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**A Partnership of Equals: Benjamin Franklin, George Whitefield, and the Birth of  
The Modern World**

## **Preface**

What is modernity? The word has a slick quality, changing its meaning and form with the times. In the nineteenth century, for historians at least, “modern” meant anything that happened after the Middle Ages. At the start of the twentieth century, “modernism” meant art that was surreal and abstract, buildings that looked like cement blocks piled on top of one another, music that lacked tonal themes, and an experimental literature that rejected traditional values and forms (including standard capitalization and punctuation). Modernists challenged Newtonian Science, revealed religion, Enlightenment rationalism, and above all the ideas of progress, continuity, and order. Some modernists even strenuously argued that the study of history was a worthless enterprise. After World War II, the United Nations introduced programs of “modernization” to jump-start developing nations’ education and infrastructure.

For people in the United States modernity has always had a special meaning, connoting a society resting on democracy and equal opportunity, embracing technological advances, rational capital investment, and improvement in everyday living. Its ruling ideology was and remains secular humanism. It is a kind of faith, according to the philosopher Stephen Toulmin, that we can make the world better by applying ourselves to the task. This was the future that Benjamin Franklin envisioned for America two and a half centuries ago.

But alongside that domain of secularism there grew another kind of community whose millions of members longed for a sacred moral purity. There was and still is a fellowship whose passion for salvation one can see in the faces of the worshipers at any evangelical church on a Sunday morning. Born-again Christians are a force in American cultural and political life. They are the inheritors of the revivalism that George Whitefield brought to America in 1739.

While cultural observers routinely note how different these two world views are today, indeed how they seem to be polar opposites, in fact they share much more than a surface comparison shows. Both arose in a provincial setting. Both depended upon the transformative effects of mass media and the equality of the consumers of such media. Both drew energy and direction from the efforts of charismatic leaders.

No one would claim that Franklin and Whitefield originated the Web or espoused democracy in its modern sense, but both technology and revivalism thrived on the mass production of the printed word, possible because of changes in eighteenth-century print culture. From Franklin's "Silence Dogood" newspaper pieces of the 1710s and Whitefield's Journals of the 1740s to the blogs, e-books, and egalitarian culture of today seems a mighty leap in time and space, but the foundations of modern media, of promotional literature and advertising, and the belief that all people, regardless of class, caste, or origin were entitled to improve themselves were first envisioned and popularized by these two very special men.

They met in November 1739, in Philadelphia. Then the Anglican missionary Whitefield, whose reputation for dramatic preaching had preceded him, pitched his message of rebirth in Christ to thousands from the gallery of the Philadelphia Court House. He cried and his auditory cried with him at the dire prospects for the unconverted and the assurance of grace that surely would come to the convert. Curious to see and hear the performance, Franklin was amazed at the way that Whitefield's words carried and the impact they had on his audience. In an unrecorded moment during that visit, the two men agreed that they could be of use to one another. Whitefield would provide copies of his journals, and Franklin would publish them. In that partnership—a partnership of published words between equals—one can see intimations of

modernity.

It is somewhat out of fashion, at least academic fashion, to speak of “representative men.” At one time, books of “parallel lives,” the comparison of leaders from various countries, were the model for all biography. In the nineteenth century, the great man theory of history was well established. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in “The Uses of Great Men” (1855): “Nature seems to exist for the excellent. The world is upheld by the veracity of good men: they make the earth wholesome...We call our children and our lands by their names.” The most popular biographer of that period, Thomas Carlyle, argued in his Heroes and Hero Worship (1869) that what heroes did “justly...what nature with her laws will sanction” would live on in history forever. In America, biographies of men like Franklin and Whitefield were best sellers.

Biography is alive and well today, but the great man theory of history so popular in the nineteenth century ill fits modern history teachers’ emphasis on the plain folk. Without meaning to sound old fashioned, the present essay rests upon the assumption that there are people who both represent their times and change them for the better. Franklin and Whitefield were two such men. But that is not all this book proposes.

By focusing our story on Franklin and Whitefield we can define with greater precision the importance of their world, the anglo-American Atlantic World, in our history. Too often that increasingly popular organizing concept has been stretched almost to the breaking point, encompassing African, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as the shorter crossing from the British Isles to their North American colonies. Franklin and Whitefield were truly Atlantic World figures in the narrower sense of the word--their travels, their ties, and their ideas linking the English speaking peoples together when the empire was in its heyday.

Finally, one cannot tell the story of their meeting, or understand its wider implications, without telling the story of the port cities of that empire—Bristol and London, Boston and Philadelphia—where Franklin and Whitefield made their mark. All four cities had been transformed by the consumer revolution of the 1730s. Bristol was fast becoming the gateway to the Atlantic Empire, not quite replacing London, but growing in commerce and activity. There Whitefield tested his outdoor evangelical style of preaching and sought ways to spread the word beyond his listening audience before he performed on the larger stage of London. Philadelphia played much the same role in the Middle Colonies as Bristol in the West Country. The city was a warehouse of wheat and other products bound for England and the West Indies and a temporary home to thousands of immigrants. Franklin used the printed word—a newspaper, an almanac, and a series of essays printed in pamphlet form to become the city’s best known citizen. In these cities on the nether sides of the Atlantic, opportunity for civic improvement and spiritual revival beckoned and the new media, newspapers and pamphlets, carried the words of that opportunity abroad.

This is not a book about Franklin the revolutionary diplomat or Whitefield the established leader of the evangelical movement, though they would fill these roles later in their lives. It is not the first volume of a full-fledged dual biography, though one could surely be written and would be most welcome. It is primarily a book crafted to return its readers to a time and place in the colonial period when revolution was the furthest thing from Franklin’s mind and Whitefield’s revivalism was still fresh. It is about a time when the Anglo-American empire was full of possibilities and opportunities for those with ambition and vision.

The sources for this study abound in Franklin and Whitefield's own works, including Franklin's autobiography and collected papers, Whitefield's journals and sermons, as well as the burgeoning newspaper culture of the period, and the documentary records of the metropolitan center and its colonial periphery.

Some technical matters require our attention in these sources. Old style English official dating, in which the new year began on March 25th, I have changed to conform to modern style dating (the year beginning January 1). English authorities changed from old style (OS, the Julian calendar) to new style (NS, the Gregorian calendar) in 1752. A hybrid, in which dates from January 1 to March 25 were rendered with a slash (e.g. February 1 1730/31) was in use during the eighteenth century. I have also silently modernized difficult to decipher eighteenth-century contractions, awkward grammar and incorrect spelling in the primary sources.

The two men cut a wide swath through their times and correspondingly in the secondary (scholarly) literature. There is a cottage industry in Franklin biographies and collections (over 350 to date), to which the three-hundredth anniversary of his birth added excellent titles. Whitefield has not fared so well in the realm of biography these days, perhaps because his intense piety does not quite lend itself to modern scholars' ears as it did to those in the early nineteenth-century Second Great Awakening (when a number of major biographies of him appeared). Religious writers still find his rhetoric worthy of study, but more attractive to modern biographers are Whitefield's theatrical and commercial sides.

Finally, a word or two about the structure of the book. My story is both chronological and topical, hence after a chapter devoted to the title event—the meeting of the two men and the arrangement between them—the book's next four chapters are divided between narrative and

analysis. Chapter Two brings both men to their meeting place, combining biography and narrative history. The next two chapters explore in detail the central themes of Whitefield's and Franklin's early writings, respectively. Chapter Five returns to narrative, placing the two men in the central intellectual controversies of their times, Whitefield in the Great Awakening and Franklin in the Scientific Revolution. That chapter concludes with the last years of the two men's collaboration and the most important of all controversies in the Anglophone world, the protests against Parliament. An epilogue returns to the theme of modernity and assesses Franklin's and Whitefield's contributions to our own times.

Acknowledgments once again are in order. First, to William James Hoffer and N.E.H. Hull, who have never failed to provide essential help with early drafts. Then, to Billy G. Smith and Michael Winship, who respectively tried to set me straight on Franklin's Philadelphia and Whitefield's Calvinism. To the kind colleagues who attended the University of Georgia Early American History Workshop in Athens and the McNeil Center for Early American Studies in Philadelphia and commented on the first two chapters, my thanks. I really did listen. The anonymous reader for the press was more than generous and his or her comments assisted me in improving the book. Remaining errors are of course my own responsibility. Finally, to Bob Brugger and the editorial and production staff at the Johns Hopkins University Press my gratitude. For them and my small part in launching the Witness to History series, I hope this entry fulfills the old adage, "third time lucky."

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## **Introduction The Anglo-American Empire of the Early Eighteenth Century**

A century ago, Atlantic World historical writing had a narrow and suspiciously self-regarding focus. That focus continued well into the twentieth century. English and North American historians understood it as an Anglo-American transatlantic connection. In 1912 Charles McLean Andrews began his study of the first years of the English North American empire, “to England alone, of all the civilized powers that bordered on the Atlantic in the seventeenth century, do we trace our descent as a nation.” Wallace Notestein’s classic The English People on the Eve of Colonization, 1603-1630 (1954) argued that empire was all about the value of the colonies to England and the importance of English ways in its colonies. David Hackett Fischer’s magisterial Albion’s Seed (1989) carried the story to our shores. The waves of British immigrants to the North American colonies brought with them their distinctive speech, dress, and food ways, their thinking on kinship, education, and authority, and their notions of religion and governance.<sup>1</sup>

The notion of an Anglo-American Atlantic is out of fashion today, and rightly so, for the Atlantic world was home to Africans and Native Americans as well as transplanted Europeans.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles McLean Andrews, The Colonial Period (New York: Holt, 1912), 10; Wallace Notestein, the English People on the Eve of Colonization, 1603-1630 (New York: Harper, 1954), xii; David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York: Oxford, 1989), 5. But note that all of these ways, including the naming of places, the adoption of Indian wigwams and Indian diet, and learning the way through the woods were influenced by the native inhabitants of the Eastern seaboard.

Imperial fortunes, in both senses of the word, depended upon the plantation colonies of the Caribbean more than on more northern and more European settlements. But the ocean over which Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield traveled was an Anglophone one and both men were two admired and successful players on the English speaking sides of the eighteenth-century Atlantic shore. Over the course of their careers, they would cross and re-cross the Atlantic nearly a dozen times, and through great effort, intelligence, and ambition re-invent themselves from lower middle class tradesmen into the foremost spokesman for technological progress and the premier revivalist preacher, respectively. Individually and together they represented what is now a lost world—the Anglo-American Empire at its height, spanning the Atlantic, connecting the imperial metropolis to the most prosperous of the provincial capitals.<sup>2</sup>

In 1739, the Anglo-American Atlantic World was a busy, prosperous place. Its American provinces had made the home country wealthy. In turn, the provinces' population and standard of living improved. Pennsylvania itself was for some who came a “best poor man’s country,” drawing immigrants from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, various parts of Germany, France, and the Iberian Peninsula. Not all of the immigrants thrived. Slaves and indentured servants faced a far bleaker future than newcomers with resources. But the lure of riches and the push of want drove hundreds of thousands of Europeans to brave the Atlantic crossing and the uncertainties of life in a new land.

Traffic along the Atlantic highway traveled in both directions. Anglo-Americans returned

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<sup>2</sup>Bernard Bailyn, Atlantic History: Concept and Contours (New York: Knopf, 2005), 6, 41-44.

to their British homes (or those of their ancestors), visited the metropolis, or sought audiences with those in power in the home country. By the first decades of the eighteenth century, the Atlantic had ceased to be a barrier and become a well traveled highway of people and ideas. The remarkable commercial and military success of the British empire to 1739 depended on the traffic along this highway. The British people attained “a collective identity” in the period before the American Revolution, an identity based in part on “social openness” and “intellectual and scientific achievement.”<sup>3</sup>

The British and American sides of the ocean were hardly cultural equals. The British North American colonies were “a borderland, a part of the expanding periphery of Britain’s core culture,” but the “provinces,” including the North American colonies, had entered something of a “golden age” of derivative cultural expression. To extend, for a moment, the metaphor of the Atlantic highway, print was the paving that tied the two sides of the empire together. Reading literacy on both sides of the Anglo-American Atlantic had taken a huge jump forward at the beginning of the eighteenth century. “From 1730 to 1750...the quantity of reading possibilities was growing,” and growing rapidly. Many Americans could read (though fewer could write). The Phenomenon was not unique to the colonies, it was true of Western Europe and the British Isles as well: “Not only did more people read, people read more.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Jack P. Greene, “Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution” in William Roger Louis et al., eds., The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2:208.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York:

Newspapers had come into vogue. Magazines of opinion were regularly appearing and disappearing. Book production and marketing were a growth industry, much like e-trade today. The spread of literacy and book culture went hand in hand, beginning in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, and by the eighteenth century the book business was booming. The printing press became an almost spiritual force, turning oral communication, to material, imperishable words on the page. Books published in England were commonplace in American libraries. Somewhat less so, books published in America found their way to British shops and shelves.<sup>5</sup>

Words in books and newspapers and magazines transmitted ideas--“Particular meanings are adopted by the speech community and imposed in turn on its members.” Language liberates and constrains, bringing people into a community as it frames how they communicate with one

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Knopf, 1986), 112; Bailyn and John Clive, “England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America The William and Mary Quarterly, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser. 11 (1954), 202-203; E. Jennifer Monaghan, Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 191; David Freeman Hawke, Everyday Life in Early America (New York: Harper, 1988), 70-71; James Van Horn Melton, The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81.

