A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755
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On November 8, 1742, several hundred men and women packed into the London Spa Fields Tabernacle to celebrate the latest news of religious revival. The high point of the meeting came when letters from all over the revival world were read out loud, after which the congregation joined in a hymn specially written for the occasion:

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

This homespun hymn serves as a reminder that the events of the late 1730s and 1740s that historians have analyzed separately and severally as the American Great Awakening, the English Evangelical Revival, and the Scottish Cambuslang Wark, were perceived by many participants as parts of a single God-inspired phenomenon. Given the direction of the historiography during the past twenty years, the reminder is both timely and necessary.

The religious revivals of the period 1735 to 1750 have attracted the attention of an impressive number of historians, but few have made more than passing reference to their broad appeal. Rather, as the historical literature developed, the focus of inquiry narrowed from national and denominational levels of analysis to detailed studies of the regional and local settings. As a result, historians have gained new insights into the nature, causes, and meaning of the revivals, but our understanding of a revival in one country has remained isolated from our
knowledge of a revival elsewhere. This point can best be illustrated by reference to the most developed revival historiography—that on the American Great Awakening. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, scholars augmented the existing denominational and regional studies by a number of local studies, each seeking to bring out those characteristics of a particular environment that made it open to the revival impulse. By the late 1970s, the weight of research and interpretation caused American historians to regard the Awakening as a peculiarly American phenomenon, central to the formation of a religious tradition whose hallmarks were millennial fervor, evangelicalism, and periodic schism. Following this line of thought, some scholars described this very tradition as a distinguishing feature of American culture, and such an assessment, as Jon Butler recently pointed out, has become entrenched in American history survey texts. Butler’s critique of American “enthusiasm” for the Great Awakening, though contested, may well mark a turning point in our understanding. His stimulating essay argues that the Great Awakening was neither “great nor general,” and its significance therefore cannot be as far reaching as historians have believed. Central to his case is the argument that American revival studies have unjustifiably centered on New England. Revivalism, in Butler’s view, was both more than the Calvinist revival of New England and less than “the Key to the American Revolution.” Another look at the evidence suggests that a more serious recognition of revivals outside America could have provided Butler with a further angle from which to question the “American-ness” of the Awakening. This missed opportunity is characteristic of the historiography.

Given the predisposition to view the Great Awakening as American, the relatively slight interest in the comparative history of revivalism or in the possible connections and influences among revivalists is hardly surprising. For different but


equally intelligible reasons, scholars have also viewed the history of the English revival in isolation.\(^7\) In its broadest sense, revivalism in the mid-eighteenth century not only appeared in several places and involved a range of theologies and religious polities, including Anglican, Lutheran, and Pietist, as well as Calvinist, but these groupings also shared connections and influences.\(^8\) Evidence suggests that Calvinist evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic were highly conscious of one another’s activities. This transatlantic evangelical consciousness grew out of the isolated correspondence of individual ministers. Ministers and lay promoters extended the correspondence into a reliable, nonpersonal system of contacts, which they developed into a number of procedures for spreading the news from individuals to groups of committed laity and beyond to a wider lay audience. Because revival news was of great importance to Calvinist evangelicals, they had a strong motivation to create a relatively durable chain of correspondence. Once in place, the contacts proved useful to the ministers in other ways. Some uses were practical, for example, the circulation of devotional literature, recommendations for suitable reading, the collection of money for missionary work, and the provision of hospitality. On another level, ministers used transatlantic contacts for the discussion of theological questions, the nature of piety, and the practice of revivalism. It is not too much to say that through the exchange of ideas and materials Calvinist revivalists of the mid-eighteenth century built a “community of saints” that cut across physical barriers and, on occasion, theological divisions.

The significance of this community lies not in its novelty—there was nothing new about associations of ministers, or religious communication systems, even transatlantic ones—but rather in its effect on our understanding of eighteenth and

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nineteenth-century revivalism. Although the historical literature is not devoid of references to “influence” and “cross-fertilization” between Britain, Northwest Europe, and the American colonies, recognition of these connections usually appeared in only two forms, neither of which has had much impact on interpretation. In one, the focus of attention is George Whitefield, whose travels from England to Scotland and America are frequently mentioned. Scholars have traced revival connections between America and Britain and, in the process, reduced them to the activities of this wholly exceptional preacher. The other type of recognition is of a different order. Historians working within a committed evangelical tradition have written of the revival much as the Spa Fields congregation saw it—as a widespread “stirring of dry bones,” a movement of the Holy Spirit. Starting in 1754 with John Gillies’ two-volume collection, Calvinist evangelical commentators have interpreted the eighteenth-century revival as broad and sweeping, careless of national and church boundaries, and evangelical in character. Because of their commitment to a God-inspired explanation, historians in the evangelical tradition have not carefully examined the human causes and agencies of connection and influence and consequently have had little influence on secular historians. But the perception of the revival as international and evangelical is instructive, and evidence adduced by evangelical writers establishes


10 For a recognition of the transatlantic dimension, see John W. Raimo, “Spiritual Harvest: The Anglo-American Revival in Boston, Mass. and Bristol, England, 1735–1742” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1974); and Watts, Dissenters, 394–406. Neither author, however, includes the Scottish revivalists, who were particularly active in the transatlantic network. In his discussion of enlightenment and religious revival, Ward did refer to “an international Calvinist network at the centre of which were ministers of the Church of Scotland,” but it was not his concern to elaborate on the point. Ward, “Relations of Enlightenment and Religious Revival,” 292.

