure of France and England to promote colonization schemes of their own meant, however, that for most of the sixteenth century their conflict with Spain in America took the form of piratical attacks on the rich treasure fleets returning from New Spain to Old. The first French attempt by Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval to found a colony at Cap Rouge near Quebec in 1541-3 with some two hundred men and women recruited from French prisons proved to be a complete failure. Another three generations passed before the lily-banner of France returned to the shores of the St. Lawrence.

Despite Cartier's denunciation of "the wicked Lutherans, apostates and imitators of Mahomet,"<sup>1</sup> Roberval, the real leader of this ill-starred exploration and colonization project, was a Huguenot. Cartier had recommended

that the French king should imitate the Spanish example of spreading the gospel among the natives of the New World and King Francis had proclaimed the colonizing venture as, "a thing pleasing to God, our creator, saviour and Redeemer, and which will be to the glory of his holy name and the increase of our Christian faith and the growth of our holy mother Catholic church."<sup>2</sup> Yet there is no evidence that either Cartier or Roberval attempted any mission to the Indians, or even provided for the spiritual needs of their settlers. France's first genuinely religious interest in the western hemisphere came not from France's Catholic king and Catholic subjects but from the persecuted Huguenot minority.

The idea of founding a New World colony to serve as an asylum from religious persecution was first promoted in France by Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon, once a fellow-student of Calvin at Paris, who enlisted the aid of the powerful Huguenot leader, Admiral de Coligny, to establish a Huguenot colony on a small island near Rio de Janiero in 1555. The settlement, called Coligny and intended to be an American copy of the city of saints, soon dissolved because of internal religious dissention over the form of communion, but this did not discourage Admiral Coligny from promoting other Huguenot enterprises in the New World. In 1562 Jean Ribaut led a mixed group of adventurers, mostly Huguenots, to "Florida" in search of gold, but within a year the project was abandoned. A second party was on the point of giving up their futile quest in 1565 when Ribaut arrived with three hundred more settlers sent out by the admiral. The fact that these Frenchmen were in Spanish territory, close to the route of the Spanish treasure fleets, and that they were heretics in the eyes of Catholic Spain, was the excuse for the Spanish to massacre every French settler captured in Florida. After his captives admitted to being "Lutherans", the Spanish commander Menendez reported, "I caused Ribaut and all the others to be put to the knife."<sup>3</sup> An estimated one thousand were executed in all, and it was said in France that Menendez hanged some of victims on trees with placards that read, "I do this not as to Frenchmen, but as to Lutherans."<sup>4</sup> The fate of the Huguenots in Florida was a grim foretaste of the tragedy that awaited the Huguenots in France itself on St. Bartholomew's Day, just seven years later, when Coligny was among the first victims of that religious bloodbath.

The next appearance of Calvinism in North America occurred in those northern territories that Cartier had explored in the 1530s. These French colonizing enterprises in Acadia and in the valley of the St. Lawrence River differed from the Coligny settlement in two ways. They involved no effort to create a religious refuge, since Henry IV's Edict of Nantes had established Huguenot civil and religious rights in France, and they were not so

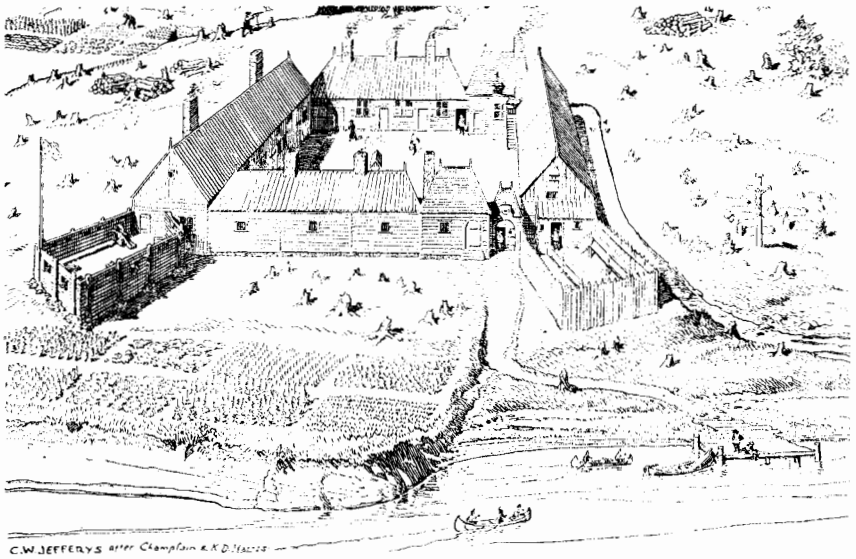
much full-scale attempts at colonization as by-products of trading ventures. The central figure in the early French settlements at Port Royal and Quebec was Pierre du Gua de Monts, a Huguenot who had distinguished himself in fighting for the cause of Henry IV during the recent French civil wars of religion. With the return of peace to France both the French king and French traders showed a revived interest in North America as an area of potential settlement and of trade, especially in furs, and during the last decade of the sixteenth century several Huguenot merchants made numerous trading expeditions to the St. Lawrence.