<sup>5</sup>Hugh Amory, “Reinventing the Colonial Book,” in David D. Hall, ed., History of the Book in America, Volume One: the Colonial Book in the Atlantic World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 26; James Raven, “The Importation of Books” in Hall, ed., History of the Book, 183-190; T.H. Breen, The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 119.

another. French, German, Dutch, and Portuguese sojourners in the British colonies learned English, and with it, English ways. English speaking colonists “sent their children back to England to be educated” to master words. England was the Mecca for the provincial would-be gentleman or intellectual. From England and Scotland American schools and churches recruited learned men, and they, with the native born colonists, produced a rich treasury of literature, scholarship, and political essay.<sup>6</sup>

Two of these men—Franklin and Whitefield are at the center of our story. The two men were polar opposites in many ways. Franklin was worldly, philosophical, and believed that human endeavor could improve standards of living everywhere. Whitefield was passionate, spiritual, and convinced that man was powerless to save himself. Franklin was the founder of highly secular institutions—a library, a philosophical society, a hospital, and a college. Whitefield was one of the founders of English Methodism, a reform movement within the Church of England that looked to the Bible for everyday guidance and called for a return to early Christian values.

But the two had much in common, enough so that they saw themselves in each other. Both rose in station in life from the sons of artisan-class parents to consort with lords and ladies. Both kept detailed diaries, part and measure of their close monitoring of their public image. For both were performers, the public arena their stage. While it may be too simplistic to say that they loved publicity, they certainly understood its uses.

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<sup>6</sup>Claire Kramsch, Language and Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5; Richard D. Brown, Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 43.

During Whitefield's first sojourn in Philadelphia, Franklin offered to publish Whitefield's journals and sermons and to cover the preacher's travels in the Pennsylvania Gazette. Through Franklin's later efforts a subscription raised enough money to build Whitefield a meeting house when his manner of preaching and his views on salvation caused most of the city's clergy to deny to him their pulpits. Though the friendship would wax and wane (Franklin was not persuaded that he needed to be born again in Christ, but Whitefield's manner was always gentle and affecting and Franklin could not stay mad at him), their usefulness to one another never flagged. Franklin became Whitefield's promoter and publicist in America, and Whitefield's peregrinations made Franklin's newspaper must reading for everyone curious about the Great Awakening of religiosity. Franklin turned Whitefield's aural power into print. The selling of Whitefield helped make Franklin a wealthy man—wealthy enough to surrender everyday business affairs to others and set about his scientific experiments and his sponsorship of a multitude of urban schemes.

Franklin was entrepreneurial and inventive when it came to marketing. He gained appointment as postmaster and used it to send his Pennsylvania Gazette all over the colonies. He sought and obtained the post of printer to the government of the colony. He sought and published “scoops” and even “stole” stories from his rivals. From the October 1729 issues, his first after driving its former publisher into bankruptcy, he sprinkled crime, sex, and humor throughout the issues of the Gazette—all sure-fire popular topics. Using pseudonyms for letters he wrote himself, his “correspondence” section wryly and pointedly nailed his competitor's foibles. So, too, his Poor Richard's Almanack, from 1732 to 1757, supposedly compiled by one Richard Saunders, made fun of all manner of subjects, including other printers. Much of its content was borrowed (even the name Richard Saunders was that of an earlier English almanac compiler). The sayings

were lifted from other publications, spiced by Franklin's own turn of phrase. The yearly publication became a best seller. Everything, it seemed, that Franklin wrote found a ready audience.<sup>7</sup>

Whitefield was likewise savvy to the importance of the media. He needed it to extend the reach of his preaching. Though he spoke extemporaneously, he prepared text assiduously. He then supplied it to the newspapers. "Press coverage helped insure Whitefield and his revival widespread popular acceptance." Though he seemed above the crass consumerism that seemed to have taken hold of England in the first half of the eighteenth century, Whitefield had made himself (even more than the content of his sermons) into a consumer product. William Seward, a confidant, convert, and former stock issue salesman, helped Whitefield turn oratory into print in the same way that over two decades earlier Seward had sold South Sea Company stock (the period's version of junk bonds) to the unwary. "Notices" of Whitefield's appearances became "advertisements" for the man and the message. Whitefield's initial hesitation to commercialize his revival overcome, Seward acted the role of press agent, and without the aid of print, Whitefield's ministry might have been stillborn. Even words that set thousands to swooning were written on water without press coverage and print publication.<sup>8</sup>

Whitefield's words carried across the ocean. From England to America news of

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin: An American Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 64-72, 94-101.

<sup>8</sup>Frank Lambert, "Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52-53, 55.

Whitefield's open air ministry traveled in press releases. In America, editors eager for newspaper copy and increased subscriptions saw the opportunity to carry news of the Whitefield phenomenon. When Whitefield himself followed, generally to carry on the Methodist missionary work of John and Charles Wesley in South Carolina and Georgia and specifically to raise funds for an orphanage in Savannah, Georgia, the press coverage was transatlantic. News of his triumphal tour filled the London newspapers and magazines. He then decided that he must carry the mission to all the British North American colonies, and did, uniting them, and bringing out crowds, in an unprecedented fashion. Indeed, in the eighteenth century the only event comparable to his tours in uniting the disparate colonies and stirring the passions of the mass of people was the American Revolutionary crisis.

Franklin was hardly an idle spectator in all this, for he too had learned the value of the printed word. He was a transatlantic traveler himself, and he understood how the printer and publisher's skills could draw the home country and its colonies closer. When not yet twenty, he spent a year in England mastering the typesetter's trade. Returned to Philadelphia the next year, he found sponsors, then partners, then friends to build a business around words. Words spanned the ocean. When he started the General Magazine (one of his few unprofitable ventures), he offered its contents and took as its subject "all the British plantations in America." For Franklin, the wider the scope of his publishing ambitions, the better they suited his view of himself as a transatlantic figure. Commerce held the project together, for shopkeeper Franklin marketed more than newspapers, but even this commerce in clothing, foodstuffs, and consumer durables was dependent upon transatlantic suppliers and markets. And how better to insure buyers knew the

latest imports on one's shelves than to advertise in the Gazette?<sup>9</sup>

In sum: both Franklin and Whitefield had learned that the Anglo-American Atlantic world could be more closely knit together by words. They were part of the process of course, but they could not have had the success they enjoyed without other supportive innovations in information technology. The introduction of regular packet boat service, the rise of the newspapers, and the investment in port facilities enhanced the speed and spread of news. The coming of war heightened all of these, as merchants needed to know where danger lurked on the ship routes, at the same time as it made all communication and personal travel more perilous. And war is what came in the summer of 1739.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>David Waldstreicher, Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 115, 120-121; T. H. Breen, Marketplace of Revolution, 35, 54-56.

<sup>10</sup>Ian K. Steele, The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 208.

## **Chapter One            A Partnership of Mutual Convenience**

The spring of 1739 came late to Philadelphia. When it did come, the rain never seemed to end. The city once again buzzed with rumors of war between England and Spain. Conflict between the two European Superpowers dated back to the sixteenth century and came to a violent climax in the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) by the English fleet and the weather in the English Channel. Never again the equal of the English at sea, Spain still drew great wealth from its Caribbean, Mexican, Central American, and South American provinces, and the English continued to prey upon Spanish treasure ships, slave ships, and settlements. There was never really peace in American waters between the two nations. The episodic and inconclusive Anglo-Spanish war of 1722-1729 interrupted efforts to achieve some quiet, if not amity, between the countries. Disputes over who would and who could carry slaves from Africa to the Spanish colonies in America (the English claimed the right to do so, but in 1739, the Spanish closed the lucrative trade to English ships) fomented further conflict. The war would come in July, when George II allowed his navy to resume offensive operations against the Spanish.

News of the impending conflict was a staple at the taverns and inns on Market (formerly High) Street in Philadelphia, on Dock Street in Boston, as well as in Bristol and London, England. No one could tell what effect the war would have on trade, but in British ports ship captains and owners began outfitting their sloops and barks for privateering raids on Spanish merchant shipping. War could be a bonanza or a catastrophe, depending on the success of British naval efforts, the luck of the privateers, and a list of imponderables including disease, weather, and the

prices for imports and exports in distant markets.<sup>11</sup>

The fall brought to Philadelphia relief from the pestilent and muggy summer—news of victories over the Spanish; toasts to the King; and the arrival of a celebrity from England—George Whitefield. He had already caused a stir in South Carolina and Georgia the year before, preaching in the open air to hundreds, crowds including slaves and their masters, men and women, Europeans and Native Americans. Like Fortinbras in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Whitefield’s return to the colonies was much awaited.

[insert 1739 portrait of Whitefield here]

Some American observers were skeptical of all the reports, including those of gatherings of thousands to hear Whitefield in the fields around Bristol and London. Boston newspapers were especially quizzical. In mid-September, the Boston Evening-Post published a series of “Queries to Mr. Whitefield”: “it would require much more room than we have to spare to give a concise account of the movement of the Methodists during this month. Preaching in church-yards, commons, large spaces, and even in the streets of the city of London, are such new things, and things so little reconcilable to any method formerly in use amongst us, that it is no wonder that it alarmed those who were not in the secret, or that it procured the following letter to be addressed to a certain gentleman who is held to be the author of this new sect.” Whitefield was hardly the “author” of Methodism, that plum would go to his mentors, John and Charles Wesley. But the

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<sup>11</sup>Poor Richard’s Almanac (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), n.p.; John Huxtable Elliott, Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 233.

puritans in Boston, themselves something of a sect, were worried. It was a tradition within New England puritan churches to address pointed questions to ministers before they were hired. The newspaper querist put the old style interrogation to new use. “Queries to Mr. Whitefield...be pleased to specify, I. What are the principles, doctrines, articles of faith, motives and etc. which this extraordinary Light reveals, after what manner they come into the mind, and by what mark or character you distinguish them from the delusions of fancy or worse temptations.”<sup>12</sup>

Benjamin Franklin’s Philadelphia newspaper was more welcoming. His Gazette reprinted the account of Whitefield’s revival meetings that Richard Seward published in the London Daily Advertiser. On May 3rd, “the Reverend Mr. Whitefield preached to about 10,000 people, at Kennington Common. This day he is to preach at Wapping Chapel for the benefit of the Orphan House in George, and at Kennington Common again in the evening.” Whitefield was ostensibly collecting funds for the orphanage he had begun in Savannah the previous year, as well as to harvest converts. “In the evening he preached at Kennington Common to about 20,000 people, among whom were nearly forty coaches, besides chaises, and about one hundred on horseback, and tho’ there was so great a multitude, an awful silence was kept during the whole time of singing, prayers, and sermon.” One can only imagine the throng; Franklin’s readers surely did. Nothing in anyone’s experience compared to it. The sheer numbers were staggering (even if Franklin was credulous in reporting what Seward related to the London newspapers). The only comparable gatherings were London street mobs, and even these never quite matched the throng

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<sup>12</sup>Boston Evening-Post September 17, 1739.

at Whitefield's appearances.<sup>13</sup>

In October, Franklin reported that Whitefield was on his way to Philadelphia before returning to Georgia and his planned orphanage, he "choosing (as he therein alleges) to go thither by the way of Philadelphia." Though the Gazette regularly reported news from England, taking the London papers off the packet ships as they arrived and freely reprinting items (no permissions sought or given), Franklin was paying especially close attention to Whitefield's travels. He must already have had an inkling that publishing Whitefield would be good for both men.<sup>14</sup>

Whitefield arrived in the vicinity of city on the last day of October and entered it on the second of November, accompanied by his older convert and publicist William Seward. Seward would insure that the press coverage was adequate and properly shaped. A small entourage of converts completed the traveling party. Whitefield was not yet married (he would, quietly, in 1741) and his family life remained something of a mystery in his time and after. Like a whirlwind, however, he swept doubters, sinners, and skeptics up in his train.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Pennsylvania Gazette, July 26, 1739. The London mob was especially fond of executions and other public humiliations. Robert Brink Shoemaker, The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Continuum, 2004), 83-84.

