

**INVENTING THE
"GREAT AWAKENING"**

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TABLE 1.1
Revival Geography: Colonial America, 1739-1745
Place-Names Prominent in the Great Awakening
Listed by Revival Center

Revival Center	City or Town	No. within Colony	Pct. of Total within Colony
New England— Centered at Boston and Northampton:		50	63.3
Massachusetts	Attleborough, Berkly, Boston, Bridgewater, Brookline, Cambridge, Concord, Dedham, Gloucester, Hallifax, Hampshire County, Harvard, Ipswich, Martha's Vineyard, Marblehead, Medfield, Medway, Middleborough, Natick, Northampton, Norton, Plymouth, Raynham, Reading, Roxbury, Salem, Sherbourne, Somers, Sudbury, Suffield, Sutton, Taunton, Worcester, Wrentham	34	43.0
Connecticut	Groton, Hartford, Lyme, Middletown, New London, New Salem, Norwich, Stonington, Wallingford	9	11.4
Rhode Island	Charles-Town, Westerly	2	2.5
New Hampshire	Gosport, Hampton, Newcastle, Portsmouth, York	5	6.3
Middle Colonies— Centered at Neshaminy, Pennsylvania		25	31.6
New Jersey	Amwell, Basinridge, Cohansie, Elizabeth-Town, Freehold, Hopewell, Maidenhead, Neward, New Brunswick, Salem, Woodbridge	11	13.9
Pennsylvania	Abingdon, Chester, Derby, Fogs Mannor, German Town, Neshaminy, New Londonberry, Nottingham, Philadelphia, Whitely Creek, Whitemarsh	11	13.9
Delaware	Christian Bridge, Newcastle, Wilmington	3	3.8
Colonies outside Revival Centers:		4	5.1
New York	New York City, Staten Island	2	2.5
Maryland	Bohemia	1	1.3
Virginia	None	0	0.0
North Carolina	None	0	0.0
South Carolina	Charleston	1	1.3
Georgia	None	0	0.0
Total		79	100%

Sources: Place-names are cited in the two works that best describe the geographic sweep of the American revival: the *Christian History* and *Whitefield's Journals*. Names from the former include all listed in an index of place-names; those from the latter are restricted to those sites where crowds of at least 1,000 assembled.

CHAPTER 5

“similar facts . . . are now united”:
Constructing a Transatlantic Awakening

WHILE American revivalists forged links between local awakenings to create an intercolonial revival, they made connections with their British counterparts who were engaged in similar undertakings in England, Scotland, and Wales. Primarily through letter writing and news exchange, revival promoters on both sides of the Atlantic bore witness to a transatlantic awakening that they compared to the Protestant Reformation. People like Thomas Prince in Boston, James Robe in Edinburgh, William McCullough in Cambuslang, and John Lewis in London compiled accounts of local and regional revivals in their own countries, published them alongside reports of awakenings in other countries, and circulated them among subscribers throughout the Anglo-American world. These revival magazines all bore witness to a single Work of God. And each sounded the same theme: progress. The message they wished to convey was that something big was on the move and that God was behind it.

The transatlantic revival reflected a geographic pattern similar to that in America. While revival activity occurred throughout the British Atlantic, its distribution was uneven, following distinctive regional patterns. Viewed together, table 5.1, showing British revival centers, and table 1.1, depicting American revival centers, reveal the revival's transatlantic scope. They also indicate its regional character on both sides of the Atlantic. Though itinerants traveled the length and breadth of Britain and America, the awakening was particularly intense in certain regions while barely discernible in others. Communities reporting revival clustered around regional epicenters from which revivalists promoted awakenings in surrounding cities and towns.

When the historian focuses on a single country, the revival appears much more regional than national. In each nation the revival emanated from one or more centers where it burned brightest: London and Bristol in England; Trevecca in Wales; Cambuslang and Kilsyth in Scotland; Boston and Northampton in New England, and Neshaminy, Pennsylvania in the Middle Colonies. Although similar activities occurred sporadically elsewhere, awakenings flourished, and revival narratives were inspired,

TABLE 5.1

Revival Geography: Britain, 1739-1745

Place-Names Prominent in the Great Awakening Distributed by Revival Center

Regional Revival Center	Town or City	No. within Region	Pct. of Total within Region
England		40	41.2
London	Basingstoke, Bedford, Bexley, Bishop Stortford, Blackheath, Blendon, Broad-Oaks, Chatham, Deptford, Dulwich, Gravesend, Hertford, Lewisham, London, Northampton, Olney, Oxford, Saffron Walden, St. Albans, Thaxted, Windsor	21	21.6
Bristol	Abingdon, Bath, Bristol, Chafford, Cheltenham, Cirencester, Coleford, Evesham, Gloucester, Hampton Common, Keynsham, Kingswood, New Passage, Old Passage, Painswick, Pershore, Randwick, Salisbury, Stroud, Thornbury	19	19.6
Rest of England	None	0	0.0
Wales		10	10.3
Trevecca	Abergavenny, Caerleon, Cardiff, Chepstow, Comihoy, Newport, Pontypool, Treleck, Trevecca, Usk	10	10.3
Rest of Wales	None	0	0.0
Scotland		47	48.4
Cambuslang and Kilsyth	Aberdeen, Auchterarder, Badernoch, Biggar, Bothwell, Caithness, Calder, Cambuslang, Campsie, Carnoch, Coldingham, Craigannatt, Crief, Cumbernauld, Denny, Dundaff, Dundee, Dunnipace, Edinburgh, Fife, Gargunnoch, Glasgow, Irvine, Kilcarn, Kilmarnoch, Kilsyth, Kippen, Kirkintilloch, Larbert, Lang Dregborn, Lochbroom, Monyard, Murray, Muthel, Nairn, Nigg, Queen's-Ferry, Ross, Ross-keen, Ross-marky, Rosshire, Sintrie, Southerland, St. Ninians, Torphican, Torryburne	46	47.4
Rest of Scotland	Aberdeen	1	1.0
Total		97	100%^a

Sources: Place-names are cited in the two works that best describe the geographic sweep of the revival in Britain, from the perspective of American revivalists: the *Christian History* and *Whitefield's Journals*.

^a Sum of percentages is less than 100 because of rounding.

within a fifty-mile radius of each center.¹ In most cases, each node included a city with sufficient population to support mass evangelism and a print trade that supplied a steady stream of pamphlets and books, as well as newspaper and magazine reports.

The revival's regional pattern raises questions, particularly that of why it was fruitful in some regions and barren in others. Territories outside the clusters barely experienced an awakening at all. English districts beyond the London and Bristol centers were largely untouched by the Whitefieldian revival. A survey of place-names in the Grand Itinerant's *Journals* indicates that he spent little time in the Midlands and the north of England, and newspapers in those regions hardly noted his existence. Those areas of Scotland, Wales, and the American South where the Church of England was strongest managed to turn aside the evangelicals' incursions. Generally, the awakening flourished where dissenters were most influential, and where a revival tradition existed, and faltered where dissenters were weak and no revival tradition fueled expectations.

Besides following a regional geographic pattern, the Anglo-American revivals also reflected regional timetables. In England, the awakening reached its peak in the spring and summer of 1739 as Whitefield and Wesley crisscrossed the district between London and Bristol preaching to enormous crowds and experimented with innovative means of perfecting mass evangelism. Led by Howell Harris, Griffith Jones, and Daniel Rowlands, the revival flourished in Wales at the same time. Whitefield's Philadelphia arrival in October 1739 triggered a revival in the Middle Colonies, and his disembarkation at Newport, Rhode Island, a year later touched off a general awakening in New England. The Scottish revivals, centered at Cambuslang and Kilsyth, reached their peaks in 1742. Table 5.2 provides a revival timetable.

The chronology reveals a notable paucity of temporal interregional overlappings. In America, three years elapsed between the end of the Northampton awakening in 1736 and the beginning of the Whitefieldian revival in 1739. John Wesley and other members of his Oxford society benefited greatly from reading Edwards's *Faithful Narrative*, but when the evangelical revival flourished in England during 1739, there was little evidence that the awakenings had sparked similar stirrings in the colonies before Whitefield's arrival. Then, when the revival spread in America between 1740 and 1742, it waned in England. The strongest temporal connection was that between the Scottish and New England awakenings; the two areas exchanged encouraging news throughout 1742 and 1743.