In 1599 King Henry granted a Dieppe merchant, Captain Pierre Chauvin de Tonnetuit, a ten-year monopoly of the fur trade of New France. De Monts accompanied Chauvin, with whom he had been associated in the defence of the Huguenot stronghold of Honfleur, to Tadoussac in 1600, but their sixteen-man settlement failed in its first year. When Chauvin died in 1603 his trading privileges were transferred to Admiral Aymar de Chaste under whom Chauvin had served in the French navy. De Monts and Captain Francois Gravde du Pont, a native of St-Malo who had been instrumental in getting the original monopoly for Chauvin, sailed up the St. Lawrence as far as Montreal in 1603 on a reconnoitring expedition for de Chaste. With them as an observer came the cartographer, Samuel Champlain, whom history has immortalized as the "Father of New France." Returning from this trip, de Monts learned that de Chaste had died, and de Monts in turn acquired the monopoly and employed Grave du Pont and Champlain in another attempt at settlement, this time on the Bay of Fundy near which copper mines had been reported. Their new settlement, built on present-day Dochet Island in the St. Croix River, was moved in 1605 to Port Royal on Nova Scotia's Annapolis Basin. Heavy financial losses caused by the charter requirement that de Monts establish and maintain colonists, and by competition from unlicensed traders who had no such responsibilities, bankrupted him in 1607. Nevertheless, when de Monts got a one-year extension of his monopoly, he raised enough money to build another post in 1608 at the more promising site of Quebec where Champlain acted as agent and Grave du Pont supervised trading.

By permitting the development of trade and colonization in New France at no cost to the monarchy, Henry IV was no doubt enhancing the prestige of Old France, but he may also have been deliberately providing an outlet for the energies of his Huguenot supporters and friends. In any case his charter to de Monts permitted the Huguenots and their clergy to settle in New France. A Protestant minister and two priests had accompanied the expedition to Acadia in 1604 but their religious arguments sometimes de-



Gaspard de Coligny



C.W. JEFFERYS after Clompain & D. 1632

### **Port Royal Habitat**

First French-speaking settlement in Canada under Protestant (Huguenot) Governor De Monts, Port Royal (Annapolis)



### **The Massacre of St. Bartholomew**

*From a painting by Vasari in the Sala Regia of the Vatican*

veloped into fist fights, to the great amusement of the rough sailors and the scandal of pious Christians such as Champlain. Commenting on these unholy brawls, Champlain wrote that he did not know which faith possessed the better fighter but that no amount of physical violence could stop these religious controversies.<sup>5</sup> Sailors, settlers, and even the local Indians took sides in these conflicts and Grave du Pont and Champlain were frequently engaged in separating the combatants. When the minister and one of the priests died of scurvy, the sailors put the two bodies into a common grave to see whether the religious antagonists could at least rest together in the peace of death.<sup>6</sup>

The Port Royal establishment was reoccupied in 1610 under other auspices and a secular priest was brought out to serve the settlers and the Indians, but no Protestant minister. The following year Pierre Coton, Jesuit chaplain to Henry IV, designated two priests of his order as missionaries to Acadia; but the Huguenot merchants refused to give them passage on their ships and only the action of a wealthy Catholic woman in buying out the Huguenot interests in Acadia from de Monts made it possible for these missionaries to reach the New World. Although no priest or Protestant minister came to Quebec during that post's first seven years of life, the religious conflict created by the Reformation was present from the beginning. The Huguenot merchants dominated the fur trade, to the economic and religious chagrin of rival Catholic traders. In an attempt to avoid the denominational controversies that had marred the Acadian settlement, King Henry prohibited all Reformed religious services in New France, but the Huguenots, according to Champlain, "went on...and in such a way that all the savages could hear them from the shore. There is no use in talking to them; it is their great zeal for their faith that impels them."<sup>7</sup> Some historians have claimed that Champlain himself was of Huguenot origin because his baptismal name, Samuel, was popular among French Protestants. Such evidence is inconclusive and the fact that Champlain was associated with Huguenots and married a young Huguenot girl does not outweigh the indications that he was a devout Catholic.