<sup>14</sup>Pennsylvania Gazette, October 18, 1739; November 8, 1739.

<sup>15</sup>Arnold A. Dallimore, George Whitefield (London: Banner of Truth, 1970), 1: 413; Harry S. Stout, The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 157-158; John Gillies, Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield (Middleton, Conn.: Hunt and Noyes, 1837), 42-44.

Whitefield had a keen eye for places and spaces. Though still a young man, only a few months away from his twenty-sixth birthday, he had already traveled across an ocean three times, seen war and peace, and most important, had learned to select those sites best suited to outdoor preaching. He chose the balcony of the colony's Court House as his pulpit. The Court House was one of the most imposing buildings in Philadelphia. Constructed in 1709 of brick, steeply gabled, its four stories topped by a bell tower, it was the highest structure in the city until the completion of the bell spire of Christ Church in 1753. The Court House stood across the way from the Quaker Great Meeting House at the corner of Second and Market Streets. At the west end of the court house was a gallery to both sides of which a flight of steps led. Around the gallery, on the broad street, was a great space. (Part of the space was a viewing area for the stocks and the whipping post—common criminal punishments even in Quaker Philadelphia.) At six in the evening of November 2, 1739, many had gathered there. The bell in the Courthouse warned the populace of approaching danger, but this time the alarm was not one of fire or invasion, but a warning to the unconverted and the sinful that the pit of hell yawned open at their feet.<sup>16</sup>

[insert engraving of courthouse here]

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<sup>16</sup>John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884 (Everts: Philadelphia, 1884), 2: 857; 1253; View of Great Meeting House and the Court House in Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), after p. 62; Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 76.

Whitefield's journal, both a throwback to the first Puritans' desire to register in minute detail their spiritual state (the only way to gain some "assurance" that they had been among the chosen few saved by God's mercy) and a commercial project (for Whitefield already knew the importance of publicity in "his ministry"), recorded the incidents of his week and a half stay in the city. As he later wrote, "every particular dispensation of divine providence has some particular end to answer in those to whom it is sent." He threw himself into the ordeal of public preaching three times a day, private meetings with other members of the clergy, audiences with individuals and families, singing, praying, baptizing, catechizing, and not least, completing business deals. "Oh that my heart may be made meet for such a divine guest to reside in!" Mixed in were notes on his travels in the Delaware River Valley and the city of Philadelphia, for "going abroad, if duly improved, cannot but enlarge our ideas, and give us exalted thoughts of the greatness and goodness of God." But the most important passages narrated his mission: "Our Lord was with us as we came on our Way; our hearts burned within us whilst we talked to one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." This—his travel and his travail—always had a biblical parallel, what historians of American religion have called a "typology": "Oh how gloriously must the children of Israel pass through the wilderness, when they saw God's presence go with them."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>George Whitefield, A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal from His Embarking after the Embargo to His Arrival at Savannah in Georgia (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 53, 54; Whitefield, "Walking with God" The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield (London, 1772), 5: 29; Perry Miller, Roger Williams: His Contributions to the American Tradition (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 37, 45

The news of Whitefield's triumphs whet the curiosity of his fellow ministers and each day he "Met with some gracious souls, who discoursed with me sweetly concerning the things which belong to the kingdom of heaven." Whitefield took care of more mundane matters as well. For himself and his followers he "Hired a house at a very cheap rate." Franklin revealed Whitefield's choice: "in second street (the same in which Capt. Blair lately dwelt)," almost adjoining the Court House. To it came throngs of the curious and the penitent.<sup>18</sup>

Evening open-air revival meetings marked the high points of Whitefield's visit. On Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, he "read prayers and preached, rather to a more numerous congregation than I have seen yet." He stood on "the court house stairs" a few steps from his rental and could be heard all the way to the wharves. With his accustomed modesty he estimated that "about 6000 people" gathered in the streets below the court house gallery. "The inhabitants were very solicitous for my preaching in another place beside the church." As in Bristol and London, where Whitefield, (following the advice of his friend and mentor John Wesley) preached to multitudes in fields and on hillsides, "the generality of people" of Philadelphia seemed to prefer to hear the word under nature's ceiling rather than in church. In any case, there was no building in Philadelphia large enough to hold such an imposing crowd.

The next night, the throng grown to 8000, he again ascended the courthouse steps to preach. "I never observed so profound a silence before my coming. All was exceeding hushed and quiet. The night was clear, but not cold. Lights were in most of the windows all around us, for a considerable distance. The people did not seem weary of standing, nor was I weary of

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<sup>18</sup>Whitefield, Journal from his Embarking, 54.

speaking.”<sup>19</sup>

Whitefield’s attempts at persuasion rubbed some of the ministerial fellowship the wrong way, but that was nothing new. He confided to his journal (hence to its thousands of future readers) that the “generality” of the Church of England “do not preach or live the truth as it is in Jesus” that “Papists” were misled by their priests, that the Quakers should show by outward signs what their “inner light” revealed to them, and that “in bearing my testimony against the unchristian principles and practices of the generality of our clergy” he spoke with “meekness” as well as “zeal.” He was already engaged with in controversies with Anglican authorities in Bristol and the Bishop of London over his ministry, the former threatening to excommunicate him if he continued to preach without a license from the Church of England (Whitefield was ordained, but did not have a pulpit assigned him in the city) and the latter reminding ministers not to show so much enthusiasm in their ministry (a clear slap at Whitefield). The next year would find him engaged in a running fight with some in the Methodist movement over doctrine (though he professed to love the Wesleys, the founders of the movement, as brothers), and with various conservative Congregationalists and Presbyterians over preparation for conversion.

But this mission was a success as far as he was concerned. The following year, once more in Philadelphia, he recalled that when “I stood upon a Balcony on society Hill, from whence I preached...and felt somewhat of that Divine Fire” many were “converted to my ministry” and thousands seemed “laboring under deep convictions” how “the Lord Jesus made himself manifest

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<sup>19</sup>Whitefield, Journal from his Embarking, 57, 58.

to their souls.”<sup>20</sup>

Whitefield’s repertoire of dramatic gestures and intonations was not quite matched by his repertory of sermons. As Franklin later wrote of them in his Autobiography (and Franklin would know whereof he spoke, for he published Whitefield’s sermons), a practiced listener could tell which of the sermons were new and which were repeated. The latter had a polish that the former lacked, and Whitefield delivered the old ones with greater panache. He practiced these, but gave them extemporaneously, the tears and other dramatic touches real.<sup>21</sup>

But those sermons he gave were memorable. New England revival leader Jonathan Edwards looked forward to the arrival of Whitefield in Massachusetts, writing to the Englishman “It has been with refreshment of the soul that I have heard of one raised up in the Church of England to revive the mysterious, spiritual, despised, and exploded doctrines of the gospel, and full of a spirit of zeal for the promotion of real vital piety...I hope this is the dawning of a day of god’s mighty power and glorious grace to the world of mankind.” After hearing Whitefield preach, Sara Edwards, Edwards’ wife, recalled “it was wonderful to see what a spell he cast over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed

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<sup>20</sup>Whitefield, Journal from the Embarking, 55, 62; Whitefield, A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal from A Few Days after his Arrival at Georgia to His Second Return Thither from Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 29, 30, 31; Stout, Divine Dramatist, 80-83, 110, 133; Lambert, “Pedlar”, 172-173; Gillies, Memoirs, 34, 36-37.

<sup>21</sup>Stout, Divine Dramatist, 104.

sob...A prejudiced person, I know, might say that this is all theatrical artifice and display, but not so will anyone think who has seen and known him.”<sup>22</sup>

Whitefield’s style seemed extemporaneous, an effusion of the spirit. As Josiah Smith, witness to his preaching in South Carolina recalled, “With what a flow of words, what a ready profusion of language, did he speak to us upon the great concerns of our souls.” Words and gesture combined in an almost “angelick” mise-en-scene, as Nathan Cole, a Connecticut farmer, who traveled for miles to hear Whitefield speak, reported “and my hearing him preach gave me a heart wound.” But what seemed to Smith and Cole improvisation moved by the Holy Ghost was in fact a much practiced and in some cases an already published sermon.<sup>23</sup>

Even some of those “prejudiced people” Sara Edwards decried conceded Whitefield’s oratorical powers. The English lexicographer and wit Samuel Johnson quipped that Whitefield “would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit or were he to preach from a tree.” The Scottish skeptic philosopher David Hume joked, after hearing one of Whitefield’s performances, “Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the sacred portals and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God.” New York City Anglican minister Richard Carlton was not amused by Whitefield’s message to the city’s bondmen, in large measure because he feared the impact of Whitefield’s words upon the lowest rung of the city’s people. “Not that I should

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<sup>22</sup>Edwards to Whitefield quoted in George Marsden, Jonathan Edwards: A Life (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 204; Sara Edwards quoted in Stout, Divine Dramatist, 127.

<sup>23</sup>Smith and Cole quoted in Sandra M. Gustafson, Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 46-47.

think Mr Whitefield to be so extremely wicked as to promote the destruction of this city,” but the slaves who tried to burn the city down in 1741 might have been urged on by Whitefield’s offhand comment “I have wondered that [mistreated slaves] ...have not more frequently rose in arms against their owners.”<sup>24</sup>

Drawn to the gatherings by curiosity as much as anything, Franklin found himself almost spellbound. He did not come to be converted. He was never much of a believer. As he wrote for his own benefit in 1728, “But since there is in all Men something like a natural Principle which inclines them to Devotion or the Worship of some unseen Power; And since Men are endued with Reason superior to all other Animals that we are in our World acquainted with; Therefore I think it seems required of me, and my Duty, as a Man, to pay Divine Regards to Something.” Not exactly an endorsement of Christian doctrines, this. There were many supreme beings, but of that who watched over Franklin, he conceived, “for many Reasons that he is a good Being, and as I should be happy to have so wise, good and powerful a Being my Friend, let me consider in what Manner I shall make myself most acceptable to him. Next to the Praise due, to his Wisdom, I believe he is pleased and delights in the Happiness of those he has created; and since without Virtue Man can have no Happiness in this World, I firmly believe he delights to see me Virtuous,

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<sup>24</sup>Johnson and Hume quoted in Allan Galloway, The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 30; Carlton quoted in Jill Lepore, New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan (New York: Knopf, 2005), 188; Whitefield, Three Letters From the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1740), 16.

because he is pleas'd when he sees me Happy." Whitefield's God was pleased when he was worshiped with perfect faith. Franklin's God was happy when Franklin was happy.<sup>25</sup>

Nor was Franklin easily fooled by someone who claimed a directly line to God's ear. He had a sharp eye for dissimulation and would not brook it. "In short I believe it is impossible for a man, though he has all the cunning of a devil, to live and die and villain, and yet conceal it so well as to carry the name of any honest fellow to the gawe with him." If no one else could see behind the facade, Franklin thought he could. And he liked what he saw and heard.<sup>26</sup>

Much later in his life, he recalled with near perfect clarity Whitefield's eloquence. "He preached one evening from the top of the court house steps, which are in the middle of the market street, and on the west side of second street which crosses it at right angles. Both streets were filled with his hearers to a considerable distance. Being among the hindmost in Market Street, I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be hard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the [Delaware] River, and I found his voice distinct till I came near Front Street, when some noise in that street, obscured it. Imagining then a semi-circle, of which my distance would be the radius, and that if it were filled with auditors, to each of whom I allowed two square feet, I compute that he might well be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconciled me to the newspaper

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<sup>25</sup>Benjamin Franklin, "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion" unpublished essay, November 20, 1728 Papers of Franklin 1:101-109.