TABLE 5.2
Revival Timetable, 1735-1745

	England	Wales	America	Scotland
1735			X	
1736			X	
1737	X	X		
1738	X	X		
1739	X	X	X	
1740			X	
1741			X	
1742			X	X
1743			X	X
1744			X	
1745			X	

Although occurring at different times, the various regional revivals manifested similar sequences of events. The revivalists' metaphor of "awakening" is useful in illustrating developmental stages. In each case there was an initial "stirring" from what evangelicals called a deep spiritual sleep. The "surprising Work of God" in Northampton in 1734-1735 was such a preliminary event. At the same time a similar yet unrelated revival in Freehold, New Jersey, prepared the way for the more extensive awakening that would arrive in that region in 1739. After an initial stirring came a full-blown "awakening" when preaching and printing reached their greatest intensity, and crowds and conversions swelled to their highest numbers. But, as opponents were quick to point out, revivals were short-lived, and as many revivalist pastors lamented, congregations returned to spiritual drowsiness as the special season of grace subsided, and even promoters referred to it as the "late revival." Whitefield explained declension as a natural part of revivalism. Returning to New England in 1744, he found that many who had been awakened under his preaching three years earlier had returned to their former ways. "Some were savingly converted," he wrote in his *Journals*, but "the greater part, as is customary in general awakening, many lost their impressions and have fallen off."²

Despite its uneven geographic pattern and asynchronous develop-

ment, the transatlantic revival was, to its promoters and followers, a single mighty work of God. And while skeptics and critics, then as now, questioned both its extensiveness and its divine inspiration, revivalists celebrated and publicized a movement they saw as sweeping across the world. Revival publications reflected a growing sense of the awakening as something on the march and something global.

William Cooper understood the importance of revivalists' interpreting events as a global revival and not merely a series of widely scattered awakenings. He was, therefore, one of the first to call for a unified account of the revival:

I can't help expressing my wish, that those who have been conversant in this work, in one place and another, would transmit accounts of it to such a hand as the reverend author of this discourse, [Jonathan Edwards], to be compiled into a narrative like that of the conversions at Northampton which was published a few years ago: that so the world may know this surprising dispensation, in the beginning, progress, and various circumstances of it.³

In other words, Cooper called for a publication that would document and publicize the transatlantic revival as Edwards's *Faithful Narrative* had done for the local Northampton awakening.

To Cooper, an account of the global revival would serve two purposes. First, if published while the awakening continued to spread in Anglo-America, it would be a vehicle for promoting revival. He hoped that news of revival success would convince men and women that God's spirit was indeed unusually effusive, extending far beyond individual towns. Second, a complete revival narrative would become an important volume in salvation history. "I can't but think it would be one of the most useful pieces of church history the people of God are blessed with. Perhaps it would come the nearest to *the Acts of the Apostles* of anything extant; and all the histories in the world do not come up to that: there we have something as surprising, as in the *Book of Genesis*; and a new creation, of another kind, seems to open to our view."⁴ Thomas Prince and others provided that new creation, the revival magazine, and John Gillies added a revival history. This chapter explores those "new creations," which transmitted the invention to contemporaries and historians alike.

BRITISH-AMERICAN REVIVAL NETWORKS

A survey of the evidence available to John Gillies in 1754 when he compiled his history of the eighteenth-century revival indicates that to

a large extent the transatlantic revival was a cultural invention. His documents included 23 published revival narratives from American towns: 13 from Massachusetts, 3 from Connecticut, 1 from Rhode Island, 1 from New Hampshire, 4 from New Jersey, and 1 from Pennsylvania. In addition, he had a lengthy letter written by Samuel Morris describing the beginning of a revival in western Virginia. He possessed no narratives or accounts of revivals from New York, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The revival as reported had occurred in a few "burnt over districts" (regions that had experienced previous awakenings): New England, especially the Connecticut Valley, and parts of New Jersey and Pennsylvania surrounding the evangelistic Log College. In Virginia, the revival, which began a decade after it had waned in the northern colonies, was confined to five frontier counties, bypassing the more populous Tidewater despite Whitefield's preaching there. Nevertheless, Gillies assembled all the accounts under a heading suggesting a much more extensive revival: "THAT EXTRAORDINARY REVIVAL IN THE BRITISH COLONIES IN AMERICA."⁵

Gillies had even less to work with from Britain. In Scotland, he had two revival narratives, one from Cambuslang and the other from Kilsyth. And in England and Wales, he had no published accounts of local awakenings. He relied on the journals of John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Howell Harris. Whitefield's, in particular, were highly self-promotional. When he revised his *Journals* in 1756, Whitefield explained that problems with earlier editions warranted a new publication. In prefatory comments, he acknowledged mistakes caused by youthful exuberance and recommended the new version to readers as one "in which thou wilt find many mistakes rectified; many passages that were justly exceptionable, erased; and the whole abridged."⁶

For the vast majority of evangelical men and women who never crossed the Atlantic in the mid-1740s, letters were the principal means of becoming part of a revival reaching beyond the local parish. While evangelicals had a long and rich epistolary tradition, revival promoters turned that heritage into a powerful means of creating a sense of community. Indeed, letters enabled revivalists to make the awakening "extensive" by linking scattered awakenings into a whole. Transatlantic connections among revival centers were an intrinsic feature in the evangelical culture, encompassing lay men and women as well as ministers. Worship services abounded in reminders that the great awakening spanned the entire British Atlantic. Hymns were commissioned especially for occasions set aside for sharing revival news from home and abroad. At the close of

one service held in the London Tabernacle "to celebrate the latest news of religious revival," the congregation sang:

Great things in England, Wales and Scotland wrought,
And in America to pass are brought,
Awaken'd souls, warn'd of the wrath to come
In Numbers flee to Jesus as their Home. . . .
What is this News, that flies throughout our Land?⁷

To stay abreast of the revival's progress in distant parts, the Tabernacle's congregation gathered periodically on what were designated Letter Days. Historian Susan O'Brien has described the services, which often lasted for several hours. The assembly "usually began with an exhortation followed by a reading of letters, each of which might be concluded by communal singing of a specially written verse. Another exhortation and prayer rounded off the service." The letters read were of two types. One was the personal letter in which revivalists exchanged revival news. The other was an epistle written for the purpose of being read aloud to an audience. Whitefield periodically wrote a summary account of his American ministry and forwarded it to Howell Harris, who was in charge of the Tabernacle in his absence.⁸

Listening to the letters admitted men and women to the transatlantic community of faith. Nineteen-year-old Elizabeth Jackson of Cambuslang, Scotland, voiced what many thought as they heard ministers read news from revival centers. At one service she "heard Mr. M'cullough [pastor] read some papers concerning the spread of the gospel in foreign parts, which moved [her] greatly." The letters aided Elizabeth in her own search for the new birth, "especially on observing how much good others were getting."⁹ After reading accounts of the New England revival, John Willison, a Scottish minister who assisted in the Cambuslang revival, commented on how shared letters contributed toward a common bond. He exulted in "seeing the extraordinary Work there [New England] at present (tho' several Thousands of Miles distant from Scotland) is of the same Kind with that at Cambuslang and other Places about." He noted that American and Scottish audiences responded to revival preaching in similar ways: "there were the very same Appearances accompanying such an Effusion of the Holy Spirit in some of our American Colonies."¹⁰

The creation of a global revival occurred in a shrinking Atlantic world. During the fifty years prior to the Whitefieldian revival, transatlantic communications had undergone revolutionary changes. The process

began in the British commercial and political capital of London. From 1662 to 1695, the Licensing Act had limited to twenty the number of master printers allowed in England. Imposed during the Restoration, the regulation represented a reassertion of executive authority over the presses in an effort to curb the "franker and fuller discussion of political events" of the 1640s. The only official newspaper in the last third of the seventeenth century was the *London Gazette*, although several "very popular manuscript newsletters" provided some competition. The lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 opened the floodgates of print in London. Ian Steele described the magnitude of the expansion: "Within days of the expiry of the law, five new newspapers appeared in London. . . . By 1704 there were some 70 printing houses in and around London, and the city had 9 newspapers (including the world's first daily) issuing 27 editions a week. Within another five years there were 55 editions a week of some 19 London papers, almost all of them privately sponsored and presenting some political bias."¹¹ By the beginning of the evangelical revival in the late 1730s, London printers published approximately 200 more newspapers, magazines, and reviews. In addition to a dramatic increase in their number, the variety of journals increased. While many continued to focus primarily on news, foreign and domestic, others specialized in literature, religion, commerce, theater, history, gardening, etiquette and entertaining, gossip, love and romance, medicine, and law.¹²

The Anglo-American print trade capitalized on the revival's popularity, further illustrating and contributing to its transatlantic scope. Printers on both sides of the Atlantic circulated hundreds of books and pamphlets about the awakening. The monthly "Register of Books" published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* provides some idea of the print trade's interest in works for and against the revival. Table 5.3 shows the total number of new releases featured each month during 1739, when the English phase of the evangelical awakening was at its height. While not a reflection of the English press's entire production nor even a random sample, the lists give some notion of what the editors believed would appeal to their "polite" or "gentlemanly" readership. It certainly shows that the revival received much attention in summer and early fall but waned after Whitefield's departure for America.