Champlain could not exercise any choice in the matter of the religion of his employers, but he was painfully aware that the Huguenot traders would do nothing to promote the advancement of Catholic missions or even of settlement as required by their charter. Their sole interest was in profits — even their Calvinist religion took second place to that motive. From the standpoint of his own ambitions to explore and to Christianize the natives, Champlain probably considered the Huguenot monopolists as the lesser of two evils, since the unlicensed traders, also mostly Huguenots, threatened the success of de Monts's venture on which Champlain's personal interest in

New France depended. But the assassination of Henry IV in 1612 was followed by a less tolerant policy towards the Reformed religion, and the formation of a new monopoly arrangement for New France included many of de Monts's former trade rivals. Champlain took advantage of this changed situation to bring to Canada in 1615 two members of the popular Recollet Franciscans because the importation of Jesuits, the spearhead of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, was opposed by the merchants who had to pay for any religious mission to their tiny colony.

The Recollet friars worked among the migratory Algonquin and Montagnais Indians of the lower St. Lawrence and began the famous Huron mission on Georgian Bay, but lacking financial resources for such extended operations they reluctantly invited the wealthy and influential Society of Jesus to join in their work. The unpopularity of the Jesuits preceded them to Canada, however, for a pamphlet denouncing their political power was already circulating among both Catholics and Protestants at Quebec. The arrival of the first three Jesuits in 1625 was another indication of the waning fortunes of the Huguenots in both Old and New France, and of the beginning of Richelieu's programme to eliminate religious dissent in all the domains of Catholic France.

Already another reorganization of the trading monopoly had occurred in 1620. Huguenot control of the Company of Montmorency had led to such religious tensions within Quebec that both Champlain and the Recollets recommended to the Crown the total exclusion of all Protestants from the colony. Religious warfare broke out again in France in 1625 and the Cardinal-Duke de Richelieu, who had just become the king's first minister, found his excuse for reducing Huguenot power in Canada. Although the general of the Company's fleet, the Huguenot Guillaume de Caen, was liberal-minded in matters of religion, the mixed crews of his ships often fought over the relative virtues of the Catholic *versus* the Reformed faith. In 1626 de Caen was forbidden to sail to New France, and in January 1627 his position was abolished after Richelieu appointed himself grand master and superintendent of navigation. Three months later Richelieu completed his plan by forming an entirely Catholic trading monopoly, the Company of New France or the Company of One Hundred Associates, to develop an exclusively Roman Catholic colony in Canada.

The charter of the One Hundred Associates revoked the Edict of Nantes as applied to New France by specifying that, "the said colony must be settled by natural-born French Catholics, and it will be required of those in command in New France to take care that this article is carried out exactly according to its form and text, not allowing it to be disobeyed for any

cause or occasion whatever.”<sup>8</sup> Before this new law could be made effective, however, both Canada and Acadia were conquered by the English. Taking advantage of a war which had begun between England and France, Sir William Alexander, the scholarly favourite of James I and Charles I, joined forces with a group of London merchants, the Company of Adventurers to Canada, to make good his claim to Nova Scotia which James had granted him in 1621.

Alexander’s first settlers had failed in 1622 to get farther than Newfoundland where their Presbyterian minister died,<sup>9</sup> but in 1628 the London group, headed by Jarvis (Gervaise) Kirke, an Englishman long resident in Dieppe, dispatched to North America a small fleet commanded by Kirke’s French-born sons, David, Lewis, Thomas, and John. In the St. Lawrence the English expedition captured the first ship which the One Hundred Associates had sent out, but Champlain refused to surrender Quebec. At the same time Sir William’s son and namesake sailed to Tadoussac with some seventy Scottish settlers and the next year founded two short-lived settlements at Port Royal and at Baleine on Cape Breton Island. In the summer of 1629 the Kirkes returned to the St. Lawrence, and Champlain, whose supplies had been captured and given to Alexander’s settlers, was forced to capitulate. Champlain, all the missionaries, and most of the French settlers were carried to England; but this first British conquest of France’s American possessions was nullified because the war between the two nations had ended one month after the Kirkes left England. Despite the illegality of their conquest, the Kirkes retained Quebec and its rich fur trade until 1632, when a second Anglo-French treaty restored both Canada and Acadia to France.