<sup>26</sup>Franklin, Journal of a Voyage, July 29, 1726, in EdmundS. Morgan, ed., Not Your Usual Founding father: Selected Readings from Benjamin Franklin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 9.

accounts of his having preached to 25000 people in the [London area] field.”<sup>27</sup>

That was also a lot of potential readers. Franklin knew a good deal when he heard one and he approached Whitefield with an offer. Franklin’s rival, Philadelphia Printer Andrew Bradford, had already published two of the sermons soon after Whitefield arrived. Franklin knew he had to act quickly, lest Bradford win the right to publish the journals in the colonies as well.<sup>28</sup>

Whitefield’s journal never mentioned his meeting with Franklin or the precise terms of the agreement the two made. Actually, the two met before Franklin had heard the minister speak. It was a private audience. Franklin knew where Whitefield lodged—the crowds going in and coming out after personal meetings, singing and praying were a telltale indication. One could probably hear it from the street. The two men must have sized one another up. Franklin was a little under six feet, solidly built and already inclining somewhat to corpulence. With his “thin tight lips and his high domed forehead,” he was an imposing figure. Perhaps to the meeting he wore a replacement for the “coat lined with silk” and the “fine holland shirt” stolen from his house earlier that year. Franklin was no longer the poor apprentice looking for work. In face to face encounters he strove never to give offense, a manner that outsiders might think “complaisant,” but was in fact a mask. Whitefield was round-faced, stooped, and thin, with a long sharp nose and bulbous lips. His most striking feature was a lazy left eye that drifted in toward his nose, giving him a cross eyed look. Later in life, he too would grow heavy set. Franklin’s portraits were kind to him, the

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<sup>27</sup>Edmund S. Morgan, Benjamin Franklin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 19-21; Franklin, Autobiography, 179.

<sup>28</sup>Lambert, “Pedlar”, 77.

prosperous businessman giving way to the wise and prudent statesman. Though Whitefield would commission a series of portraits, they were never flattering, and the caricatures of him as a religious fanatic were far more popular.<sup>29</sup>

[insert here the cross-eyed Whitefield drawing]

Franklin was no sooner in Whitefield's presence, than the preacher probably asked the printer for a contribution to the orphanage. Franklin looked about at the objects that charity had deposited with Whitefield for transport to Savannah--candlesticks, dishes, nails, shot, lead bars, powder, blankets, bed stuffing, cloth and clothing of all kinds, curtain fabric, and even silk. The catalogue he later reported implies that Franklin tarried a while, his and Whitefield's attention on the baubles of this world rather than Franklin's fate in the next. Franklin demurred then and after (for Whitefield was nothing if not persistent). But the meeting was fruitful in other ways. A week later the Gazette revealed that "the Rev. Mr. Whitefield having given me copies of his journals and sermons, with leave to print the same; I propose to publish them with all expedition, if I find sufficient encouragement." At this time, most book publication relied upon "subscriptions," that is, advance orders. "Those therefore who are inclined to encourage this work, are desired speedily to send in their names to me, that I may take measures accordingly."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin: an American Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 37; Esmond Wright, Franklin of Philadelphia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 10, 52; Lambert, "Pedlar", 5; Stout, Divine Dramatist, 41.

<sup>30</sup>Franklin, Autobiography, 177; Pennsylvania Gazette, November 8, 1739; November 15, 1739.

Franklin had been involved in one religious imbroglio already. He had, early in the 1730s, attended services at the Presbyterian church. He found the minister Jedediah Andrews uninspiring, however, and after a month of regular attendance, spent his Sunday mornings elsewhere. Then Samuel Hemphill arrived to assist Andrews and Franklin returned. Hemphill's preaching delivered "with a good voice, most excellent discourses." Like Franklin, Hemphill had little use for dogma and less for predestination. He preached the practical virtues. This bothered some of the elders, and they called for his ouster. Franklin, under an assumed name, published vigorous defenses. But when Hemphill borrowed a little too much of a sermon from a published source, his stock among his supporters declined precipitously. He left in disgrace, plagiarism having tarnished his reputation. Franklin moved on to other less controversial causes.<sup>31</sup>

No one could accuse Whitefield of plagiarizing his journals. The arrangement—Franklin to publish, Whitefield to supply clean and edited copy—would hold for the next thirty-one years. For Franklin, though he never accepted Whitefield's invitation to confess sin and be born again, genuinely respected the minister. Indeed, as Franklin later conceded, "The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers, and how much they admir'd and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them, by assuring them that they were naturally half beasts and half devils. It was wonderful to see the change soon made in the manners of our inhabitants. From being thoughtless or indifferent about religion, it seem'd as if all the world were growing religious, so that one could not walk

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<sup>31</sup>Franklin, Autobiography, 167-168.

thro' the town in an evening without hearing psalms sung in different families of every street.”

Even the frugal Franklin was finally persuaded to support the orphanage. In 1740, after once again refusing to contribute, “I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give the silver and he finished so admirably, that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector’s dish.”<sup>32</sup>

Whitefield prepared his leave-taking from the city with as much care as he had prepared his arrival. “Many to my knowledge have already been quickened, and awakened to see that religious does not consist in outward things, but righteousness, peace and joy in the holy ghost.” The news of his coming departure brought even larger crowds to his auditory and his home. “My house was filled with people, who came in to join in psalms and family prayer...their hearts, I believe, were loaded with a sense of sin, the only preparative for the soul-refreshing visitations of Jesus Christ.” If this was a return to old Calvinism, then Calvin had miscounted the proportion of damned and saved. For the door to justification was opened as wide as the door to Whitefield’s lodgings, and as many poured through the former as through the latter. Whitefield looked on and was pleased. “Blessed be the Lord for sending me thither.”<sup>33</sup>

Then it was time to go—on November 13, a Monday, Whitefield consigned a packet of

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<sup>32</sup>Franklin, Autobiography, 175-176, 177.

<sup>33</sup>Whitefield, Journal from the Embarking, 61; Pennsylvania Gazette, December 6, 1739.

letters to be sent to London, where his presence was still felt, and then on by horse to New York City. Franklin spread journalistic fronds along the path, “Before he returns to England he designs (God willing) to preach the Gospel in every province in America, belonging to the English,” or so Whitefield must have confided to Franklin. Franklin asked New York newspaper editor John Peter Zenger to print a poetic notice of Whitefield’s ministry. “See! See! He come, the heavenly sound flow from his charming tongue, rebellious men are seized with fear with deep conviction stung. Listening we stand with vast surprise...while he declare their crimson guilt...while WHITEFIELD to thy sacred strained surprised we silent still...and flock around the song.”

But even as he asked a fellow printer to join in praise of Whitefield’s devotions, Franklin could not curb his own sharp wit—not when it came to organized religion. So he reported this from London: Whitefield’s preaching “is become so offensive to the clergy of this kingdom, that ‘tis said one of my Lords the bishops...went to the king to desire his majesty to silence him...his majesty seemed at a loss how to satisfy the bishop, which a noble duke present observing humbly proposed that in order to prevent Mr. Whitefield’s preaching for the future, his majesty would be graciously pleased to make him a bishop.” To those upper class snobs closer to home who “affirm that Mr. Whitefield’s tenets are mischievous” Franklin’s Plebeian alter ego Obadiah Plainman huffed they “consider us as a stupid herd, in whom the light of reason is extinguished” and “expect our plaudits by reviling us to our faces” but the throngs of ordinary people who heard Whitefield knew better than this “gibberish.” When Franklin took your part, he did not do it by half measures.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Whitefield, Journal from the Embarking, 63; Pennsylvania Gazette, November 15, 1739;

Whitefield returned briefly from New England and in apparent triumph, this time on his way south. From November 23 to the end of November, he tarried and preached. Though it rained they stood to hear him, twice a day, as the holy procession made its way south to Annapolis and on to Charles Town. In the wake of his second visit, he had left controversy, the contrarian spirit of New England's ministerial fraternity perhaps influencing him to offend more than his usual quota of critics. Richard Peters, rector of Christ Church and a friend of Franklin (Peters was a benefactor of the Library Company and helped found the Philadelphia Academy), openly criticized Whitefield as a ranting zealot. Whitefield replied that Peters was "an entire stranger to the inward spirit." In Charles Town more controversy awaited (the commissary of the Church of England was not pleased, and said so), and more throngs come to hear Whitefield's message.<sup>35</sup>

Whitefield had already sampled Franklin's wry views of religion, apparently, though Franklin made it a policy to be polite. But as persistent as Franklin was in his skepticism, so was Whitefield in ministry. A year after they first met, Whitefield was still at it. The publishing arrangement came first, but it was invariably followed by Whitefield's appeal to Franklin to

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November 22, 1739; November 29, 1739; Franklin, writing as Obadiah Plainman, Pennsylvania Gazette, May 15, 1740..

<sup>35</sup>Pennsylvania Gazette, December 6, 1739; Stout, Divide Dramatist, 110, 120; J.A. Leo Lemay, The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 424; Hubertis Maurice Cummings, Richard Peters: Provincial Secretary and Cleric, 1704-1776 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 44.

repent and accept Jesus into his life. “You may print my [biography] as you desire. God willing, I shall correct my two volumes of sermons, and send them the very first opportunity. Pray write to me by every ship, that goes shortly to Charles-Town...Dear Sir, Adieu. I do not despair of your seeing the reasonableness of christianity. Apply to God; be willing to do the divine will, and you shall know it.” Busy still, too. “I think I have been on shore 73 days, and have been enabled to travel upwards of 800 miles, and to preach 170 times, besides very frequent exhortations at private houses.” Nor had Whitefield forgotten the ostensible purpose of his mission. “I have collected, in goods and money, upwards of £700 sterling, for the Orphan-house; blessed be God! Great and visible are the fruits of my late, as well as former feeble labours, and people in general seem more eager after the word than ever. O the love of God to Your unworthy friend.”<sup>36</sup>

The partnership arrangement benefitted both men, one more evidence, if it were necessary, that both men possessed a keen eye for opportunity. Though it seemed the meeting was a coincidence, in fact it was almost predictable coming together of the two paths they had traveled. For both had risen from obscurity to fame through circumstances not entirely of their own manufacture.

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<sup>36</sup>Whitefield to Franklin, November 26, 1740, A Select Collection of Letters of the late George Whitefield, M.A. ... (London, 1772), 1:226.

## Chapter Two Franklin Becomes a Printer and Whitefield Becomes a Preacher

In 1771, in the quiet of an English manor house's garden, Benjamin Franklin looked back on his life. He could not have predicted that great events lay ahead, for at 65 years of age he was already past the life expectancy of his generation. But his recollection of his days in Philadelphia was crystal clear. By 1740, he remembered, "my business was now continually augmenting, and my circumstances growing daily easier, my newspaper having become very profitable, as being for a time almost the only one in this and the neighboring provinces." Life was good. It had not always been so, however.<sup>37</sup>

Franklin was not a native of Philadelphia, though the two are inseparable in our memory of him. He was born and reared in Boston, another port city tied to the fortunes of the empire, but very different in many ways from his chosen home to the South. Franklin was born on January 17, 1706, his father Josiah an immigrant candlemaker, his mother, Abiah Folger Franklin, his father's second wife. He was the youngest male offspring of their union. Franklin found a little space for himself in what must have been a very crowded house (though the children were placed in apprenticeships or "put out" to service as soon as they were old enough) by reading. He devoured what he could find, though there was rarely enough. In 1731, he would help found a Library Company in Philadelphia, buying and borrowing books so that the young would have books to read and a place to read them.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin ed. Leonard Labaree et al., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 180.

<sup>38</sup>These and the later paragraphs information on Franklin from Isaacson, Franklin, 5-101;

Franklin had two years of formal schooling, and then was apprenticed to his older brother James, a printer. Franklin still scrounged as much time as he could for his reading. Eclectic in his tastes (or rather omnivorous) he consumed everything from John Bunyan's puritan allegory Pilgrim's Progress, to Plutarch's Parallel Lives of ancient Greek and Roman statesmen. Though many who could read could not write (writing became common with the introduction of "spellers" later in the century), Franklin was determined to master prose style. He copied from the fashionable magazines of the time, set aside the original and tried to recall from memory what he had written.

Soon he had the chance to try out his prose. Only fifteen when his brother embarked on a newspaper publishing career with the New-England Courant, in 1722 Franklin anonymously crafted and delivered to his brother's shop door the "Silence Dogood" essays. Silence was supposedly a middle aged woman whose life had been one hardship after another. But the voice was pure Franklin, remarkably mature for a lad of sixteen: "Know then, That I am an Enemy to Vice, and a Friend to Vertue. I am one of an extensive Charity, and a great Forgiver of private Injuries: A hearty Lover of the Clergy and all good Men, and a mortal Enemy to arbitrary Government & unlimited Power. I am naturally very jealous for the Rights and Liberties of my Country; & the least appearance of an Incroachment on those invaluable Privileges, is apt to make

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Gordon S. Wood, the Americanization of Benjamin Franklin (New York: Penguin, 2004), 17-60; Brands, The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 9-156; and Esmond Wright, Franklin of Philadelphia, 14-56; all of which depend, at least for the early account, on Franklin's Autobiography.

my Blood boil exceedingly. I have likewise a natural Inclination to observe and reprove the Faults of others, at which I have an excellent Faculty. I speak this by Way of Warning to all such whose Offences shall come under my Cognizance, for I never intend to wrap my Talent in a Napkin. To be brief; I am courteous and affable, good-humour'd (unless I am first provok'd,) and handsome, and sometimes witty, but always, SIR, Your Friend, and Humble Servant, SILENCE

DOGOOD.”<sup>39</sup> As the editorial slant of the paper was anti-government, Franklin’s satirical commentaries neatly fit its pages and his brother, unaware of Ben’s authorship, published them. There was more than a little social animosity in the essays, the targets often marked by upper class hypocrisy and self-interest. But even at the height of his censorship of the unworthy rich, Franklin was no rebel. Wit was his weapon of choice, not rabbleroising.