Presses published and circulated a variety of revival writings that revivalists eagerly purchased. In her content analysis of the revival publishing network, O'Brien has identified two types of materials: sermons/essays and revival news. Sermons included both exhortatory discourses, such

TABLE 5.3
Revival-Related Publications in England, 1739

Month	Total Titles	Revival Publications	%
Jan.	43	3	6.9
Feb.	54	4	7.4
Mar.	63	0	0
Apr.	56	1	1.7
May	48	2	4.1
June	56	11	19.6
July	51	4	7.8
Aug.	37	10	27.0
Sept.	45	6	13.3
Oct.	32	5	15.6
Nov.	42	1	2.3
Dec.	35	0	0

Source: Data compiled from each issue of *Gentlemen's Magazine* for 1739.

as Samuel Finley's *Christ Triumphant*, and theological treatises, such as Jonathan Edwards's *Religious Affections*. While most exegetical sermons circulated in regional markets, some enjoyed transatlantic exposure. For example, Finley's *Christ Triumphant* and Benjamin Colman's *Souls Flying to Jesus Christ* were originally published in the colonies. The Methodist publisher in London Samuel Mason reprinted both works and then sent fifty copies of each to his Edinburgh bookseller.¹³

Polemical works abounded in the evangelical publishing network. Sometimes they appeared as sermons, sometimes as open letters. In all cases they were intended to counter opponents' "misconstructions" of the revivals. James Robe of Scotland wrote to Jonathan Edwards of antirevivalist literature, originated in New England and circulated in Scotland: "the most unseasonable accounts from America, the most scurrilous and bitter pamphlets, and representations from mistaking brethren, were much and zealously propagated."¹⁴

Sermons and essays, however, were not the most widely disseminated and read revival literature. That honor belonged to revival news. The reportage of the awakening consisted of "individual testimony, revival

narrative, mission journals, printed correspondence, and evangelical magazines."¹⁵ One example will illustrate how news heartened revivalists on each side of the Atlantic. American promoters of the awakening sent copies of the *Christian History* to their counterparts in Britain. One recipient was the distinguished dissenter Isaac Watts. In a letter to William Shurtleff of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Watts referred to "the Papers which relate to these Matters [i.e., the revival], and have been written in New-England." He added that he took "Pleasure to see and read" about the gospel's success in the colonies. Watts concluded with his opinion that throughout the world "the Work of our Lord Jesus Christ [is] making some Steps toward his glorious Kingdom."¹⁶ Because Watts's letter was published in the colonies, it became a news item for American revivalists. Its appearance in the midst of the ministerial debate between supporters and opposers going on in Boston gave hope to awakeners, who regarded it as a ringing endorsement from an eminent observer viewing developments from afar.

With the *Weekly History* and other evangelical magazines, a publishing network operated alongside the letter-writing network to create a truly transatlantic audience. (See table 5.4 for revival magazines.) Nicholas Gilman, pastor of Durham in New Hampshire, provides one of the best glimpses of how the new periodicals, plus newspapers, kept revivalists informed of distant revival events. Through reading the *Boston Gazette*, Gilman, though living on the periphery of the British Empire, followed the progress of awakenings first in the Middle Colonies and then in New England. In her analysis of Gilman's reading, Susan O'Brien noted that "in January 1740 alone he read George Whitefield's *Journal, Life, Nine Sermons, Answer to the Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter, and Account of the Rise of the Methodists at Oxford*." Then, in 1742, when the center of revival activity shifted to Scotland, Gilman kept abreast of the Cambuslang and Kilsyth awakenings through the *Glasgow Weekly History*. In 1743, he acquainted himself with "detailed accounts of awakenings throughout the revival world" by reading copies of the Boston *Christian History* and the Edinburgh *Christian Monthly History*.¹⁷

Gilman's experience of following a remote revival through the publication network mirrored that of his counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic residing on Britain's perimeter. Henry Davidson, pastor at Galashiels, Scotland, labeled himself an "omne-gatherum of pamphlets." In *Letters to Christian Friends* he described how he kept himself and others in touch with the latest events in America and England as well as Scotland, despite the fact that he was impoverished and isolated.¹⁸

TABLE 5.4
Revival Magazines

London

The Christian Amusement containing Letters Concerning the Progress of the Gospel both at Home and Abroad etc. Together with an Account of the Waldenses and Albigenses. . . . Published by John Lewis, Sept. 1740–Mar. 1741.

The Weekly History: Or, An Account of the Most Remarkable Particulars Relating to the Present Progress of the Gospel. By the Encouragement of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. Published by John Lewis, Ap. 1741–Nov. 1742.

An Account of the Most Remarkable Particulars Relating to the Present Progress of the Gospel. Published by John Lewis, autumn 1742–autumn 1743.

The Christian History or General Account of the Progress of the Gospel in England, Wales, Scotland and America, as far as the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, His Fellow Labourers and Assistants are concerned. Published by John Lewis, Autumn 1743–1748.

Glasgow

The Glasgow-Weekly-History Relating to the Late Progress of the Gospel at Home and Abroad; Being a Collection of Letters partly reprinted from the London-Weekly-History. . . . Published by William McCullough, Dec. 1741–Dec. 1742.

Edinburgh

The Christian Monthly History or an Account of the Revival and Progress of Religion Abroad and at Home. Published by James Robe, Nov. 1743–Jan. 1746.

Boston

The Christian History, Containing Accounts of the Revival and Propagation of Religion in Great Britain and America. Published by Thomas Prince, Mar. 1743–Feb. 1745.

Source: Durden [O'Brien], "A Study of the First Evangelical Magazines," 257–258.

A closer examination of revivalists' libraries reveals three main types of print material available: revival news, such as that Gilman found in magazines and newspapers, sermons, letters, journals generated in the course of the current revival, and "works from the past in the Reformed and Puritan traditions." For example, Gilman read, along with revival narratives and newly written sermons, works of earlier divines John Flavel, Matthew Henry, Joseph Alleine, Thomas Shepard, William Law, Richard Baxter, and Solomon Stoddard. Booksellers like William McCrea of White Clay Creek in Pennsylvania sold seventeenth-century works such as John Bunyan's *Two Covenants*, Baxter's *A Call to the Unconverted*, and Alleine's *Alarme to the Unconverted*. Ministers testified to the role of the older works in awakening men and women. Samuel Davies reported that in Virginia, "Such were awakened, as they told me, either by their own serious reflections . . . or on reading some authors of the last century,

such as Boston, Baxter, Flavel, Bunyan etc, and they often wondered if there were such doctrines taught anywhere in the world at present as they found in the writings of these great good men." Colonial printers were quick in responding to the demand for erstwhile best-sellers. Thomas Prince noted in his account of the Boston awakening that "the People seemed to have a renewed Taste for those old Pious and Experimental writers: Mr. Hooker, Mr. Shepard, Guthrie, Alleine. . . . The evangelical writings of these deceased Authors, as well as of others alive, both in England, Scotland, and New England, [are] now read with singular Pleasure: some of them reprinted and in great numbers quickly bought and studied."¹⁹

In addition to publicizing revival events, printers published and sold scores of sermons, letters, and journals written by revivalists. Consider the Philadelphia print trade. Both Benjamin Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette* and Andrew Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury* provided extensive coverage of Whitefield, Tennent, and other awakeners. Franklin also advertised for sale such current works as Samuel Blair's attack against antirevivalists, Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, Samuel Finley's sermons, and William Seward's *Journal*.²⁰ While Franklin concentrated on publishing new works, his rival, Andrew Bradford, shipped reprints of older works to his customers. For instance, in 1743 William McCrea, a White Clay Creek (Pennsylvania) shopkeeper ordered "30 copies of Bunyan on Two Covenants, 2 dozen 'Sincere Converts,' 11 Alarmer's, 8 Baxter's Call," and "many other seventeenth-century works as well as contemporary works by Edwards, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, John Willison, and Charles Chauncy."²¹

The strongest cross-cultural link established by the revivalist publishing network was that between New England and Scotland. Thomas Prince and James Robe exchanged revival narratives to reprint in each other's revival magazines. And New England and Scottish newspapers carried full coverage of the awakenings on both sides of the Atlantic. Middle Colony revivalists also stayed abreast of religious events in Scotland. Gilbert Tennent and other Log College preachers included Scots among the "witnesses [God raised up] in diverse Parts of the World to appear for his Cause by publick Attestations and Defences." They cited Robe for his *Narrative* and Alexander Webster for his *Divine Influence: The True Spring of the Extraordinary Work at Cambuslang and other Parts of the West of Scotland*.²² Accounts of a work similar to that in New Jersey and Pennsylvania authenticated the revival they had witnessed, and strengthened the ministers' view that they were participating in an unusual and widespread showering of God's grace.