David Kirke was accompanied on his 1629 expedition by a “Lutheran” minister, yet no references exist to any religious activities during the English occupation of Quebec. It has been frequently assumed that the Kirkes were Huguenots, but the fact that David corresponded with the Archbishop of Canterbury and that his brothers fought for King Charles against the Puritans and Covenanters indicates their staunchly Anglican and royalist sympathies. David Kirke was later removed as governor of Newfoundland by the Cromwellian regime; his estate was seized and after being tried by the army’s Council of State he died in prison in 1654. The episode of the Scottish settlement in Nova Scotia and the English capture of Quebec had no apparent religious motivation, beyond the national rivalry with Catholic France. From the restoration of New France to French rule in 1632 until the British Conquest of 1759 the Reformed religion was never practised there, and only a handful of French Protestants ever managed to elude the



watchful eyes of the Catholic church and the French state to enter New France.

### *Early Calvinism and Presbyterianism in the English Colonies*

In the English seaboard colonies of America the oldest Calvinist churches were in New York where they had been established by the Dutch before their colony of New Netherland was captured by England in 1664. While employed by the Dutch East India Company, the Englishman, Henry Hudson, discovered the Hudson River in 1609, the same year that the Netherlands won their freedom from Spain. Almost immediately the tiny trading community of New Amsterdam was created on Manhattan Island. In 1623 a party of Walloon (Belgian) Calvinists arrived from the Netherlands where they had sought refuge from religious persecution. Some of this group remained at New Amsterdam where Jonas Michaelius organized a Dutch Reformed congregation in 1628; others ascended the Hudson River in 1624 to found Fort Orange, later renamed Albany, where a church was established in 1642 by Johannes Megapolensis.

From its earliest days New Netherland was a cosmopolitan colony containing Walloons, Huguenots, Waldensians from the Piedmont, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Puritans, and Catholics. In 1640 the Dutch Reformed Church had been declared the only permissible religion in New Netherland, but in practice dissenting religious opinion and even private worship by other denominations was tolerated. When Governor William Kieft entertained the Canadian Jesuit missionary, Saint Isaac Jogues, whom the Dutch had rescued from Iroquois captivity in 1644, he told Jogues that eighteen languages were spoken in the colony, which explains Jogues's criticism that New Amsterdam had "the arrogance of Babel."<sup>10</sup> Fearful that religious pluralism might lead to a rebellion against Dutch control, Kieft's successor, the semi-legendary Peter Stuyvesant, removed several Quakers and a Lutheran minister from the colony before the directors of the new Dutch West India Company intervened to assure freedom of conscience to settlers in their territories.

The number of Dutch Reformed congregations continued to grow with the population of New Netherland and by the time of its bloodless conquest at the hands of the English the colony had eight thousand inhabitants, two thirds of them Dutch. The Dutch churches remained under the Classis of Amsterdam even after 1664, but despite increasing membership their influence declined under the English, who formally established Anglicanism as the state religion. Laws passed in 1665 and 1674 permitted the Dutch

majority to select their own ministers and pay them from public taxes, yet as new settlers arrived the principle of voluntary support for any and all denominations was viewed with greater favour. In Reformed church worship services the English language gradually replaced Dutch, notwithstanding the protests of the older generation that God could be properly glorified only in the Dutch tongue. The conflict between the generations caused younger church members to demand in 1747 the erection of a coetus or presbytery as a gesture of independence from the Classis of Amsterdam. Seven years later this Coetus of New York assumed the full powers of a classis, thus ending one of the last formal ties with the Netherlands. The next obvious need, a seminary to train clergy locally, was met in 1766 when Queen's College, now Rutgers University, received a royal charter.

Despite the fact that the spread of Dutch settlement into neighbouring New Jersey extended the geographic scope of the Dutch Reformed Church, it continued to be diverted from efforts to convert new settlers and from its Indian mission begun in the 1640s by Megapolensis. The main causes for its failure to expand and identify with colonial life were theological disputes, and the English-Dutch language question which persisted until 1805. The major contribution of Dutch Calvinism to the history of Presbyterianism in North America was the influence of its pietism on the great wave of evangelism which swept through the English colonies in the mid-eighteenth century; and its specific gift to Canadian Presbyterianism was the sending of a few clergy to Canada in the wake of the American Revolution.