Boston was still not ready for such ribaldry. In many ways, it was a city under siege. Into it, during the wars of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century between England and France, and their northern colonies, poured refugees. The war on the northeastern frontiers—Maine (a province of Massachusetts) and western Massachusetts was truly as the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes described it a half century earlier—“a war of each against all.” From 1689 through 1713 dynastic struggles begun in Europe between England and France and their allies came to America as King William’s War (1689-1697) and Queen Anne’s War (1701-1713). From settlements on Cape Breton Island (Ile Royale when it was French), Montreal, and Quebec, French and Indian war parties swooped down on isolated New England towns. From Salem and Boston colonial forces launched counter attacks. Raiding parties on both sides ravaged villages,

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<sup>39</sup>Silence Dogood, The New-England Courant, April 16, 1722.

took hostages, and destroyed crops. Those who could flee the French and their Indian allies found temporary homes in Salem and Boston, bringing with them tales of atrocities. Young Bostonians who joined in the fight often did not return—disease and wounds cost them their lives. Fearful of the disorder and crime of wartime, the city expanded the night watch. Boston was not a happy place. Peace in Europe quieted immediate fears, but the generation that came of age in wartime would never forget its terrors.<sup>40</sup>

Within a year, his brother discovered the identity of Silence Dogood and the animosity between them became intolerable. Ben Franklin left Boston and the remaining years on his apprenticeship behind. Technically, he was a runaway, and could be returned forcibly. No attempt was made by his brother or his father to pursue him, however. He made his way to New York City in October, 1723, but found that no one wanted a journeyman printer. With no patron or friend in the city, Franklin might have slipped into the ranks of the “able poor,” vagrant assigned to the workhouse. But Franklin did not despair. He was good at making friends and making the rounds, and at William Bradford’s print shop he learned that William’s son, Andrew, might need an assistant.

Andrew’s shop was in Philadelphia, and Franklin had enough money to pay in part for the short trip from Manhattan to Perth Amboy, in North Jersey, thence to cross New Jersey to the Delaware River, and so on to Philadelphia. The boat was caught in a storm, driven away from the Jersey side of the Hudson, and nearly sank off the south shore of Long Island. Franklin was a

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<sup>40</sup>Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742 (New York: Knopf, 1956), 83, 217.

swimmer, however, and regained the Shore. He resumed his trek the next day. Across New Jersey he traveled by foot, fearing that he would be taken up as a runaway. Nearly exhausted and feverish, he at last found passage on a Delaware River boat and landed at the edge of Front Street, Philadelphia. “I was in my working dress, my best clothes being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey; my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings; I knew no soul, nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with traveling, rowing, and want of rest. I was very hungry, and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar and about a shilling in copper.”

Almost destitute, but still beholden, he gave what he had to “the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refused it...but I insisted on their taking it, a man being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty.” Of course, Franklin wrote this account of his first moment in the city almost fifty years later, when he too had plenty!<sup>41</sup>

[insert here Cabot “Prospect of the City of Philadelphia” (waterfront, 1720) ]

When Franklin arrived, Philadelphia had but two thousand inhabitants. By the time Whitefield visited, it had over 10,000 residents and was growing. Later Franklin, looking at his city, would find its growth an example of the “American multiplication table.” First proprietor William Penn expected his “green country town” to grow and planned the city’s dimensions with that in mind. He envisioned a grid pattern that his aide Thomas Holmes, a map maker, designed. The grid pattern facilitated the development of residential and commercial blocks. The original city plot, some 1200 acres between the Delaware and the Schuylkill Rivers, would become the model for city planning in the future United States. The main streets of Broad and High (now

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<sup>41</sup>Franklin, Autobiography, 75.

Market) were avenues, and green squares set in the plan resembled those of Christopher Wren's proposal for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666. While the Wren Plan did influence the expansion of London to the West, Penn's plan had an unplanned result. Instead of spreading evenly across the land to the west, owners and occupants clustered up and down Front Street along the Delaware River shore.

This pattern of settlement was dictated by the same fortuity that promoted the city's rapid growth—overseas trade. When the trade (and the imperial economy) flourished, so did Penn's city. The Quakers led the way, “shrewd and successful,” frugal and honest (in the main), the Quaker merchants profited not only from their own skills, but from their close ties with British Quaker families. (Franklin was never a Quaker, but he never dissuaded anyone from mistaking him for one.) Because Philadelphia's mercantile success depended on such ties as the Quakers had with family in the home country, when the British economy suffered reverses, as in the 1720s, Philadelphia suffered. For as Peter Kalm, a Swedish scientist and economist who visited the city in 1748, reported, “Philadelphia carries on a great trade both with the inhabitants of the country and with other parts of the world, especially the West Indies...and the various English colonies in North America. Yet none but English ships are allowed to come into this port.” The city's fate was tied to the empire's.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House, 48, 50; Edwin B. Bronner, “Village into Town 1701-1744” in Russell F. Weigley, ed., Philadelphia: A 300-Year History (New York: Norton, 1982), 33-37; Peter Kalm, “Travels into North America” [1753] quoted in Oscar Handlin, ed., This Was America (New York: Harper, 1949), 22.

Franklin attributed his good health to his salubrious habits, in particular his moderation, for Philadelphia was not a particularly healthy place to live. Surrounded by the wetlands of the lower Delaware River and the marshes on the Schuylkill, Philadelphia suffered from mosquito borne malaria and yellow fever in addition to London's maladies. The city's population suffered from cholera, smallpox, dysentery, typhoid fever, and other contagious, parasitical, and sexually transmitted diseases. Dampness, population density, poor hygiene, and inadequate diet added to the recipe for early death. Franklin's beloved son died at the age of 4, in 1736, a victim of the smallpox and a lesson on the frailty of life that Franklin never forgot.<sup>43</sup>

In the Spring and Summer of 1744, Annapolis, Maryland, physician Alexander Hamilton toured the northern colonies for his health. His stays in Philadelphia were not particularly pleasant, as he recalled in his Itinerarium. His first view of the city came on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1744. "At my entering the city, I observed the regularity of the streets, but at the same time the majority of the house mean and low and much decayed, the streets in general not paved, very dirty, and obstructed with rubbish and lumber, but their frequent building excuses that." The weather oppressed him. "The heat in this city is excessive, the sun's rays being reflected with such power from the brick houses and from the street pavement which is brick." Awnings provided some shade at street level, and balconies above the streets allowed the home owners some respite and

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<sup>43</sup>J. H. Powell, Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague Of Yellow Fever In Philadelphia In 1793 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 1-2; Billy G. Smith, Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods (State College, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 225-229; Lemay, Franklin, 2:24.

perhaps a breeze in the early evening.<sup>44</sup>

For the city was busy. The shops opened at five a.m, and the main streets on Penn's grid plan were soon echoing to the clatter of horses and the clang of iron rimmed wagon wheels. "The market in this city is perhaps the largest in North-America." To it and the shops in the city came the produce of the surrounding farm land—"bread, flower, and pork." Everything not sold in the city was carted down to the Delaware River docks and there loaded on board coasters and ocean going vessels. Some of the vessels were "outfitting as privateers," bound for the Caribbean to capture French and Spanish merchantmen and bring the goods back to Philadelphia as the spoils of war to be sold at auction or divided among the captain and crew.<sup>45</sup>

It was a city grown hungry, but not yet fat, on the success of its merchants. The Quaker founders of the colony and the city led the way, but they were soon joined by Germans, English, French Huguenots, Scots, and even a handful of Jews in the overseas trade. The trade was full of risks—lost ships, lost cargoes, fraud, default, and simply sending the wrong goods to the wrong market. Everything depended upon good contacts in England and other ports of call. Trustworthy middlemen were essential, as was cheap warehousing at both ends. Often called a triangular trade (from the mainland colonies to England, to the Caribbean), the Atlantic trade was far more complex in reality. Philadelphia merchants invested in the slave trade, for example, carrying slaves from Africa to the English West Indies, on-loading sugar and molasses, and returning these

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<sup>44</sup>Alexander Hamilton, "The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton" in Wendy Martin, ed., Colonial American Travel Narratives (New York: Penguin, 1994), 189, 192.

<sup>45</sup>Hamilton, "Itinerarium," 197.

to mainland ports.

All Philadelphia ships were bound, at least in theory, to obey the Navigation Acts. These parliamentary statutes required that certain staple goods produced in the colonies go directly to England, all carriers be of British or colonial registry, and all imports from non-British sources stop first at British ports and be reshipped to the colonies from the home country. As well, the colonies were not to print their own money or to compete with British manufactures. Customs officials in the colonies and royal governors were to police this system. In fact, colonial merchants found ways around the regulations, including smuggling and bribing the customs officials. Everyone in Philadelphia knew who was on the take and who violated the laws.<sup>46</sup>

Merchants and tradesmen often took their meals at the taverns. Hamilton sat among the “Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; there were Roman Catholicks, Church [of England] men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen [evangelicals] Methodists, Seventh day men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew.” Hamilton joined in the conversation as it swirled around politics and the war, prices and prospects for trade. Hamilton found the evenings’ gatherings convivial and the exchange of opinions “agreeable and instructive.”<sup>47</sup>

Hamilton barely took note of the servants, laborers, and apprentices who lived on the alleys or the back streets, but the city teemed with them. Philadelphia, once a haven for the oppressed Quakers, had become a warehouse of peoples from all over Europe. “Common

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<sup>46</sup>Arthur Jensen, The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia (Madison, Wisc.: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1963), 135.

<sup>47</sup>Hamilton, “Itinerarium,” 191, 192, 319.

laborers” had come from the hinterlands of the colonies, from Wales, England, Scotland, Southwestern Germany, Ireland, and ports all over Europe. The very lucky, plucky, or skilled married into the mercantile classes. Some made the leap to craftsman, artisans, or shopkeepers. The years of peace before 1739 were good ones for the “middling sort,” and prospects abounded for the able, ambitious, and fortunate. Most of the immigrants worked for wages or in apprenticeships for “found” (room and board). Some fell into perpetual poverty, illness or madness stealing away their youth. These destitute men and women found a bed and help at the Alms house, chartered in 1734. Its location on a rise north of the city was salubrious, but it was little more than a provincial version of the old English poor house and a revolving door for a class of marginal men and women.<sup>48</sup>

Slaves filled the streets as well. Franklin owned at least two young male slaves from 1735 until he left for England, in 1757. They were employed in his household and shop. In 1750, he purchased a married slave couple. By 1750, of those free men and women wealthy enough to leave estates for probate in Philadelphia, nearly one-half owned slaves. Gary Nash estimates that fully fifteen percent of the dock workers were slaves. Although the Quakers were the first Americans to decry slavery and the slave trade, African bondmen and women continued to pour

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<sup>48</sup>Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, 357-358, 394-395; Billy G. Smith, “The Vicissitudes of Fortune: The Career of Laboring Men in Philadelphia, 1750-1800” in Stephen Innes, ed., Work and Labor in Early America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 221-251; Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 74.

into the city. The number would peak during the French and Indian War, some 1400 out of the 18,000 inhabitants of the city in 1760 were slaves. They worked as house servants, day laborers, alongside master craftsmen in shops and forges, and in the shipworks. They did the hard and dirty work of cleaning human and animal waste from the streets, alleys, and stables. Some formed families, worshiped in their own churches, and learned trades. All dreamed of freedom.<sup>49</sup>

Religious diversity (of a limited sort) enlivened the culture of the two cities. During Dr. Alexander Hamilton's stay in Philadelphia, he treated himself to "a very Calvinisticall sermon preached by an old holder" in "whose assembly was a collection of the most curious old fashioned screwed up faced, both men and women, that ever I saw." At the Roman chapel "I heard some fine musick and saw some pritty ladies. The priest, after saying mass, catechized some children in English and insisted much upon our submitting our reason to religion and believing of every thing that God said (or properly speaking, every thing that the priest says). As a result, Hamilton, "was taken with a sick qualm...which I attributed to the gross nonsense proceeding from the mouth of the priest." Philadelphia boasted 20 churches by the end of the French and Indian War, and alongside the Church of England's houses of worship one could find German Reformed, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Roman Catholic and a Jewish synagogue.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Lemay, Franklin, 2:278; Gary B. Nash, Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9-14.