Reprints of revival publications provided a direct connection between New England and Scotland. In 1740 Kneeland and Green published an edition of Daniel Campbell's *Sacramental Meditations on the Sufferings and Death of Christ*. A minister in Kilmichael, Campbell first published the work in 1698 in an effort to "codify the practice of piety that accompanied the sacramental occasions," or Holy Fairs, frequently held by Scottish evangelicals. His intention was to prepare men and women by encouraging them in self-examination and reflection.²³ He wanted his readers "to see the Love of Christ that endured such Torments for our Redemption," hoping in the process "to excite our Faith." Writing for a broad audience, Campbell opted to craft a book wherein "the Stile is plain, and the Method obvious."²⁴ American revivalists thought that New Englanders could benefit from a work that had for decades helped Scottish evangelicals prepare for a special season of God's grace. Like Campbell, they hoped that the volume would enable people to attend services with "a Heart-Melting Frame of Spirit."²⁵

James Robe, Alexander Webster, and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine were other Scottish evangelicals whose works found a receptive market in America. In 1742, Andrew Bradford published Robe's revival magazine, *A Short Narrative of the Extraordinary Work at Cambuslang in Scotland*. Samuel Kneeland and Timothy Green of Boston quickly reprinted it for the New England market. Kneeland and Green also republished Alexander Webster's defense of the Scottish revivals, *Divine Influence: The True Spring of the Extraordinary Work at Cambuslang*. American revivalists welcomed Webster's apology as part of their armament in warding off attacks by opponents. In addition to reading a collection of his sermons, colonial revivalists made Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets* a best-seller. Franklin introduced the Dunfermline minister's popular collection of spiritual songs in a 1742 Philadelphia edition. Reprints appeared in Boston and Philadelphia in 1743, 1745, and 1749. In a 1743 letter to Robe, Jonathan Edwards reported that Scottish revivalists' "writings, especially Mr. Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, have been in great repute among God's people here."²⁶

Scots were eager readers of American revivalists. Jonathan Edwards was arguably their favorite writer. Two reprints of his *Faithful Narrative* appeared in Edinburgh, the first in 1737 and the second the following year. Within the first year of Edwards's *The Distinguishing Marks*, printers in both Glasgow and Edinburgh issued editions. And *Some Thoughts Concerning the Revival* appeared in Edinburgh a year after its first issuance in Boston. Scottish revivalist John Erskine cited, as evidence that the revivals in western Scotland were authentic, reports from elsewhere.

"The Seriousness and Fervency that appears in the Writings of many in that Part of the World [America]," he wrote in 1742, "with the Accounts of their Assiduity and Success, published in the *Weekly Histories* and elsewhere, more than confirm what is here asserted." He interpreted the wide scope of the awakening as fulfilling biblical prophecy of a great outpouring of God's Spirit. As evidence of the revival's great extent, he cited narratives of the Work in America, "whence [we] . . . find that in *America* the Down-pouring of the Spirit is more or less in the several Provinces that measure many Hundred Miles on the Continent; has entered and spread in some of the most populous Towns, the chief Seats of Concourse and Business, and visited their principal Seats of Learning; and in some Places, particularly Boston, Thousands in one Winter were under serious Impressions." The revival's success abroad gave Erskine hope that it would continue to "spread from Kingdom to Kingdom."²⁷

In 1744, some Scots recommended that evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic establish a more formal spiritual community through what they called a "Concert for Prayer." The design was that revivalists in Britain and America would join in prayer "relating to stated times for such exercises; so far as this would not interfere with other duties: particularly a part of Saturday evening, and Sabbath morning every week; and more solemnly of some one of the first days of each of the four great divisions of the year." By appointing a specific prayer time, revivalists would be conscious of a wider "imagined community" all joining in the same activity for the same purpose.²⁸

The proposal met with favor in New England, where Jonathan Edwards had made a similar proposal in his work *An humble Attempt to promote explicite Agreement, and visible Union of God's People in extraordinary Prayer*. In a preface by such leading American revivalists as Sewall, Prince, Webb, Foxcroft, and Gee, hope for global revival found expression: "this design we cannot but recommend to all who desire the coming of that blissful kingdom, in its promised extent and glory, in this wretched world."²⁹

The Concert was short-lived. One American commentator on its last days recognized that the key to the success of any transatlantic promotion was news of success. Only if participants on both sides of the ocean continued reporting that the awakening proceeded from triumph to triumph could any cooperative effort persist. A New England pastor expressed his hopes and misgivings regarding the Concert in a letter to his Scottish correspondent, dated May 23, 1749. "'Tis matter of great thankfulness and joy," he wrote, "that God puts it into the hearts of so many, in various parts, to unite in extraordinary prayer for the coming

of Christ's kingdom: and surely it is a thing that bodes well." Commenting on the specific kind of news that would inspire Americans, he continued, "It would tend to cause this concert to prevail much more here, if we could hear that it was greatly spreading and prevailing on your side of the Atlantick, where it was first begun, and from whence it was first proposed to us." But, he cautioned, "On the contrary, it will undoubtedly be a discouragement to people here, if they hear that the matter decays and languishes, or is come to a stand."³⁰

Although not as strong as the New England-Scotland connection, revivalist ties were solid between American promoters and their English counterparts. While traveling with Whitefield in the colonies, William Seward had corresponded with Samuel Mason, a leading publisher of early Methodism in London. Among other things, Mason was the "Friend in London" to whom Whitefield addressed his attack on Archbishop Tillotson. Seward copied that letter and sent it to Mason for publication in England.³¹ In 1741, Benjamin Colman sent Mason a copy of his sermon *Souls Flying to Jesus Christ* and included a preface written especially to inform English supporters of the revival of the "great and remarkable success" of the American awakening.³²

REVIVAL MAGAZINES: "THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND, AND AMERICA"

When William Cooper called for a revival magazine, he spoke for many who sought an efficient, dedicated vehicle for circulating revival successes and strategies. Revival magazines would serve a dual purpose. First, they could publicize local and regional awakenings to evangelicals in distant lands and, thus, become instruments in the revival's spread. Second, their cumulative issues would constitute a history of the revival and situate it within a larger, older tradition. Revival magazines fulfilled their advocates' desires. They were indeed vehicles for promoting revivals as they occurred, and means for inventing an interpretation of global awakening. Subsequent histories have relied heavily on the periodicals, largely accepting the notion therein of an extensive revival that spread throughout Anglo-America.

The first magazine, the *Christian's Amusement* (1740), was a miscellany of past and present struggles to spread the gospel. (For a list of revival magazines, see table 5.3 above.) It contained letters and comments on the theological breach between Whitefield and Wesley over the doctrine

of Free Grace. In addition, it reprinted letters from various ministers reporting on revival activity in America, England, and Wales. John Lewis also provided exhortations to piety, including a series of his own creation entitled "A History of the Waldenses and Albigens." His purpose was to draw "parallels between persecuted medieval Christians and contemporary Methodists."³³ Poems, hymns, sermon extracts, editorial notes, and advertisements rounded out the periodical's contents.

Despite Lewis's aim to focus on the breadth and unity of Methodism, his magazine acquired a marked parochial and partisan quality. An examination of advertisements reflects social separation, as only persons plying humble trades accepted Lewis's offer of free publicity, including "plumbers, chandlers, tailors, seamstresses, a razor-maker, a glove-washer, a watch-mender." Lewis made free advertising available because he assumed that polite society would not patronize those declared for Methodism. "I shall be willing to advertise for any brother or sister, in this Paper, gratis," he announced, "for if you do but begin to be in earnest about Religion, you will soon find the frowns of an ill natur'd world. And some have lost their Bread for conscience sake."³⁴

Unfortunately, the magazine's first issue coincided with the Whitefield-Wesley rift over predestination. "Despite Lewis's proposal to promote peace and charity as much as possible," Susan O'Brien observed, "the paper was clearly anti-Arminian and may have aided the delineation of parties."³⁵ As Lewis selected letters for reprinting in the *Amusement*, he sided more and more with Whitefield, making increasingly difficult his objective of promoting "unity & brotherly love between the followers of Wesley and Whitefield." A typical partisan selection came from Howell Harris, who stated that "our Brother J. W. is not yet enlightened to see God's Electing Love." He added that until Wesley received sufficient light to embrace the doctrine of Election, "let him not oppose it."³⁶

In addition to theological partisanship, Lewis's growing financial difficulties lent a negative tone to his prominent editorial voice. From the outset, he expressed his concern over the magazine's financial performance. He told one well-wisher that the project had suffered from "want of money," and that he had been "a considerable loser by this paper" from the start.³⁷ His frustrations found expression in the magazine itself as he blamed his woes on a conspiratorial world. "Both Hell and Earth have conspir'd against it [the paper] for if the Common Hawkers are asked for it, some of them do tell their customers that I will not sell it to the Hawkers. . . . And the Printers of News will not advertise this Paper."³⁸ On the edge of despair in the winter of 1741, he eagerly awaited

the arrival of "Mr. Whitefield amongst us, in hopes that he will both advise and assist me therein."³⁹

When Whitefield returned to England after an eighteen-month absence, he found that his base of support had dwindled. Some followers had defected to Wesley, others to the Moravians. Along with the latter went his principal London publisher, James Hutton. At a time when he needed a means of communicating and propagating his brand of the revival, differentiating it from that of competitors, Whitefield found himself without his chief printer. The nearly bankrupt Lewis and his moribund magazine suddenly attracted renewed interest. Whitefield decided to assume editorial control over the *Christian's Amusement* and turn it into an exclusive organ for his revival program.