Besides the Dutch Reformed Church in lower New York and adjoining areas of New Jersey, Huguenots, Welsh Calvinists, and "Presbyterian" clergy and laity from England were to be found in the Middle colonies before 1650. Notable by their absence in this early period were Scottish and Irish Protestant elements. Although the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish from Ulster later became one of the major factors in the development of American Presbyterianism in the eighteenth century, the number of Scottish settlers in the colonies always remained relatively small considering the important role of the Scottish clergy and Scottish universities in that development. The two main sources of the American Presbyterian tradition were, however, the great Scotch-Irish immigration to the colonies in the eighteenth century, and second and third generation New Englanders who joined the Presbyterians as a result of changes in Puritanism.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, largely as a result of the complex English religious situation during the Civil War, the Puritans, a term hitherto applied rather indiscriminately to all opponents of the royal policies of Anglicanization, broke into two distinct branches, Congregationalists and

Presbyterians. Their main point of difference was the definition of “church” — the Congregationalists believed the church was an autonomous “gathered” community of persons, known to each other, sharing a common religious belief and controlling their own membership by insisting on a conversion experience, whereas the Presbyterians held that the church was a larger body in which a presbytery defined the terms of membership and in which each congregation was only a subordinate unit. Congregationalists ordained ministers to and by a specific congregation for a period of service in that congregation only. Presbyterians ordained clergy to the universal church and congregations merely called their minister from that ministerial group. Congregationalism was lay-centred, and within the congregational unit highly democratic, whereas Presbyterianism involved a system of checks and balances on both the laity and the clergy, and control over church government was more diffuse and less immediate than in Congregationalism.

This separation of Congregational and Presbyterian traditions of church government appeared in the American colonies before 1700, but was less sharply defined than in England, partly because American Presbyterianism perpetuated its close tie with English Puritanism and had few contacts with Scotland’s completely Presbyterian church. In the New World it was common for Presbyterian ministers to serve Congregational churches and for Presbyterian congregations to call Congregational ministers. Their differences were really a matter of degree rather than kind.

The emergence of an undeniably Presbyterian church in the colonies was in some measure a reaction to the activities of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the English organization chartered in 1701 to send Anglican missionaries to settlers abroad. The Church of England was already the legally established religion in New York, Virginia and South Carolina where Anglican church membership conferred political privileges; and the appearance of the S.P.G. in North America encouraged attempts to make Anglicanism the official religion in other colonies. Although Presbyterians, both laymen and ministers, had been active in the Middle Colonies (New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania) for several decades before 1700, the first Presbyterian to attract public attention was the Rev. Francis Makemie. He had arrived from Scotland in 1683 and in 1705 obtained financial aid from Presbyterians in London to bring John Hampton and George McNish to the colonies to assist in serving the growing number of Presbyterians. The following year Makemie and Hampton were arrested, tried, heavily fined and imprisoned for six weeks for preaching without a licence from the governor of New York, who claimed that the English Act of Toleration did not extend to the overseas colonies.

The first step towards organizing a church had already been taken in 1706 when seven ministers — four Scotch-Irish, one Scottish and three American-born, formed the Presbytery of Philadelphia in connection with the Church of Scotland. Its position in the middle colonies was strengthened by the accession of several “Presbyterianized” Congregational churches and of some newly established churches, especially Scotch-Irish ones, in the frontier region of Pennsylvania. The trial of Makemie and Hampton was another factor in attracting public attention to the Presbytery. The Presbytery appealed to both Ireland and Scotland for help, but most of its outside support came from the wealthy Presbyterian congregations in London. By 1716 the Presbytery of Philadelphia was big enough to transform itself into a synod of twenty-five ministers whose national origins indicated the diverse backgrounds of the colonies — eight were Scottish, seven New Englanders and three Welsh.

### *Subscription, the Great Awakening, and Disruption*

Almost from the moment of its creation the Synod of Philadelphia was beset by internal factional disputes. One major problem was the low moral and intellectual life even among clergymen on the colonies’ western frontier, in contrast to the sophistication of seaboard cities such as Philadelphia, the third largest city in the British empire. This regional and class difference was mirrored to some degree in the “subscription” controversy that arose out of attempts to enforce discipline on church members and especially on the clergy. After 1690 a move arose in Scotland for stricter control of doctrinal beliefs by demanding a “subscription” or declaration of agreement to every detail of the Westminster Standards. The same pressure for a rigidly confessional conformity had been duplicated in the General Synod of Ulster after 1717 when the “New Lights,” or subscriptionists, charged that their opponents were too permissive regarding the beliefs of some clergy. The anti-subscriptionists argued that while the Bible was undoubtedly infallible, the interpreters of the Bible were not because they were mere humans. At stake in this argument was control over the church, since the winning party would be able to establish its own rules for church membership and ordination. In Ireland the subscriptionists won the battle, but in Scotland the controversy contributed to the Erskine secession.