<sup>50</sup>Hamilton, "Itinerarium," 320; Patricia U. Bonomi, Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion,

The city and Franklin would grow wealthy and wise together. For the present, teenaged Franklin found himself looking for lodging and work. He visited Andrew Bradford and found William, visiting from New York (no doubt his trip not so harrowing as Franklin's). William Bradford introduced Franklin to Samuel Keimer, a printer and shopkeeper. Franklin agreed to Keimer's terms and went to work for him. Though Franklin thought Keimer a "disheveled and quirky man," the older man's penchant for philosophical debate and his odd religious views afforded Franklin many hours of sporting conversation. Always improving the leisure time he found on his hands, Franklin sought friendships with other young men in his situation. In later years, he would turn it into a literary club that he called the "Junto."<sup>51</sup>

In the meantime, Franklin was looking for a patron. The colonial world ran on patronage and clientage—young men seeking to gain the favorable attention of those above them in status, repaying assistance with loyalty. Patronage created dependency. John Hancock, for example, "made work for people, erected homes he did not need. He built ships that he sold at a loss." But the men whom he patronized repaid him with steadfast political loyalty to him. If one came from the "middling sort," one needed a patron, or so Franklin reasoned. With this in mind, Franklin sought out the lieutenant governor of the colony, Sir William Keith. So well cast was Franklin's written plea to the lieutenant governor for succor that Keith came to Keimer's shop and offered to

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Society, and Politics in Colonial America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 90.

<sup>51</sup>Wright, Franklin of Philadelphia, 29; Brands, First American, 40; Isaacson, Franklin, 37, 39; J.A. Leo Lemay, The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 1: Journalist, 1706-1730 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 206.

aid the young man.<sup>52</sup>

Keith helped Franklin return to Boston to visit his family. Franklin took the opportunity to visit with aging Boston puritan leader Cotton Mather (a target of Silence Dogood) and the two reconciled. Mather was a septuagenarian who was one of the most prolific of American puritan writers (no less than 600 sermons and books in print). He still yearned for the time when New England was the promised land and puritans expected Christ to come to it first in the days of final judgment. But Ben and James did not reconcile, and a letter from Keith asking Franklin to return to Philadelphia provided ample excuse for Franklin to bid his family and his birthplace farewell.

Franklin did not tarry long in Philadelphia. He pressed Keith to help him travel to England to learn more of the printer's trade and make useful contacts, what today one would call "networking." Keith offered to supply Franklin with a letter of credit. The letter of credit was the eighteenth-century equivalent of today's bank check, payable to the bearer by the person to whom the letter was addressed. The letter represented funds the writer had, supposedly, deposited with the person or institution to whom the letter was addressed. Along with other forms of "commercial paper" called bills of exchange and promissory notes, the letter of credit allowed business dealings over long distances among individuals who might not even know one another.

But no letter of credit was ever delivered from Keith to Franklin. Perhaps there had been a misunderstanding. Perhaps Keith had simply failed to honor his promise. There was also the possibility that the letter had been intercepted, and another, unintended, recipient put the letter to

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<sup>52</sup>Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalization of the American Revolution (New York: Knopf, 1992), 57, 88.

use. When Franklin arrived in London, on Christmas Eve, 1724, he had only his wits and will on which to rely.

The nineteen-year old was dazzled by London, one of the world's capitals, with its elegant Georgian and Augustinian town houses, its ancient Guildhalls, and its palaces. He saw as well the twisted alleys that led to the waterfront and the squalor of backstreet rickety wooden walk-ups. Franklin's eye missed nothing. He found work with a printer and for a year plied that trade, avoiding loose women, drink, and infirmity. It was not easy in London to abstain from any of these vices. He moved up from the basement jobs of lugging type to the composing room, saving money, lending money at interest (and collecting), and doing some writing of his own. His talents, judiciously demonstrated, led to a good reputation—something that Franklin was finding essential to success; that and frugality. He returned to Philadelphia a year and a half later—wiser, more cynical perhaps, now a grown man more determined than ever to succeed at his trade and his life.

And he did. He shined as a junior partner in Thomas Denham's retail outlet; as a manager in Samuel Keimer's print shop; as Hugh Meredith's partner in a start-up printing venture; as the founder in 1727 and leading light of the Junto, a collection of young men who had ambitions (and were of a social station) similar to his own. Somehow he found time to continue his writing, for it truly pleased him to put words to paper. His Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain (1725), written in the dark London days, explained that the pleasure principle was the driving force in life—not morals, not faith, and certainly not rationality. But, and a very big but, who would want to have this unpleasant truth published? "I am sensible that the Doctrine here advanc'd, if it were to be publish'd, would meet with but an indifferent Reception. Mankind naturally and generally love to be flatter'd: Whatever soothes our Pride, and tends to exalt our

Species above the rest of the Creation, we are pleas'd with and easily believe, when ungrateful Truths shall be with the utmost Indignation rejected.” So he cloaked his sharp view of human nature in sly satires and whimsical plesasantries.<sup>53</sup>

Skeptical, practical Franklin’s moral guide was experience, not religion. His advice—frugality, honesty, industriousness, and speaking (in public) no ill—was self-serving, but not insincere. Was he shallow? Was his injunction to be modest itself immodest, as much a facade as his self-command to be chaste? Or was this simply another aspect of the mask? He published his admonitions, made money sharing them, and seems, for the most part, lived up to them. After all, in business, a man’s reputation was tantamount to his creditworthiness, and Franklin needed credit to engage in his many commercial enterprises. “Credit was the key” to any successful venture that reached beyond the competency of a single household or local trade. Credit opened doors in the other colonies and in England.<sup>54</sup>

In 1729, Franklin turned reputation and credit into a newspaper venture, commencing the publication of the Pennsylvania Gazette. Like most colonial newspapers, its four large pages were taken up with news and opinion pieces cribbed from London papers and magazines--no copyright secured or payment offered—piracy was far more common than copyright permission. Franklin’s

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<sup>53</sup>Franklin, “A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain” (1725) Papers of Benjamin Franklin ed. Leonard W. Labaree ((New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 1:507.

<sup>54</sup>Thomas Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 53.

paper even advertised the arrival of pirated Irish editions of England authors' books. He included announcements of ships arrived, goods imported, and other local news, and, the specialty of the paper, Franklin's own essays. These he often framed as letters to the editor from some interested person. The anonymous letter allowed him to violate his own principles—attacking rival papers and publishers. The primary victim of these attacks was none other than Andrew Bradford's rival newspaper.<sup>55</sup>

Good contests bring out the voters, and the rivalry boosted sales. But more important was securing two government benefices, the first the publication of official papers (a ready source of income), the second becoming postmaster general of the North American colonies (allowing Franklin to keep Bradford's paper out of the mail pouches of the carriers). The first took some doing, the second some skullduggery, but Franklin had the energy and the wit to accomplish both. He found time to marry Deborah Read, whose affections he had long (if not entirely constantly) courted. A man of means had to have a family. Her husband had deserted her and her circumstances were in such dire straits that she forgave Franklin an illegitimate son (William Franklin), and reared him with their own children.

In 1733, Franklin's circle of close friends, the Junto, branched out from conviviality. They founded a subscription Library Company (10 shillings colony money a year bought membership), and pooled their resources to buy books. In the library as well were copies of Franklin's newest venture, Poor Richard's Almanack. A new "alter ego," one Richard Saunders, was the pseudonym

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<sup>55</sup>Adrian Johns, Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 150.

Franklin chose, aptly because a real Richard Saunders was the compiler of an almanack in seventeenth-century England. Franklin recalled, “I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar, with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality...These proverbs, which contained the wisdom of many ages and nations” were actually cribbed from a variety of already published sources. Franklin’s readers preferred conventionality to originality, at least if his sales were any indication, the latter “a sweet source of income for a printer, easily outselling the Bible.” Again a rivalry, this time with Titan Leeds, another almanack publisher, promoted sales. The *Junto*, the *Gazette* and now the almanack were all sounding boards for Franklin’s proposals. A plan for fire companies (based on the principle of mutual assistance) followed, as did a magazine (stillborn), and in 1737, the long-coveted royal appointment as postmaster general of the colonies.<sup>56</sup>

Affable in public, apparently genial and open, Franklin was a calculating, ambitious, clever man. Like so many in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world who aspired to be someone important and were almost at their destination, Franklin was adept at masking his true feelings. As early as the final epistle from Silence Dogood, he knew that “It often happens, that the most zealous Advocates for any Cause find themselves disappointed in the first Appearance of Success in the Propagation of their Opinion; and the Disappointment appears unavoidable, when their easy Proselytes too suddenly start into Extremes, and are immediately fill'd with Arguments to invalidate their former Practice. This creates a Suspicion in the more considerate Part of

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<sup>56</sup>Brands, *First American*, 121; Isaacson, *Franklin*, 95-96; Franklin, *Autobiography*, 163-164.

Mankind.” Poor Richard put it succinctly: “Let all men know thee, but no man know thee thoroughly.”<sup>57</sup>

The real Franklin wore a mask in public. As sociologist and social historian Richard Sennett has written, “The relationship [between the face behind the mask and the mask that the public sees] is a dyad” the impression the mask makes is as important as what is behind it. “Appearances in public, no matter how mystifying, still had to be taken seriously, because they might be clues to the person behind the mask.” For example, Franklin was never a Quaker, but “for his part, did not neglect to foster this confusion when he shrewdly conceived it to be to his advantage.” He simply put on the Quaker mask from his chest of theatrical props.<sup>58</sup>

So who was the man behind the mask that day in November, 1739? Not yet the prosperous gentleman of the William Feke portrait of 1748, lace at his neck and wrists, brown wigged, standing in the erect pose of the arriviste; certainly not yet the royal academy Franklin of the 1762 Mason chamberlain portrait, clothed in plain brown waistcoat and black buckle shoes, sitting at his desk, electrical apparatus hanging behind him while lightning struck the kite outside, in no wise the diplomatic Franklin of Joseph-Siffred Duplessis in 1778, looking out at Paris’s elegance with avuncular sympathy. None of these fabrications yet fit him. But he was always eager for new

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<sup>57</sup>Silence Dogood, The New-England Courant, October 8, 1722; Franklin, Poor Richard’s Almanack, 1743.

<sup>58</sup>Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York: Norton, 1992), 284, 21; Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 247.

business, and when he heard that Whitefield was coming to town, he knew that an opportunity beckoned.

[insert here Feke portrait of Franklin, 1748]

In 1740, twenty-six year old George Whitefield wrote a highly unflattering account of his early years. Unlike Franklin's witty and contrived memoir, Whitefield's was closer to the events, but its solemn and apologetic tone and its admonitory strictures were as contrived in their way as Franklin's writing. Already an ordained minister in the Church of England, Whitefield understood the genre of religious autobiography. Born in sin, suffering in ignorance, the true Christian only came to grace through confession, repentance, and seeking. A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, published as part of his Journals, and later in a series of separate volumes was a narrative of confession, repentance and seeking, a sermon in form and highly revealing in content.

Whitefield saw himself in much the way that Caesar saw himself in Conquest of Gaul: chosen for the work at hand, though the mission was the conquest of the human heart. "A single eye to God's glory" had motivated him to tell his own story, in effect God had moved the pen in his hand, making the words, like the words in the Bible, divinely inspired and Whitefield an instrument of the divine. Were it not for his manifest, almost agonizing, sincerity, one might recoil at the author's arrogance.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>George Whitefield, A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend George Whitefield, Written by Himself (London, 1740), preface.