He first determined to change the paper's tone and format. Whitefield opted not to emphasize problems as Lewis had. Instead he focused on the revival's success and the "progress of the Gospel." According to O'Brien, "the paper became more concerned with successes and with creating a feeling of strength among its members than with displaying any weaknesses." She added that the new "note sounded was optimistic, even ecstatic at times."⁴⁰

While the *Christian's Amusement* had contained a few letters describing the revival's progress, the new version, renamed the *Weekly History*, made letters its principal genre. Whitefield had long favored the reprinting of letters praising the revival. While preaching in America, he sent London printer Samuel Mason a packet of letters with instructions: "If some Passages of the Letters were extracted and inserted in the *Daily Advertiser* it might comfort and rejoice God's people."⁴¹ Now he would provide Lewis with a steady supply of epistles from revivalists in England, Scotland, and America. During its twenty-month existence, the *Weekly History* published a total of 232 separate pieces, 198 (85 percent) of them letters. The letters' authors divide into three approximately equal groups: anonymous reporters of local revivals, Whitefield and his closest associates, and more than thirty other writers who wrote one or two apiece. The other 15 percent of the entries fall into two categories: approximately half were nonepistolary reports of awakenings, and the other half were miscellaneous writings including hymns, poems, sermons, and book extracts. Reportage from America arrived primarily in the form of newspaper reprints, while that from England and Scotland consisted of specially written accounts sent directly to Lewis for publication.

Lewis and Whitefield solicited regular reports from itinerant evangelists, and the accounts' positive tone reflected that of the editors.

Whitefield established an ebullient pitch in his frequent letters in the magazine. "This Afternoon we arrived here in the Fullness of the Blazing of the Gospel of Peace," he wrote from Scotland in June 1742. "It would have melted your dear Heart, as it did mine," he continued with unabashed self-promotion, "to see the People run after me with Tears of Joy, blessing God that I was come. Wonderful Things are indeed doing here. The Work of God breaks out in fresh Places."⁴² Others imitated his effusive style. Reporting on the Scottish revival in spring 1742, one writer noted, "Since I wrote the inclos'd [referring to a printed piece], more Accounts of Zion's King riding on the White Horse of the Gospel making a triumphant Conquest of many to the Obedience of his Will have come to my knowledge."⁴³

Lewis also solicited letters from America, giving the *Weekly History* a transatlantic flavor. In spring 1741, a letter from Gilbert Tennent presented readers with a glowing account of the revival's progress in the colonies. Referring to his New England itinerancy, Tennent reported that he had "met with Success much exceeding my Expectations," adding that "multitudes were awakened." He then surveyed in a summary and rather formulaic way accounts from other itinerants: "My Brother William has had remarkable Success this Winter at Burlington [New Jersey]. . . . Mr. John Cross has had remarkable Success at Stratten [*sic*] Island. . . . Mr. Mills has had remarkable Success in Connecticut. . . . Mr. [Samuel] Blair has had remarkable Success in Pennsylvania."⁴⁴

Lewis and Whitefield filled the *Weekly History* with colorful anecdotes that illustrated how God worked through ordinary human instruments to do extraordinary things. A typical account came from New England. A Boston gentleman, it was reported, stumbled upon his slave one day preaching to an empty room in the style of George Whitefield. Amused at the performance, the slaveholder, who was also an antirevivalist, decided to take advantage of his servant's talents. The next day, the gentleman hosted a dinner and afterwards announced with glee, "I'll entertain you with Mr. Whitefield's preaching; for my Negroe can preach as well as he." Supplying his friends with pipes and glasses all around, he instructed his slave to mount a stool in the center of the room and preach as he had the day before. As he began, the company laughed heartily, but when he warned against blaspheming the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the necessity of a new birth, "the Negro spoke with such Authority that struck the Gentlemen to Heart." To their host's dismay, the men began to listen intently, and many, as a result of that day's "entertainment," became "pious sober Men."⁴⁵

The editor of the *Weekly History* also solicited and reprinted conversion narratives that informed readers of the success of the gospel in individual lives. In one of the magazine's early issues, Lewis published a letter urging readers to submit accounts of their New Births. "I would every [Reader]," the plea began, "for the general good of the Christian Republic, to send you an Account of what they have experienced of the Work of God upon their Souls." The letter-writer urged men and women to lay aside fears of writing for publication and to speak from their hearts. He proposed a format: "The best way . . . is for every person simply to write what he *once was* in a state of nature, how and by what means he came to have the drawings of light and grace upon his soul, and how it has been with him since this time."⁴⁶ By including testimonials from throughout the Anglo-American world, the editors suggested that the revival was extensive. And by showing similarity in vocabulary and style, they indicated that the conversions were all of the same origin and nature—that is, genuine rebirths.

Typical of the conversion narratives Lewis published was one by a nine-year-old English girl. In a letter addressed to Whitefield, she informed the evangelist that she had "read one of your Journals, and afterward some Sermons of yours we had got from London." Though but a child she spoke of being a wicked person before her new birth. But, through reflecting on what she read and applying the ideas to her own life, she related triumphantly that she had experienced a "Change of Heart."⁴⁷ Evangelical pastors on both sides of the Atlantic supplied Lewis with scores of similar narratives. William McCullough, pastor at Cambuslang, Scotland, solicited conversion accounts from his parishioners, which he forwarded to the *Weekly History* and other revival magazines for publication.

Lewis's initiative inspired the publication of similar magazines in Scotland. When William McCullough of Cambuslang began the *Glasgow Weekly History* in December 1741, he borrowed heavily from Lewis's periodical. With more than thirty issues of the London magazine in print, McCullough had a great deal of material to glean. The format was epistolary, and the source of letters reflected the magazine's transatlantic character. During its first six months, roughly one-quarter of the items came from England, about one-half from America, and the remaining quarter from Scotland. When revival broke out in May 1742, in part because of the *Glasgow Weekly History*, Cambuslang supplied most of the material. However, McCullough continued to show readers how events in Scotland connected with those in New England, "facilitated by

theological similarities, and more practically by trade and educational links."⁴⁸

In 1743, James Robe of Kilsyth began publishing Scotland's second revival magazine. While McCullough's periodical had been a "miscellany of contemporary materials ranging from Holland, Wales, England and New England," Robe's provided more historical assessment of the revival. He cited three purposes for publishing another revival magazine. First, he intended it as a history: "Hereby God's wonderful dealings with His Church in this Age shall be propagated to many Ages to come." Second, he sought to encourage a sense of "community of sincere Christians in present times," noting that the periodical was a "choice Means to promote the Communion of Saints upon the Earth." Third, Robe, like so many other revivalists, viewed his magazine as a promotional tool. He hoped that "the good news of a great and effectual door being opened up to the Lord's servant, in any part of the Christian Churches, will excite all who make mention of the name of the Lord to strive . . . That a Door of Utterance may be given to them." Robe, like editors of similar magazines, hoped that it would "make serious Impressions and awaken a concern upon Careless and secure sinners."⁴⁹

Upon learning of spreading New England revivals that bore striking similarities to the ones in Scotland, Robe wrote Jonathan Edwards, urging him to write another narrative that would encompass all the North Atlantic revivals. William Cooper of the Brattle Street Church in Boston made a similar request. He thought it would be well if "those who have been conversant in this work, in one place and another, would transmit accounts of it to such a hand as the revered author of this discourse, [i.e., Edwards], to be compiled into a narrative like that of the conversions at Northampton which was published a few years ago."⁵⁰ Both Robe and Cooper desired a narrative linking all the local and regional revivals into one unified account. Thomas Prince met the challenge by undertaking a weekly magazine that would constitute a history of the revival.⁵¹ Publishing his history near the awakening's end, Prince was in a position to make connections that had been less discernible in the midst of the revival.

Prince's *Christian History* was the American magazine dedicated to publicizing awakenings and reporting revival news. Though primarily targeting a local audience, it also emphasized the transatlantic scope and nature of the awakening. Like the Scottish magazines, the *Christian History* was patterned after the *Christian's Amusement*, and it offered its readers an opportunity to follow "the Progress of the Gospel both at Home and Abroad." Prince filled his magazine with new materials,

primarily conversion accounts and revival narratives solicited from colonial pastors, and with old items reprinted largely from other magazines.