In 1721 the Philadelphia Synod received an overture from the Scotch-Irish group favouring subscription and clearly aimed at the “indifference” of older Presbyterian settlers towards standards. Controversy continued until 1729 when the Synod accepted the compromise Adopting Act. This required subscription to the Westminster Confession from all members of

presbyteries and Synod, but disclaimed any power to legislate over men's consciences. The Adopting Act defined the Confession as "a system of doctrine" rather than a detailed catalogue of required belief, but this did not satisfy the subscriptionists who would permit variety of opinion only on matters of church-state relations. The leader of the anti-subscriptionists and author of the Adopting Act was the Rev. Jonathan Dickinson of New York who saw in subscription a narrow confessionalism that threatened liberty of conscience and the dynamic and charitable spirit of Christianity in the British colonies of America.

The colonial subscription controversy was complicated by the appearance of a third force in Synod — the revivalist group led by William Tennent Sr. who believed that the essential qualification for church membership should be a vital religious experience of conversion. In 1738 the subscriptionists deepened the divisions within the Synod by proposing an examination of ministerial candidates by Synod in lieu of a college degree. Since no church colleges existed all training of ordinands was done by individual ministers. William Tennent had already trained his three sons and one other man for the Presbyterian ministry and in 1735 had built his famous Log College in Pennsylvania to extend his educational work. The suggestion for examination was therefore quite reasonable, but it did emphasize intellectual attainments rather than emotional experience as the qualification for ordination. Citing Scottish and Ulster practices as the desirable standards for the colonial ministry, the Scotch-Irish subscriptionists opposed the influence of revivalism and considered any minister uneducated if he did not possess a Scottish university degree, there being no Irish university open to Presbyterians. Scottish university education was, however, at its lowest ebb at this time. Academic standards were poor, the university term lasted only a few months, and there was no control over curriculum. To complete this unhappy picture, student enrolments in the Scottish universities were exceedingly small — in 1746 no student graduated from Edinburgh.

Within the Synod of Philadelphia the revivalist group was drawing closer to Dickinson and the anti-subscriptionists in the face of their common opponents, the Scotch-Irish clergy. At the Synod of 1736, however, when twenty-six members including the leaders of the Tennent group were absent, the Scotch-Irish party — sixteen of the twenty men present — took advantage of their temporary majority to circumvent the Adopting Act by accepting an overture that demanded adherence to the Westminster Standards "without the least variation or alteration."<sup>11</sup> Subsequent events proved that the aim of the subscriptionist party was an all-powerful synod, controlled by themselves, which would deny congregations any voice in installing

ministers in specific churches and would even control preaching by clergy visiting congregations other than their own. Since four of the five presbyteries were in the hands of the subscriptionists — New York was the exception — it was obvious that the Log College men would have trouble in obtaining future employment.

Although open schism within the Synod did not come until 1741 the ultimate defeat of the revivalists was foreshadowed much earlier. Between 1706 and 1738 more than half the ministers in the Synod were either Irish or Scottish. The Log College party was small — only about eight ministers — and their failure to attend synods left their “letter-learned”, unconverted opponents in full control of the highest court which could create policy. The only improvement in the position of the revivalists came in 1738 with the formation of the Presbytery of New Brunswick (New Jersey), whose population was, like that of New York Presbytery, composed largely of later generations of New Englanders moving into more fertile agricultural regions. The revival movement for spiritual renewal was at work within existing congregations — the protracted or camp meeting had not yet been developed — and the charge against unawakened “dead Dogs” church members was not impiety but their formalized performance of religious obligations. The revival was not a mass movement but the reaction of individuals to the sermons and private contacts with their own ministers. The conflict with the subscriptionists was not fought over principles but over jurisdiction. Thus the subscriptionists used synod’s authority, as defined by themselves, to censure and punish members of the New Brunswick Presbytery for supplying vacant pulpits and visiting congregations other than their own.