He was born in Gloucester, in the southwest of England, in December 1714, a difficult birth for his mother, who kept the Bell Inn with his father. The latter died when Whitefield was two, and for much of his early childhood he was, in effect, apprenticed to his mother at the Inn. From a very early age, “stirrings in his heart” told him that he “was born in sin.” That is, like any child, the pleasure principle dominated his thoughts. “Early acts of uncleanness” gave way to “lying, filthy talking, and foolish jesting.” In other words, from a modern perspective he was a normal child—craving attention and acting out to get it. But from the perspective of 1740, of a man born again in Christ, the weight of unnatural sin seemed almost unbearable. “It would be endless to recount the sins of my early days.” What is remarkable to the modern reader is that the adult Whitefield seemed so obsessively aware of them. But the puritan who took constant measure of the state of his soul, looking for that faint glimmer of assurance that God had selected him, would not find unusual Whitefield’s short account of his unworthiness. “If I trace myself from my cradle to my manhood, I can see nothing in me but a fitness to be damned.”<sup>60</sup>

He was not damned, for there were also “very early movings of the blessed spirit upon my heart.” He could have seen, if at the time he had understood how to look, “the free grace of God” working in him. How to tell the difference between vain hope and real assurance would be the essence of his adult ministry. But that ability only came through a series of steps—recognition that salvation could not come through good works, a sense of his utter helplessness to save himself, rigorous preparation through the study of Bible and a few interpretive texts, the guidance of John and Charles Wesley, whose “method” taught Whitefield the right steps to take, and then, only

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<sup>60</sup>Whitefield, Short Account, 13.

then, the blessed assurance that he had been reborn in Christ. As Whitefield would later warn his hearers, “If we once get above our Bibles, and cease making the written word of God our sole rule both as to faith and practice, we shall soon lie open to all manner of delusion, and be in great danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”<sup>61</sup>

To what extent Whitefield was offering his own pilgrim’s progress as a guide to others, and to what extent it reflected actual experience of the child and youth, one cannot tell. If he was as self absorbed a youth as he wants the reader to believe, surely he would not have experienced his actions as sinful. That could only come with later reflection. In any case, the fact is that his family had suffered a decline in status over three generations and his mother, widowed, had seven children to feed and clothe, and the hardship he experienced then was real.

Young Whitefield had a “knack for mimicry and memory for dialogue,” at first drawing him to amateur theatricals, and later serving him well in the ministry. He was admitted to a grammar school where he struggled to learn Latin (necessary for college admission) and easily mastered dramatic arts. At the time, the well-schooled actor was supposed to use facial and body gestures to convey emotion, and at these Whitefield was truly precocious. After a family falling out not unlike Ben’s with James, Whitefield left Gloucester to live with an older brother in Bristol. Like Franklin, arriving nearly penniless and unsure of his future, Whitefield found a calling in Bristol. He began to attend church services regularly. He prayed, and an answer came:

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<sup>61</sup>Whitefield, Short Account, 13; Whitefield, “Walking with God” Works of George Whitefield (London, 1771), 5:27.

God intended some great work for him.<sup>62</sup>

There are remarkable parallels between Bristol, Whitefield's adopted home, and Franklin's Philadelphia. Although Bristol was a medieval town and Philadelphia was born at the stroke of William Penn's pen, both were port cities on rivers whose mouths open wide to the Atlantic. Both straddled two rivers, Philadelphia the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers and Bristol the Avon and Severn. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, both came to be dominated by merchant elites, the top of whom were overseas traders. "The trading spirit permeated the soul of Bristol." Like Philadelphia, "West Indian commerce became the most important branch of [Bristol's] trade." Bristol became the sugar refining capital of the British Isles and sugar imports provided jobs for a significant portion of the city's laborers and craftsmen. The Bristol merchants not only serviced the West Indian trade, they avidly joined in the overseas slave trade that made some merchant fortunes in Philadelphia. "Everyone knew that the trade in negroes was a valuable though risky one." By the 1730s, the Bristol merchants were senior partners in the Guinea slave trade, though Liverpool's ships and merchants eclipsed the Bristol slave trade by mid century. In addition, a trade in fish, tobacco, and iron products tied Bristol to the colonies. From that trade, Bristol merchants "grew rich" and "her manufactures expanded."<sup>63</sup>

Rapidly changing economic conditions often breed social unrest. Bristol was a case study

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<sup>62</sup>Stout, Divine Dramatist, 5, 11, 12.

<sup>63</sup>Ronald H. Quilici, "Turmoil in a City and an Empire: Bristol's Factions, 1700-1775" Ph.D. diss. University of New Hampshire, 1976, 140; C.M. MacInnes, A Gateway of Empire [1939] (New York: Kelly, 1968), 180, 217, 241, 261.

in the 1720s and 1730s. The disparity between the rich and the poor was growing. A new class of laboring poor was drawn to the city by employment opportunities, but the business cycle, dominated by fluctuating market conditions, left the fate of the laboring poor in the hands of others. The razing of three hundred old houses by the docks to build bigger wharves for the merchants left the poorer residents of the houses without recompense. Miners, shipyard workers, and others in this underclass would become ready audiences for Whitefield, his plain message and direct style of speaking appealed to them, as did his willingness to go where they worked and preach. But the hardest hit by the changing economic circumstances were the old crafts—the medieval cloth tradesmen for example. Apprentices in these crafts were less and less likely to gain a place in the voting lists. Once respected and fully employed families now losing status and income would find Whitefield’s ministry especially attractive.<sup>64</sup>

[insert here depiction of early 18<sup>th</sup> century Bristol]

Whitefield rejected the opportunities of this rapidly changing material world. Not the craftsman apron or the merchant’s ledger for him. Whitefield had found his calling in the Anglican church—but not yet his voice or his lines. He gained entrance to Pembroke College, at Oxford, as a servitor—fees paid in return for services to the college and its paying matriculates. Seventeen, increasingly convinced of his own weakness (in morals and in physical health, the latter of which plagued him all his life), he plunged into a world of gentlemen and scholars, and

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<sup>64</sup>Brian S. Smith and Elizabeth Ralph, A History of Bristol and Gloucestershire (Chichester, Eng.: Phillimore, 1996), 94-96; Quilici, “Turmoil in a City and an Empire,” 28, 73, 203.

those, less fortunate like himself, who had to serve. Lonely, he filled his time with “self-imposed religious duties.” Charles Wesley and his older brother John, ahead of Whitefield’s class at Oxford, asked Whitefield to join them in a Holy Club, meeting regularly to sing psalms, pray, and discuss Bible passages. The group had identified a small number of religious tracts that seemed trustworthy guides to Scripture. He found purpose, fulfillment, and ultimately mission in the “method.” Whitefield’s personality—aloof but not arrogant, single-minded but not self-serving—merged with the method. Only lacking was the venue for an outward expression of his inner transformation.<sup>65</sup>

A “new birth” came to him during one of his episodes of acute mental and physical debility. Home from college, ill, anxious, and needy, he began to preach. Preaching was exhausting but exhilarating. He had found salvation in this world, though salvation in the next was never certain. In 1736 he took his degree and shortly thereafter was ordained in the Church of England. He would never leave that affiliation, though his doctrines and his manner of presentation would cause commissaries, ordinaries, and bishops no end of headache. Ordained at the almost unprecedented age of twenty-two, though not yet fully licensed (that would come in December, 1738), he had little chance of finding a pulpit in the metropolitan center. He had been ministering to people incarcerated in the Oxford jail, but a new adventure beckoned.

Both John and his younger brother Charles Wesley were carrying on missionary work among the settlers and Indians of the new colony of Georgia. Chartered by the crown as a charitable alternative to the workhouse for the honest debtor, Georgia was run like a military

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<sup>65</sup>Stout, Divine Dramatist, 19.

camp by its governor general James Oglethorpe. Indeed, the colony was little more than a barrier between South Carolina and Spanish Florida. Oglethorpe and the trustees would allow no slaves and no spiritous liquors in the colony, for both might undermine the colony's security. In 1736, the capital of Savannah, like Philadelphia a planned grid city, still looked more like a Roman fortification (Oglethorpe had training as a military engineer and he knew that the Spanish in Florida were watching his every move) than a commercial enterprise. But Savannah was a deep water port and the soil was rich enough to support intensive agriculture. Georgia had a future.

The colony's population, a polyglot collection of Englishmen, German Salzburgers, Scots, and even a few Sephardic Jews, amounted to about 3000 by the end of the proprietary period. Malaria and other endemic diseases, marauding Indians, and despair regularly culled these numbers—not, at first sight, an inviting venue for settlement, but perhaps precisely because hardship and danger shrouded the colony its inhabitants would pay closer attention to the word of God.<sup>66</sup>

[insert view of savannah here—1737?]

While Whitefield waited for the chance to continue the Wesleys' mission, he preached to anyone who would listen in the streets or private dwellings. He developed a unique style, appealing to the emotions of his auditory, matching their needs to his neediness. An opportunity to test himself and his approach came in October 1736, when he was asked to temporarily fill a

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<sup>66</sup>Buddy Sullivan, Georgia: A State History (Savannah: Historical Society of Georgia, 2010), 19-20; James C. Cobb, Georgia Odyssey 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 4.

position at the Tower of London. Walking through the London streets in “gown and cassock” (theatrical costuming, perhaps, still in his thinking), he attracted attention. See the boy minister some wag cried out.

But the crying began in earnest when increasing crowds came to hear him preach. He continued as a substitute in other’s pulpits until mid-1737, when in Bristol he had the second of his revelations. He realized that his particular message worked best out of doors to a self-selected congregation, people who came to hear him rather than simply to attend church. Back in London, in August, he found huge crowds gathering to hear him. To insure that they could find him, his new convert William Seward placed notices in the London newspapers. Whitefield’s ministry had become a phenomenon, the avatar of revivalism.<sup>67</sup>

Whitefield’s journals recorded his impression of the crowds’ responses. Over and over they were transformed by his words and his manner. Though the comparison would have appalled him, in some sense he was marketing his performance, an actor on an outdoor stage in a great era of English theater. But his purpose was not to divert or entertain, more than winning the good will of the crowd. For his message was that the people in front of him were all sinners, and that save for their repentance, they would all end up in the fiery pit of hell.

He did not, however, emphasize this fate—that was more like the preaching of his Massachusetts counterpart Jonathan Edwards. Edwards’ God justly hated our sins and would

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<sup>67</sup>Jerome Dean Mahaffey, Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 31-32, 37.

punish them. As he told church goers in Enfield Connecticut, visiting their church in 1741, “There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands. -- He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it.”

Whitefield’s Calvinism was just as strict as Edwards’—God had chosen the elect before creation; no amount of good works could change one’s fate; no evidence of sanctification was proof of justification—but Whitefield emphasized how much God wanted us to seek him; how much He loved us; how he (and more immediately Whitefield) grieved when we remained stiff necked. One could not will one’s own salvation, but one could be born again, indeed, “that I must be born again, and have Christ formed in my heart, before I could have any well-grounded assurance that I was a Christian indeed, or have any solid foundation whereon I might build the superstructure of a truly holy and pious life.” No promise of eternal life—but no chance at all if one were not born again. True faith, found faith, was God’s “gift to the believer.”<sup>68</sup>

Whitefield’s understanding of Calvinist doctrine would deepen some years after he first began his revival preaching. In New England during its Great Awakening he would meet Edwards and other so-called New Lights, see profoundly the difference between their views and those of their critics, align himself with them, and find himself at odds with the Wesleys, Methodism, and

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<sup>68</sup>Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” July 8, 1741; Kenneth Minkema, Jonathan Edwards's "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God": A Casebook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 34; George Whitefield, “Law Gospelized, or An Address to All Christians” Works of Whitefield , 4:400; Mahaffey, Preaching, 65.

the Church of England. All this lay in the future. For the present, he was not exploring doctrinal niceties but his own conversion experience, and sharing that with increasingly appreciative audiences.

Whitefield's itinerancy, for he preached on the roads and in the streets and in the fields as well as in churches, without a set pulpit or even a license to one, covered the South of England, from Bristol to London. Everywhere he went, crowds were sure to follow. They asked him to preach, or so he reported (the exact sequence is lost to us, dependent as we are on his Journal) and he complied. Rain or shine, his physical debilities always nagging at him, "the doctrine of the New Birth" electrified his audiences.<sup>69</sup>

One is almost tempted to compare Whitefield's tour with that of some modern rock music group, its fans like his converts swooning, crying out for more, save that most often the gathering listened in deep silence broken only by the occasional moan. Unlike the camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening in early nineteenth century America, there were no "holy rollers," no screams of remorse and fear, not that he reported at least.

But at the height of his popularity, he finally found backers for his passage to Georgia, a leap from eminence to obscurity. Was it the wilderness that beckoned? Christ found himself in the wilderness, tempted, and hardened. Was Whitefield seeking to follow a holy path, away from celebrity, setting self-sacrifice, even danger to his person, as a part of his pilgrimage? When he boarded ship for Savannah, on January 2, 1738, his fellow passenger was none other than

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<sup>69</sup>Whitefield, "The Potter and the Clay" Works of Whitefield, 5:214; Stout, Divine Dramatist, 37.