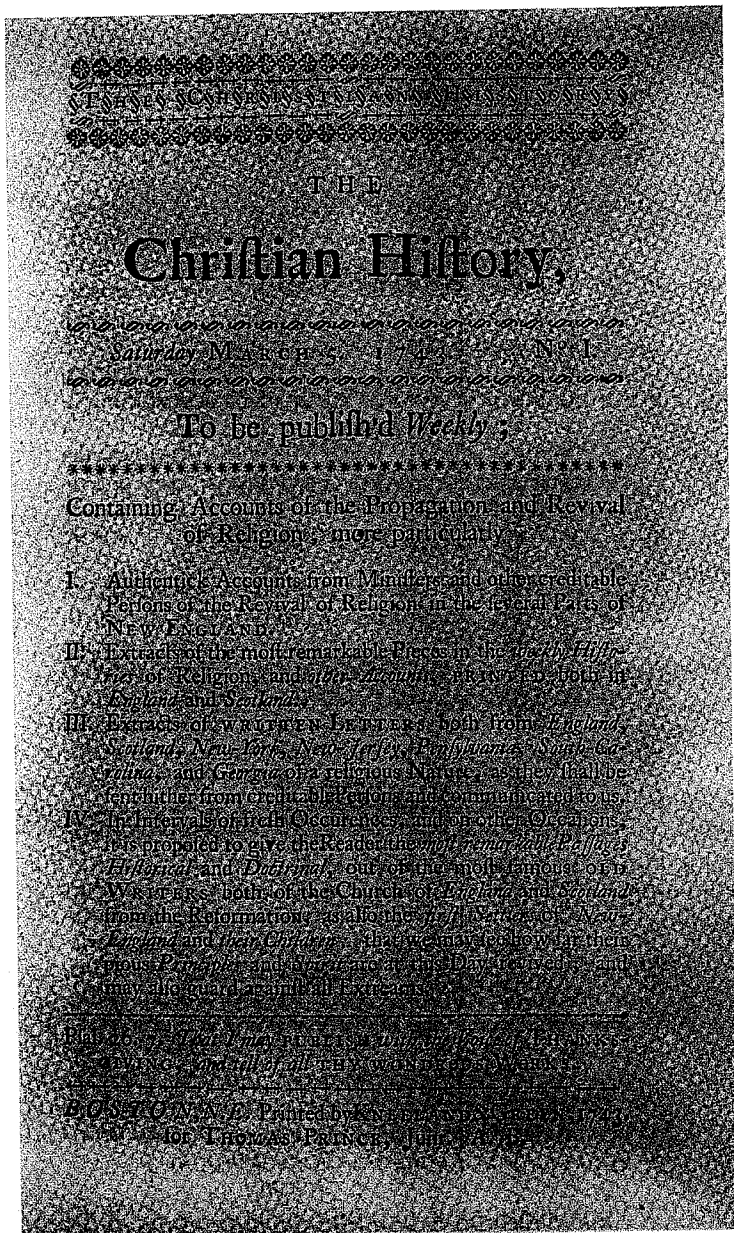
Prince published the *Christian History* in two formats. He printed it as a weekly magazine of eight pages, usually containing a single revival account from one location. At the end of each of the magazine's two years, he collected that year's issues and published them in a single volume with continuous pagination. The two formats highlight the editor's role in inventing the idea of a transatlantic revival. Each weekly installment had a decided local flavor, reflecting its authorship by a local pastor who described revival in his community. The year-end bound volume had a transatlantic air, reflecting the interleaving of revival accounts from New England, the Middle Colonies, Scotland, and England.

Revival opponents recognized the *Christian History* as one of the most effective means by which the awakening was propagated to a transatlantic audience. One critic viewed it as an "instrument of perpetuating the *evil Spirit*" among men and women. He viewed it as a repeated expression of the "Sentiments of weak enthusiastical Men" but granted its effectiveness, especially among new converts. "It is esteem'd," he wrote, "almost of equal Authority with the inspired Writings! Hence it is, that it is publicly read on the Lord's Day in several Churches." Moreover, the *Christian History* was a most "diffusive Evil," extending the "Spirit of Contention, Division and Separation thro' all the American Provinces, and even beyond the *Atlantic*."⁵² Though criticizing the revival magazines' message and influence, the opposer acknowledged its success as a powerful evangelizing component of the transatlantic publishing network.

When viewed separately, the letters that fill the pages of the revival magazines describe a series of local and regional awakenings. A global, unified revival is not self-evident. But when gathered together and placed under headings proclaiming a global revival, they portray a transatlantic revival. To promoters of the American awakening, the periodicals emanating simultaneously from several locations in the British Atlantic world meant that the colonial event was surely part of an extraordinary work of God.

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS: THE GREAT AWAKENING IN SALVATION HISTORY

In addition to spanning geographic divides, revival promoters reached across time to place the "present Work" within a larger context. In



3. Contents of revival magazine

1741, John Webb, senior pastor at Boston's New North Church, used the vehicle of print to link an earlier New England revival with the intercolonial awakening occurring as he wrote. He made his observations in a preface to a second edition of sermons he had first published in 1727 “after the Terrible Earthquake, whereby, the People in New England, were generally very much awakened.” Webb thought the reprint appropriate because “the Subject of [the discourses] is of universal infinite Importance.” They contained “Some Plain and Necessary Directions to Obtain Eternal Salvation,” and thus were as valid in 1741 as in 1727. While arguing that God's outpouring was the same grace at both times, Webb noted some important distinctions. First, the latter revival was much bigger: a “Season, when God is pouring out his Spirit, both here [i.e., New England], and in many other Places.” And second, God brought revival to New England this time not by a natural phenomenon but by human instruments, specifically, Whitefield and Tennent.⁵³

A second reprint in 1741 linked the “present Work” with great Puritan revivals in seventeenth-century England. New England revival supporter Mather Byles published an extract of one of John Flavel's sermons. Flavel had been one of the leading divines in preaching in a “warm” evangelistic style. Byles introduced the discourse as one “delivered at a Season something like this among ourselves, when there were mighty Impressions from GOD upon the Hearts of Multitudes.” He said that Flavel's sermons reach across the ages and speak “immediately to the Heart” and “set the great Doctrines of the Gospel in the most affecting and engaging Lights.” Byles provided his readers with another tie between Flavel and revivalists of the 1740s. He quoted from a letter Flavel had sent Increase Mather, Byles's grandfather, in which he enclosed one of his sermons, a “Discourse God hath so signally owned for the Conversion of very many Souls in this Town and Country.” Byles concluded his preface by expressing his hope that “the same Almighty Agent may accompany the reading of it in the like Manner.” He thought that the republication was “well timed, when such Numbers are awakened, to direct and encourage them in the Way of Salvation.”⁵⁴

To narrate the revival as a coherent story linked across temporal as well as spatial boundaries, promoters thought of writing a history. They had made extensive use of print in publicizing and defending the “great awakening,” but they recognized the limitations of newspapers and magazines in telling a coherent story of God's extraordinary work. The problem was that periodicals by their nature presented fragmented accounts of the revival, printing reports from scattered regions whenever

they arrived. In 1743, some readers of the *Christian History* complained about the lack of continuity in the magazines' reports. One issue might contain a description of current events in Scotland, the next an account of present developments in New England, and the following a historical review of revivals in America. In an apology, Thomas Prince explained: "It is not expected that, in publishing the Accounts successively sent us of Revival in various Parts, we should observe so exact an Order with Respect either to Time or Place, as if we had them all before us at the Beginning."⁵⁵

To best present the revival as an extensive, uniform, coherent event, awakeners turned their attention to writing a narrative history. The historian could do what the periodical publisher could not: collect and arrange information in a way that revealed the spatial and temporal sweep of the awakening. Moreover, he could place the eighteenth-century revivals within the larger story of salvation history. In 1754, nine years after the awakenings had subsided, the Scottish revivalist John Gillies published his history of "Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel," a unified account that began at Pentecost and culminated in the most recent awakenings.⁵⁶

When Gillies undertook the task, the source documents available did not in themselves contain a narrative of an extensive awakening or a special divine dispensation. By themselves or considered one at a time, they did not add up to global revival. Rather, the revival accounts he relied upon described local revivals stretching over several decades and scattered throughout Anglo-America. From the 1740s, he had access to about three dozen accounts of disparate religious awakenings in various parts of England, Scotland, and America. He believed, however, that compiled in one place and viewed together, reports of local revivals would portray a global awakening much more extensive than the individual events suggested. Therefore, through weaving the various accounts into a single "narration of the success of the gospel," Gillies invented something bigger: an extensive, uniform transatlantic revival.⁵⁷

In *Historical Collections*, Gillies displayed his editorial work, gathering source documents and arranging them in a pattern that told a story of widespread revival success. In the preface, he set forth his task and purpose as compiler: "When similar facts, that were so dispersed, and sometimes mixed with other subjects in different books . . . are now united, so as to be laid before the reader in one view, and methodized according to the order of time in which the events happened in different places; they may be read and compared with much greater advantage."⁵⁸ The whole, if rightly presented, was greater than the sum of its parts.