The American Presbyterian revivalists would probably have disappeared from the pages of history or at least been relegated to a footnote, had it not been for two separate but parallel developments of revivalism in the colonies. The Dutch Reformed Church in the Raritan Valley near New Brunswick, New Jersey, had been awakened by the pietistic preaching and writing of the Dutchman, Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, who arrived in that area in 1720 and later co-operated with one of William Tennent’s sons.<sup>12</sup> The more important development of American revivalism can certainly be attributed to the visit to Philadelphia in 1739 of George Whitefield, the twenty-four-year-old Calvinistic Anglican evangelist who was already famous in the Old World and the New. “In the history of revivalism,” writes the late W. W. Sweet, American church historian, “the outstanding individual revivalists have been Calvinists: exactly contrary to what might have been expected. Fortunately, the great Calvinistic preachers have not been consistent Calvinists; and they have gone ahead in spite of their doctrine of election, as

though there was hope for every man. What the colonial Calvinistic revivalists did was to personalize Calvinism; to make it apply to individuals.”<sup>13</sup>

Whitefield preached twice in Philadelphia where William Tennent sought him out and probably convinced him to stay and tour the areas where the anti-subscriptionist groups were strongest. Whitefield’s visit proved to be a turning point not only for the fortunes of the Log College men but for American religious history. His revival technique was new to America. Like John Wesley, he preached in the open air to thousands of people from any and all denominations. Benjamin Franklin, the Presbyterian who became the epitome of Deistic philosophy, reported that Whitefield’s sermons were clearly audible to a crowd of thirty thousand people. “The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seemed as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk through the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.”<sup>14</sup> No doubt in the middle colonies Whitefield’s revival was the reaping of a crop sown by Tennent’s group and by Frelinghuysen, and in New England his path had been smoothed by the revival begun under Jonathan Edwards in 1737.

For Presbyterianism in America the importance of Whitefield’s visit was the sudden swing of public opinion against the subscriptionist party in favour of the revivalist group that encouraged Tennent to open an all-out war on the former’s “unconverted ministry.” The orthodox “Pharisee teachers” had no answer to Tennent’s vital restatement of the Protestant doctrine of “calling” — a God-ordained ministry, as opposed to man-made ministry which claimed the sanction of God for what were in fact the actions of mere church courts. Undoubtedly the Great Awakening was one of the most important religious events in the history of North America, but it harboured an anti-intellectualism and a reaffirmation of congregational autonomy that were at odds with Presbyterian traditions of the ministry and form of church government. The Log College men now adopted Whitefield’s revival technique of emotion-packed mass meetings. By the time Whitefield visited Philadelphia again in 1740 it was obvious that the ranks of denominationalism had been broken and that the revival had become a truly popular movement. No Protestant denomination in America would ever be the same after the Great Awakening.

### *Reunion and Revolution*

Within the Presbyterian church, opponents of the great revival protested

against the “intrusion” of Whitefield and other evangelists into established congregations, and in 1741 this “Old Side” group illegally ejected the revivalist “New Side” from the Synod “to save this swooning Church from a total expiration.”<sup>15</sup> At first the dispossessed New Side lacked both organization and clergy to serve the wave of immigrants who were arriving at the same time as the Great Awakening, and the New Side was dependent in large part on new converts to Presbyterianism who not only lacked any knowledge of Presbyterianism and Calvinism but were deficient in general religious education. When the New Side did organize under the name of the Conjunct Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Londonderry, it engaged in a pamphlet war against the Old Side that lasted several years. Abandoning all hope of early reconciliation, the New Side ceased its claim to be part of the Synod of Philadelphia in 1745 and formed the Synod of New York with three presbyteries and twenty-two clergy, all adhering to the Adopting Act of 1729. The creation of this new synod fused the older tradition of New England’s Puritan Presbyterianism with the dynamism of the Tennents, the Log College and life in the middle colonies.

The Synod of New York, however, had no seminary — the Log College closed in 1744, two years before William Tennent’s death — and Harvard and Yale universities were both unfriendly towards the Great Awakening. To fill this need the College of New Jersey was chartered and opened in Dickinson’s study in 1747 to teach liberal arts to all denominations; in 1748 it moved to Princeton where it survived early financial difficulties by holding lotteries.<sup>16</sup> Another result of the Great Awakening in the New York Synod was an active missionary campaign in the middle colonies and in Virginia and the Carolinas, and missions to the Indians. The trend within colonial American Presbyterianism and particularly among the New Side, was towards mission outreach, towards charitable relations with other Christian denominations churches. In both respects it differed from the rigid confessionalism and lack of enterprise found in Old World Presbyterianism.