Oglethorpe. The Whitaker was a relatively small ship for its time, barely fifty tonnes, and the voyage to the colony could take over three months. This was no luxury cruise. The food, even for the better paying passengers, was unpalatable, the ships were dirty, the sailors were veteran blasphemers, and the sea voyage in winter was at best miserable and at worst deadly. John and Charles Wesley had left behind them a trail of ill feeling and suspicion in Georgia and South Carolina, particularly for their anti-slavery message. Although Oglethorpe and the trustees of Georgia had barred slavery, they were anything but abolitionists.

How much of this Whitefield knew, or credited, cannot be determined. But Whitefield had some allies upon his arrival in the colony. Charles Delamotte and James Habersham were Methodists and committed to the orphanage project. Habersham in particular would become the patriarch of one of Georgia's most important families. Habersham, a merchant by trade, soon developed a commercial practice in Savannah to complement his management of Bethesda, the orphanage. When Georgia became a royal colony and slavery was permitted, Habersham was ready. His rice plantations would occupy the labor of over two hundred slaves. James died a loyalist in 1775, but his three sons would become revolutionary stalwarts, serve in the army and the confederation congress, and support the federal constitution of 1787. In the antebellum period, they remained important figures in Georgia economic and political life.

Whitefield worked hard to bring the crew to see the way to salvation, and according to his own account, by the end of the voyage the crew had listened. At Gibraltar, a major British naval base then as now, he preached to his first non-British auditory. There he mingled with Catholics and Jews, the former repellant to him, but the latter welcoming. He would, throughout his later life, regard the Jews and biblical Judaism with genuine admiration, though he hoped that

somehow they would see the Truth and convert.

When he arrived in Savannah, he found an indifferent, in places hostile environment to his mission. Though he made friends of those the Wesleys had antagonized, conditions in Savannah were rude, and Whitefield's health, never robust, suffered accordingly. But he persevered, reaching out to families, holding conventicles in homes, visiting, singing, praying, teaching, making himself available to everyone. He reversed the Wesleys's views of slavery, agreeing that it should be legal if masters acted as good Christians toward their bondmen. He was not averse to alcoholic spirits either. From his stores on board ship, he carried charitable gifts to the poor in the colony. His reputation grew, but so did his dissatisfaction. He shifted his plan from a permanent ministry to an episodic one, visiting the colony rather than taking up permanent residence, collecting goods and funds all over the colonies and in England and depositing them with trustworthy men of affairs in Georgia, sponsoring churches, schools, and other institutions for the colony while not neglecting the orphanage, and then going on his way. In September, 1738, he departed Georgia. He would return periodically to spread his largesse and accept grateful thanks, and then move on again.

Whitefield did not neglect to publicize his efforts in Georgia. During his stay and after he left, he arranged for the publication of the first of his journals, the centerpiece of which was the journey to Georgia and his stay in the colony. From his vivid account of the storms at sea, to his daily attempts to convert the sailors (the longest part of this first journal), to his detailed narrative of people and places in the colony, he combined religion with travelogue. The latter had become a very popular genre in the 1720s, including the fabulous and allegorical, for example Anglican Bishop Jonathan Swift's 1726 Gulliver's Travels; and the practical, for example John Lawson's A

New Voyage to Carolina (1705).

Lawson's introduction explained the fascination with travel that authors and readers shared. "In the Year 1700, when People flock'd from all Parts of the Christian World, to see the Solemnity of the Grand Jubilee at Rome, my Intention, at that Time, being to travel, I accidentally met with a Gentleman, who had been Abroad, and was very well acquainted with the Ways of Living in both Indies; of whom, having made Enquiry concerning them, he assur'd me, that Carolina was the best Country I could go to." Lawson was also a promoter of the Carolina trade, and again like so many of the travel writers, had a promotional purpose. Thus of South Carolina he boasted, "They have a well-disciplin'd Militia; their Horse are most Gentlemen, and well mounted, and the best in America, and may equalize any in other Parts: Their Officers, both Infantry and Cavalry, generally appear in scarlet Mountings, and as rich as in most Regiments belonging to the Crown, which shews the Richness and Grandeur of this Colony."<sup>70</sup>

Whitefield too had a promotional scheme in mind. When he returned to London in December, he published the first of the journals. They became a kind of serial, much like the nineteenth-century newspaper serializations of Charles Dickens's novels or Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, each issue gaining readers, raising the expectation for the next issue. Seward remained indefatigable in his efforts to publicize Whitefield's efforts. Seward "placed two or three notices every week in the Daily Advertiser" to insure that Whitefield's regular followers knew where and when he would preach next. The ostensible purpose was to raise funds for the

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<sup>70</sup>John Lawson, A New Voyage to Carolina (London, 1709), 1, 3.

orphanage. The underlying purpose was to keep his ministry on the front page.<sup>71</sup>

While the pieces were going to press, Whitefield returned to the fields around London to preach. He was not the first to minister in the open air. But he was the first fully ordained and licensed Church of England minister to take to the streets. His “living” or pulpit was to be in Georgia. There was nothing unusual about this. The only licensed Church of England ministers in America were ordained in England and sent to their places in the New World by the Bishop of London. Young men sent to England to be ordained sometime fell ill or elected not to return to America. Those who were returned to American parishes sometimes displeased the vestrymen whose tithes paid the ministers’ salaries. In the 1760s, this would become a bone of contention in the New England colonies where the Church of England was not the established church. Anglicans in these colonies pleaded for an American bishop to ordain and supervise Anglican ministers. Congregationalists and Presbyterians cried foul.<sup>72</sup>

The London to which Whitefield now devoted his ministry was rapidly changing. It was a city of sharp contrasts, some obvious, some hidden. The street life illustrated these contrasts. “A poor man sleeps on a basket lid. An aged crone offers vegetables, while a gallant dallies with two handsome women....flying coaches in the background inject movement into a panorama that radiates energy and vitality...Polite customers with money in their pockets have come to buy goods and enjoy the playhouses, alehouses” all of which Whitefield knew from his own

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<sup>71</sup>Lambert, “Pedlar”, 55.

<sup>72</sup>Bonomi, Cope of Heaven, 199-200; Rhys Isaac, The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 186-188.

experience. But the rich on the street rub shoulders with “the fops, gamblers, whores, mendicants, pickpockets” street sharpies, and rubes who have found their way into the heart of the city. For the city attracts the young from the countryside, luring them with the promise of employment and despoiling them with the reality of filth, disease, hunger, and crime. Such contrasts were not new—they were the mark of every world capital. One might have found them in the Rome of Augustus.

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[insert here depiction of London, as close to 1740 as possible]

London was the metropolitan center of empire. To it came the Caribbean planters with their ebony slaves, fleeing from the heat and disease of the Sugar Islands; the children of aristocratic Tidewater Virginians, sent to polish their manners and find wealthy wives; Quaker businessmen from Pennsylvania, visiting with friends in the trades; and multitudes of ne'er-do-wells, apprentices, minor officials, and the odd minister trolling for contributions for a provincial church or school.

London had become the mercantile and banking capital of the world. London merchants, working closely with the Board of Trade, managed a far-flung empire of imports and exports. In consequence, a new strata of society had appeared. Self-aware and proud, these were the trading classes, the “middle station,” and their abettors, the professional men who enabled the economy of the empire to function. This middle class made London its home. Where once the city had been the preserve of upper class townhomes and the shanties of the poor, now entire blocks were

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<sup>73</sup>Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman, eds., “Introduction” Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay’s *Trivia* (1716) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

devoted to homes for the lawyers, doctors, merchants, bankers, and others whose fortunes rose with those of the empire. Material life was more refined than ever before, refined by the purchase and use of consumer durables and early manufactures—the tea and coffee sets, the sitting room furniture and wallpaper, the fine tables and dressers—that defined middle class life. Even food for the middle class was distinctive and dependent on London’s place in the imperial scheme. The coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate and other imported caffeinates and energy sources kept the middle classes at their desks longer and increased efficiency. Sugar made tea and coffee as popular as alcoholic beverages, and far more likely to keep one awake and busy than beer.<sup>74</sup>

As London city magistrate Henry Fielding wrote of this middle class in 1750, “trade hath indeed given a new face to the whole nation.” The successful abandoned “simplicity” for “craft” “frugality” into “luxury” and “humility” into “pride.” They were the equal of any man, forgetting the old ordering of society by rank and birth. Such rapid social and economic change in a community often opens a door to religious longing. As the safety and sanctity of old ways is undermined, those who are losing status and those who fear for the future will turn to the reassurance of their faith. Anxiety among the seekers bred the need to find and adhere to evangelical preaching that recognized the spiritual crisis and offered reassurance in it. Such

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<sup>74</sup>Peter Earle, The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1663-1730 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 3, 6, 7, 8, Joanna Innes, Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 280; T.S. Ashton, An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth-Century (London: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 20, 162.

“burned over” regions then become the birthplaces of new sects or sites for the rejuvenation of older churches in revival enthusiasm.<sup>75</sup>

It was, as events proved, a perfect setting for Whitefield’s new brand of ministry. He targeted the market fairs, a forerunner of shopping malls, inns in market centers, and everywhere else that the new class might frequent. He even preached from a shop window to a crowd in the street, literally offering his words as a store-bought commodity. Though he claimed that he was opening the virtual church doors to everyone, commoners who could not sit in the front pews of their neighborhood churches because these were reserved for the wealthy, his chosen were those whose pockets held coins. These were the people who could donate charity to the Georgia orphanage. They were also a class adrift, without the moorings of the older upper class or the indifference to religion of the lower orders. His successful collections proved that he had found the right audience. The same people were buying copies of the first edition of his journal, cheaply priced at sixpence.<sup>76</sup>

Whitefield’s message was also changing somewhat. He was beginning to preach in opposition to other ministers, in particular the more conservative members of his own Anglican order. They leaned too much toward the notion that works and piety led to salvation, a

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<sup>75</sup>Fielding quoted in Earle, Middle Class, 11. On rapid social change and evangelical religion, see, e.g., Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (New York: Harper, 1965), 181 .

<sup>76</sup>Lambert, “Pedlar”, 62, 65.

“latitudinarian” persuasion at odds with his Calvinism. These clerics, probably the majority of those in the Church of England, thought that reason combined with Bible was sufficient to guide the perplexed Christian. They were tolerant of a variety of doctrinal exegeses, as Whitefield, increasingly, was not. They also believed that many, perhaps all, who sought salvation had been chosen for it, a view that Whitefield found too close to Roman Catholicism. While he shared with them a dislike of the pomp and ritual of High Church Anglicanism, he denounced their reliance on morality and righteousness as guides. They seemed far too close to the idea that one could reason one’s way to heaven.

Whitefield was also moving away from the Wesley brothers. He kept them as personal friends, but their rejection of predestination was unacceptable. The formal breach did not occur until the winter of 1741, but it was in the wind. Both Wesleys had come to believe that all who sought Christ could be saved, as John Wesley explained in “Free Grace,” a sermon preached at Bristol in 1740 and later published. Whitefield disagreed. He clung to the theory of “election,” that God had chosen who would be saved and that number was finite. An exchange of letters followed, and these were published. “Why then should we dispute, when there is no probability of convincing? Will it not in the end destroy brotherly love...How glad would the enemies of the Lord be to see us divided?” Whitefield expressed the wish that the breach not be made public, but it was. He had unleashed the torrents of words, he could not stem the flood now.<sup>77</sup>

But for the present, all the Methodists seemed united and gloried in Whitefield’s success.

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<sup>77</sup>Whitefield to John Wesley, quoted in Gillies, Memoir, 56; John Hurst, John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of his Life and Work (London: Eaton and Mains, 1903), 154-155.

Seward's newspaper reports of attendance at Whitefield's open air sessions was extravagant. There were many thousands, he relayed to the publishers, some fifty thousand at one meeting. While the number was exaggerated (Whitefield would lower it considerably in a 1756 edition of his journals), it conveyed to readers the sense that something truly revolutionary was happening. The "staging" of these events took Whitefield back to Bristol, then a return to London, and finally once more to the sea, to Philadelphia and an arrangement with Franklin.<sup>78</sup>

The experiences that brought Franklin and Whitefield together in Philadelphia that Fall, like the partnership they formed there, centered on the published word. Both men were known not by scepters or swords, but by essays and sermons they caused to be published. In the years to come, the volume of those words would increase in direct proportion to the influence of the two men. One cannot understand the nature of that influence without a closer attention to their words.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Lambert, "Pedlar", 63.

<sup>79</sup>Of course, one has to be selective here—for Franklin's words fill many volumes, and Whitefield's not a few more.