Gillies wrote from a biblical framework, finding his blueprint in the New Testament. Contending that "a considerable part of [the New Testament] is employed in historical narrations of the success of the Gospel," Gillies found a pattern that explained for him the eighteenth-century evangelical revivals. To him, the spiritual awakenings that occurred throughout the English world were nothing less than the latest instance of "the success of the Gospel." Like his scriptural model, Gillies's history would relate "the numbers that were converted," "the religious instructions that were the means" of conversions, "the providences" that enabled men and women to benefit from those instructions, "the uncommon influences of the Holy Spirit" on prayers for revival, and "the blessed fruits of holiness in the lives of the converts."⁵⁹

In constructing his story of the success of the gospel, Gillies desired to include only what he considered to be the most reliable information. He wished to emulate the apostle Paul who "set us a pattern of seeking information about such facts from men who had access to know them." He was convinced that "when witnesses are sufficient as to their characters, their numbers, and their means of information; their testimony affords a very high degree of moral evidence." Thus, like Colman and Prince before him, he paraded before the reader a succession of witnesses who attested to revivals throughout the ages. He began his history with "the swift progress of the Gospel, in the time of the Apostles" and concluded with the "late extraordinary dispensations of grace, with which the Lord has favoured so many different corners."⁶⁰

Gillies did not write his history as an academic exercise. Rather, he hoped that it would move evangelicals "to continual ardent prayer that the Lord would give more success than ever to his gospel in all parts of the earth." Moreover, he recognized that many "pious persons [were] . . . not yet sufficiently informed, and persuaded of several past events, as instances of the success of the Gospel." His task was to convince readers of the authenticity of "these late gracious dispensations." Thus his was a work in "practical religion," an effort to promote future revivals by showing the progress of preceding ones.⁶¹ Gillies hoped that his account of evangelical revivalism would be instrumental in inspiring men and women to experience the new birth themselves and to work on behalf of its propagation.

Although he emphasized the eighteenth-century revivals, Gillies devoted more than half of his history to previous centuries. He desired to place the more recent awakenings within an evangelical tradition with roots in the New Testament. His primary question dealt with the success of the gospel. In examining the success of the gospel from the Apostolic

Age, Gillies followed a strategy that persists throughout the volume. First, he explored some of the "means employed by divine wisdom for promoting" the faith. In particular, he noted the written documents instrumental in shaping and publicizing early Christianity, such as "the apologies for Christianity written by men of learning." Second, he reminded his readers of the persecutions that people of faith face in every age. The main barriers to the gospel's progress in the first three centuries were powerful Roman emperors. But in every age true believers spread the good news despite all obstacles.⁶²

Gillies's history is not a narrative of the advance of Christianity in general. Rather, it is an account of a particular type of Protestantism, usually referred to by revivalists as "experimental religion," or "piety," or "practical religion." All of those expressions represented attempts to capture the essence of New Testament and Reformed Christianity. Experimental religion was that experienced firsthand by an individual through conversion, a spiritual new birth. Revivalists insisted that faith mediated by priests and churches and merely assented to by adherents was cold, formal, and without efficacy. Piety suggested a life "more suitable to the principles and spirit of Christianity" than that lived by most avowed Christians.⁶³ It was an awakened life given more completely to the study and practice of scriptural precepts and less inclined to worldly vanities. Practical religion emphasized an active faith whereby persons devoted their time, talent, and money to spreading the gospel and relieving the suffering of those less fortunate.

The denouement of Gillies's narration presented the evangelical revivals occurring in the British Atlantic world, and especially those in British North America in the eighteenth century; enumerating "instances of success of the gospel" in America, Gillies charted revivals in New England, New Jersey, and Georgia.⁶⁴ His account of colonial revivalism began with what he called "the sad decay of vital religion." He quoted such Puritan divines as Samuel Danforth, Increase Mather, Samuel Torrey, and Cotton Mather to make his case for religious declension. In his sermon before the Massachusetts general court on May 11, 1670, Danforth asked "Whether we have not in a great measure forgot our errand into the wilderness." In a 1683 sermon, Torrey left no doubt about his answer to Danforth's question. He wrote "that there hath been a vital decay, a decay upon the very vitals of religion, by a deep declension in the life and power of it." In his 1706 jeremiad *The Good Old Way*, Cotton Mather lamented that "the modern Christianity is, too generally, but a very shadow of the ancient!"⁶⁵

Gillies noted, however, that out of the depths of New England declension came revival. The earliest form was that of covenant renewal. Meeting in 1679, a synod of all the churches convened to consider why God allowed the colonies to suffer at the hands of the Indian sachem Metacom. The conclusion was that King Philip's War had been a divine visitation upon disobedient Christians. Only "a solemn renewing of covenant with God, and one another" could restore God's favor. When "many complied, . . . there was a considerable revival of religion among them."⁶⁶

In Gillies's depiction of American awakenings, Northampton enjoyed a special place as a "remarkable revival," the last and greatest of a succession of local awakenings before the Great Awakening beginning in 1739. Northampton was noteworthy as a genuine "work of God," but it was also an inspiration for budding revivalists, who saw it as a beginning of a larger dispensation. Edwards's *Narrative* inspired the Oxford Methodists who would play major roles in promoting transatlantic revivalism. The group's leader John Wesley recorded in his diary: "I read the truly surprising narrative of the conversions lately wrought in and about the town of Northampton, in New England. Surely this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." And Gillies noted that when Whitefield arrived in New England, he desired especially to visit Northampton, "having read in England, an account of a remarkable work of conversion there, published by their Pastor the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards."⁶⁷ Thus Northampton was more than a local revival; its telling and retelling became an inspiration and model for what Gillies called "the extensive revival in the British Colonies in America, which began chiefly in the end of 1739."⁶⁸

The Great Awakening—the colonial American phase of the revival—was a major chapter in John Gillies's history of "Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel." Published in 1754 in two volumes, *Historical Collections* describes revivals from the first Pentecost to the mid-eighteenth century.⁶⁹ The first volume covers great outpourings of God's spirit through the seventeenth century, with the Protestant Reformation receiving most attention. Volume 2 contains about the same number of pages as the first volume but extends only over the first half of the eighteenth century. The colonial American revivals constitute half of that. Thus Gillies devotes about one-fourth of his history to the great awakening. In his account, the American revival, while part of an international awakening, was the feature attraction.

Gillies relied on revival magazines for most of the material in volume

2. Except for a few letters and Whitefield's *Journals*, Prince's *Christian History* is the basis for his description of the American revival. He noted that he extracted material "mostly verbatim." Only on occasion did he choose "the way of Paraphrase, . . . [or] the way of Abridgement."⁷⁰ While largely derivative, Gillies's history makes a significant contribution to revivalists' interpretation of the great awakening, giving prominence to the great awakening by presenting it as the extension and culmination of the Reformation. Situating it as one of a very small number of preeminent events in salvation history, Gillies ensured the Great Awakening's eminence among evangelicals. He characterized it as "that extraordinary Revival in the British Colonies in America, which began chiefly in the Year 1740, and continued in 1741, 1742,—spreading through a great many Places."⁷¹

Gillies viewed the eighteenth-century revival as deliverance. He agreed with other revivalists that the awakening came in a dark chapter of Christianity when opposition from without and sinfulness within the church brought discouragement to the faithful. But, Gillies argued, that has always been the case. He wrote of the church that the "most threatening dangers and lowest times have frequently been soon followed with the most signal appearances in its behalf." God intervenes when his people are under greatest attack, as was the case during "the times preceding the deliverances from Egypt and Babylon, the first promulgation of the gospel, and the Protestant reformation." Scriptural promises and church history teach that when the church "seems in imminent danger of becoming consumed; the power and good-will of him who dwelt in the bush seasonably interposes; and the time of need proves the time for the Lord to work."⁷² The eighteenth-century evangelical revival takes its place as one of the church's great deliverances.

