

Volume 3

Number 028

**Whitefield, Franklin and the Business
of Revival - Part I**

Lead: In the 1740s George Whitefield and Benjamin Franklin combined business and religion in a most unlikely alliance.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The Great Awakening was a powerful religious revival in British North America between 1720 and 1750. Part of a general stirring of religious interest among Protestants and Roman Catholics in Continental

Europe and under John Wesley, in England at about the same time. In America the movement was a reaction to dry, formalistic religion in the main denominations and at one point or another many Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists along with some Anglicans were swept along in the tide of revival.

The Great Awakening featured preaching that stressed the importance of the "new birth," in Jesus Christ as well as experiential faith that went beyond mere assent to a list of doctrinal beliefs. One of the leaders of this movement was Jonathan Edwards, a Congregational pastor in Northampton, Massachusetts and later president of the College of New Jersey

which became Princeton University. Another important preacher and perhaps the most famous was George Whitefield. Born in Gloucestershire, England, while in college at Oxford he was a close friend of John and Charles Wesley and served for a time with them as a missionary to the new colony of Georgia in the 1730s. Whitefield was an Anglican priest, an itinerant evangelist who preached to huge crowds in England and the colonies.

Despite its powerful impact, the Great Awakening was not welcomed by all. Its opponents accused Edwards, Whitefield and other revivalists of whipping up emotions for religious effect, of condemning the faith experience of others and of preaching

in parishes without the permission of religious authorities. So violent at times was the dispute between those who supported the revival and those who rejected it that major divisions developed within certain denominations.

One of the most interesting alliances flowing out of the Great Awakening was that between the evangelist George Whitefield and the Philadelphia printer and publisher Benjamin Franklin. Their relationship began as one of mutual benefit and profit and progressed into a deep and long-lasting friendship. Next time: The profits to be made from revival.

**At the University of Richmond, this
is Dan Roberts.**

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Resources

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