This identification of American Presbyterianism with the interests of the colonies and with other denominations was further encouraged by the increasing hostility between the English and French in North America. Faced with the threat of French encirclement that would block the westward march of settlement from the seaboard colonies, New Side Presbyterianism joined in the attempts of all the churches to encourage patriotism and a common defence effort against the French and their Indian allies. This awareness of the common peril and the stagnating condition of the Old Side paved the way for Presbyterian reunion in America in 1758. In the previous seventeen years, the conservative Old Side Synod had shrunk from twenty-six ministers



to twenty-three, whereas the more activist New Side had grown from twenty-two to seventy-three, indicating the future trend of American Presbyterianism towards a more pragmatic expression of the faith.

The reunited church accepted the Adopting Act of 1729 and ignored most of the causes of the 1741 Disruption. It now contained 233 churches, but 142 of these were in three colonies — Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey.<sup>17</sup> Over a quarter of its ninety-six ministers were graduates of Yale and almost as many came from the College of New Jersey; probably less than a fifth of the total had been educated in Britain. The synod could claim with justice that it was an American Presbyterian Church. Yet despite the contemporary boast that Old and New Sides were reunited in “wise and happy conjunction,” their former differences persisted and the synod was prey to power struggles as both groups tried to dominate in the new frontier areas such as western Pennsylvania. The Old Side charged the New with continuing the techniques of “experimental religion” that were neither Presbyterian nor Calvinistic. Slowly the evangelical forces which had shaped the revival within colonial Presbyterianisms gave way to the more traditional rationalism of eighteenth century Scottish Presbyterianism until “the New Light was snuffed out.”<sup>18</sup> By the 1770s, however, the complexion of American Presbyterianism had also been drastically altered by the formation of bodies representing recent secessions in Scottish Presbyterianism, and by the arrival of many Ulster Presbyterians.

The physical expansion of American Presbyterianism in the early eighteenth century had depended heavily on immigration by Scotch-Irish, mainly from Ulster. In all, an estimated 200,000 arrived between 1717 and 1767. Pennsylvania was the largest recipient of these settlers but the interior parts of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia were also areas of strength — New England, in contrast, received very few colonists from this source. The motives for this vast migration were both economic and religious. Government discrimination in favour of English trade and manufacturing, and the oppressive rents levied by absentee landlords, moved many Irish tradesmen and farmers to cross the Atlantic, while the legal exclusion of Presbyterians from public offices and the illegality of Presbyterian marriages added a bitter dimension of religious persecution to their migration. By the time of the American Revolution the Presbyterian Church was the second largest denomination in the colonies, but it was stamped with a Scotch-Irish character which explains its deteriorating relations with both the British and the local governments.

In America the Scotch-Irish who had fled from attempts to Anglicanize them in Ireland clashed with colonial authorities over their legal rights as Presbyterians, over the endowment of the Church of England, over Indian policy, and particularly in the “episcopal controversy” over the desire of the

Church of England to have colonial bishops who, it was widely feared, would be invested with political powers as in Britain. By the 1770s most Presbyterians and Congregationalists sincerely believed that the preservation of their religious liberties was directly connected to the struggle for civil liberties and self-government in the colonies. As the stage of armed confrontation approached, Presbyterians, both laymen and ministers, were to be found in both the royalist and the revolutionary parties, and this conflict of loyalties was most obvious in Pennsylvania where Presbyterians were the largest denomination.<sup>19</sup> The Synod's call for loyalty in 1775 was approved with only one dissenting voice but the poor attendance at the meeting suggests there was some truth in the popular belief that Presbyterians were among the most active supporters of rebellion.

It has been estimated that about a third of the American Presbyterian Church engaged actively in revolutionary activities, a figure that corresponds with Benjamin Franklin's opinion that the colonists were divided fairly equally between Loyalists, rebels and neutrals. No less than fourteen Presbyterians, including one minister, were among the fifty-five signers of the Declaration of Independence. That minister was John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey, who had turned that institution into a centre of political radicalism. Although the British colonial minister charged in 1777 that "Presbyterianism is really at the Bottom of this whole Conspiracy,"<sup>20</sup> Presbyterianism made no direct contribution to the American constitution, and the principles and practices of government of the young republic owed nothing to Calvinistic theology or presbyterian polity. Nevertheless, among the Loyalists, the stigma of treason clung to the American Presbyterian church, and its involvement, real or imaginary, in the "Presbyterian Rebellion" precluded any serious American Presbyterian influence on the development of Presbyterianism in Canada.