Gillies's history fits Jon Butler's paradigm of the Great Awakening as "interpretive fiction"; however, it is a fiction that predates Joseph Tracy's version by more than a century. Indeed, Tracy relied heavily upon *Historical Collections* for his construction of the Great Awakening, adding little original interpretation other than the title. Gillies and other revival inventors operated out of a strong conviction that they were describing and promoting nothing less than a second reformation, an extraordinary dispensation of grace. To the transatlantic community of evangelicals it inspired, that interpretation became an article of faith. But to many outside the revivalist circle, the notion was the result of enthusiasm, overheated imaginations that saw God's hands in human events. Some critics published their own "discoveries" of the revival as artful design,

works that revivalists, in turn, charged were "inventions" in the sense of being fabrications. Historians, then, who seek to explain the state of religion in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America confront an array of fictions, inventions and counterinventions, from which they construct their own "interpretive fictions."

27. Ibid., 600.
28. Walsh, "The Great Awakening in the First Congregation of Woodbury, Connecticut," 551-555.
29. Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), 279.
30. Rodger M. Payne, "New Light in Hanover County: Evangelical Dissent in Piedmont Virginia, 1740-1755," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (November 1995): 682-685.
31. See Robert Leland Bidwell, "The Morris Reading-Houses: A Study in Dissent," MS 7:3, Virginia Historical Society, 7-9, 23-24, 29.
32. Ibid., 34.
33. Payne, "New Light in Hanover County," 665, 672-673.
34. George Pilcher, *Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1971), 29.
35. Ibid., 29-30.
36. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, Glasgow edition, 2:332-333.
37. Payne, "New Light in Hanover County," 688.
38. *Virginia Gazette*, October 24, 1745.
39. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, Glasgow edition, 2:330.
40. Marcus Rediker, "'The Outcasts of the Nations of the Earth': The New York Conspiracy of 1741 in Atlantic Perspective" (Paper presented to the Cultural History Workshop, Department of History, Purdue University, April 20, 1995), 19-20. For a broader examination of the awakening and slaves, see Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, 1978). See also Stephen Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence," *Church History* 42 (June 1973): 243-256.
41. Cited in Rediker, "'The Outcasts of the Nations,'" 19-20.
42. Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 166.
43. Cited in Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982), 166.
44. Ibid.
45. See Colman's remarks in his preface to Smith's ordination sermon, *A Discourse Delivered at Boston, on July 11, 1726. Then Occasion'd by the Author's Ordination* (Boston, 1726), iii.
46. See Isaac Chanler, *New Converts Exhorted to Cleave to the Lord* (Boston, 1740).
47. Benedict Anderson coined the phrase "imagined community" to describe how popular print such as newspapers "creates . . . [an] extraordinary mass ceremony: the almost precisely simultaneous consumption" of the same material such that thousands of readers, though separated by many miles, are aware that others are engaged in the same enterprise. See Benedict Anderson, *The Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 28, 38-39.
48. William Seward, *Journal of a Voyage From Savannah to Philadelphia and From Philadelphia to England* (London, 1740), 55-56.
49. On Kneeland and Green's circular letter, see n. 6, above, this chapter.
50. Circular letter.

51. Ibid.
52. This discussion involves only North American revival narratives, not those from England or Scotland. For Crawford's analysis, see Crawford, *Seasons of Grace*, 185.
53. *Whitefield's Journals*, 352 and 486.
54. *Christian History*, 1:255.
55. Ibid., 2:126-127.
56. Ibid., 414-415.
57. Ibid., 1:261.
58. Ibid., 268.
59. Ibid., 2:322-323.
60. Ibid., 323.

Chapter 5

" . . . similar facts . . . are now united"

1. See table 4.1.
2. *Whitefield's Journals*, 529.
3. See William Cooper's preface to Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Boston, 1741), xvii.
4. Ibid., 224-225.
5. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, 337.
6. *Whitefield's Journals*, 31.
7. Durden [O'Brien], "A Transatlantic Community of Saints," 811.
8. Ibid., 824.
9. Cited in Lambert, "Pedlar in Divinity", 159.
10. Ibid., 132.
11. Ian Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986), 135-136.
12. *Tercentenary Handlist of English and Welsh Newspapers, Magazines and Reviews* (London, 1920).
13. Susan Durden [O'Brien], "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks in the First Years of Transatlantic Evangelicalism," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. Mark A. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (Oxford, 1994), 45-46.
14. Cited in *ibid.*, 46.
15. Ibid., 47.
16. *Boston News-Letter*, May 26, 1743.
17. Durden [O'Brien], "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks," 38-39. See also S. J. Royal, "Religious Periodicals in England during the Restoration and Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Rutgers University* (1971): 27-33.
18. Durden [O'Brien], "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks," 39.
19. Cited in *ibid.*, 43-44.
20. For Franklin's sale of Whitefield's works, see manuscript copy of Benjamin Franklin's Ledger "D" located at the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia). See also George S. Eddy, ed., *Account Books Kept by Benjamin Franklin*, 2

vols. (New York, 1929); and C. William Miller, *Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Printing, 1728-1766: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Philadelphia, 1974).

21. Durden [O'Brien], "Eighteenth-Century Publishing Networks," 43.
22. See preface to Dickinson, *Display of God's Special Grace*, ix-x.
23. See Leigh Eric Schmidt, "Sacramental Occasions and the Scottish Context of Presbyterian Revivalism in America," in *Scotland and America in the Age of the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten (Princeton, 1990), 60-67.
24. David Campbell, *Sacramental Meditations On the Sufferings and Death of Christ*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1740), iv.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Goen, *Jonathan Edwards*, 538. For a fuller discussion of the awakenings in Scotland and their links with the American revivals, see Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1971). Scottish converts frequently mentioned the effects of news from the American revivals on their own new births; see T. C. Smout, "Born Again at Cambuslang: New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland," *Past and Present* 97 (November 1982): 114-127.
27. John Erskine, *The Signs of the Times Considered: or, The High Probability, that the present APPEARANCES in New England, and the West of Scotland, are a PRELUDE of the Glorious Things promised to the CHURCH in the latter Ages* (Edinburgh, 1742), 10, 17-18.
28. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, Glasgow edition, 2:399.
29. *Ibid.*, 401-402.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Seward, *Journal of a Voyage*, 30-31.
32. See preface to Colman, *Souls Flying to Jesus Christ*.
33. Susan Durden [O'Brien], "A Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740-1748," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (July 1976): 258.
34. "The Christian's Amusement," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 11 (1917-1918): 183.
35. Durden [O'Brien], "First Evangelical Magazines," 258.
36. "The Christian's Amusement," 184-185.
37. John Lewis to Mrs. James, January 31, 1740/41. Trevecca Letters. National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales.
38. Cited in Durden [O'Brien], "First Evangelical Magazines," 259-260.
39. Lewis to Mrs. James, January 31, 1740/41. Trevecca Letters.
40. Durden [O'Brien], "First Evangelical Magazines," 261.
41. Cited in *ibid.*
42. *Weekly History*, June 12, 1742.
43. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1742.
44. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1741.
45. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1741.
46. *Ibid.*, July 4, 1741.
47. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1741.
48. Durden [O'Brien], "First Evangelical Magazines," 266-267.
49. Cited in *ibid.*, 270.

50. Goen, *Jonathan Edwards*, 59, 538.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Boston Evening-Post*, October 24, 1743.
53. Webb, *Some Plain and Necessary Directions To Obtain Eternal Salvation*, unpaginated preface.
54. John Flavel, *The Great Design and Scope of the Gospel Opened. An Extract from the Rev. Mr. Flavel's England's Duty* (Boston, 1741). See Byles's prefatory remarks in unpaginated preface.
55. *Christian History*, 1:258.
56. The complete title of Gillies's work is *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel*.
57. *Ibid.*, vi.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*, v.
60. *Ibid.*, vi-viii.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, 9.
63. *Ibid.*, 239.
64. *Ibid.*, 272-292.
65. *Ibid.*, 279-281.
66. *Ibid.*, 281.
67. Gillies, *Memoirs of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 73.
68. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, 272.
69. This is the two-volume 1754 Glasgow edition of Gillies, *Historical Collections*.
70. *Ibid.*, 1:preface.
71. *Ibid.* This heading is in vol. 2.
72. *Ibid.*, 1:ix-x.

Part Three Introductory Section

1. Benjamin Prescott, *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Joshua Gee, In Answer to His of June 3, 1743. Address'd to Mr. Nathaniel Eells, Moderator of the late Convention of Pastors in Boston* (Boston, 1743), 22-23.

Chapter 6

The "grand delusion" or "great Mistakes of the present Day"

1. *An Historical Narrative And Declaration Shewing the Cause and Rise of the Strict Congregational Churches in the State of Connecticut* (Providence, 1781), 5.
2. Gillies, *Historical Collections*, 423.
3. Charles Chauncy, *An Answer to the Reverend Mr. Edwards' Sermon on the Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (Boston, 1743), 8.
4. Thomas Foxcroft, *Some Seasonable Thoughts on Evangelic Preaching: Its Nature, Usefulness, and Obligation* (Boston, 1740), 30-31.