11 This is a position adopted, for example, by one of Whitefield’s more recent biographers. Arnold Dallimore states that “Whitefield’s ministry was the one human factor which bound this work together in the lands it reached.” See Dallimore, George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival, 2 vols. (London, 1970), 1: 14.

12 John Gillies, Historical Collections relating to remarkable periods of the success of the Gospel, and eminent Instruments employed in promoting it, 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1754). The two volumes were revised and enlarged in 1845 by Horatius Bonar and a facsimile of this edition has been published (Fairfield, Pa., 1981). In addition to the Historical Collections, Gillies edited an Appendix to the Historical Collections . . . (Glasgow, 1761) and A Supplement to the Historical Collections . . . (Glasgow, 1796). Later Scottish evangelical historians writing in this tradition include John W. Couper, Scottish Revivals (Dundee, 1918); Duncan MacFarlan, The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, particularly at Cambuslang (Edinburgh, 1847); and John MacInnes, The Evangelical Movements in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688–1800 (Aberdeen, 1951). An important American text in the same tradition is Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield (Boston, 1842). More recently, but in the same tradition, Archibald Fawcett recognized the ties between Scotland and America. Even so, he concluded, “it is not easy to trace any definite connection between these movements and the little community at Cambuslang, and there is something infectious about such happenings.” Fawcett, The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1971), 53.
that revivalists of the 1740s discussed the devices and methods for promoting and sustaining their work with colleagues all over the world. Indeed, their exchanges created an evangelical communications network long before the more widely recognized networks of the nineteenth century.

The major contrast that historians have drawn between the spontaneity of the mid-eighteenth-century revivals and the professionalism of those in the nineteenth century is misleading. Instead, the eighteenth-century revivals should take their place on a continuum of Protestant evangelical development, with its starting point in the seventeenth century. The real significance of the mid-eighteenth-century revivals was not their wondrous spontaneity or their primary role in the formation of national consciousness, but rather their combining of traditional Puritan practices with fresh evangelical techniques and attitudes. It was a combination that played a major part, and perhaps the most creative part, in the systematic development of evangelicalism.

In 1736, news of the recent revivals in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, crossed over to England in the letters of Boston minister Benjamin Colman to London Dissenting ministers John Guyse and Isaac Watts. These same men encouraged Jonathan Edwards to write an account of the awakening for publication. This was to become Edwards's famous Narrative, first published in London. The correspondence between Colman, Watts, and Guyse that made this possible exemplified the Old Dissenting network—a network with its roots in the seventeenth-century Puritan “community of saints.” By the mid-eighteenth century, Dissenters had not only developed informal contacts across the Atlantic, but had also established a formal machinery, the Dissenting Deputies, to protect their civil and legal welfare. It would be misleading, therefore, to underestimate the extent of communication already in existence before the evangelical revival. Colman and Watts, for example, corresponded and exchanged books and pamphlets from the 1720s until a few months before Colman’s death in 1747. Watts carried on an extensive correspondence with other New England religious leaders, including Samuel Mather, Thomas Prince, Sr., and Elisha Williams. Through his generous gifts of books to Harvard, Watts demonstrated his interest


in and concern for the Dissenting community abroad. When the New England ministers wanted an English sponsor for Edwards's revival narrative, Watts was the obvious choice. But the colonial ministers were mistaken if they believed that the support they received from Watts, or from another interested correspondent, Philip Doddridge of Northampton (England), was similar to the response they could expect from English Dissenters. Watts and Doddridge were attempting to occupy a middle ground between antinomianism and Arminianism and, as a result, remained relatively isolated among English Dissenters. Although colonial promoters of the revival narrative turned naturally to these two men, and, although both took part in the revival exchanges, they were not representative of English Dissent and of its response to the aims and style of revivalist religion.

For political, organizational, and theological reasons, the official channels of Dissent were not open to the revival of religion when it happened. Many Dissenters distrusted the tenets that became associated with revivalism: the emotionalism and even dogmatism of some of the converted, the new relationship proposed between clergy and laity, and the notion that an inspired preacher might be more efficacious than a trained minister would be. News of the New England conversions threatened to bring confrontation within both Nonconformism and Presbyterianism. The majority of English Nonconformist ministers, along with the spokesmen of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and of the Associate Presbytery, ultimately found they could not support the evangelicals. As a result, they lost their primacy in the transmission of revival news to a new grouping. The focus shifted from them to the Calvinist Methodists in England, to an active group of revivalists in the Church of Scotland, and to their kindred spirits in New England and the Middle Colonies. Because Anglican evangelicals, not Nonconformists, led the English revival, and because groups in Scotland, Wales, Holland, and America shared in the revival, a new religious community based on Calvinist evangelicalism came into existence.

This evangelical community was established through a network of correspondence that had George Whitefield at its center. Between 1739 and his death in 1770, in addition to his extensive preaching tours of England and Wales, Whitefield made seven journeys to America and fourteen to Scotland. His willingness to travel was only the most obvious expression of his eagerness to see the revival world as a single entity and to encourage others to do the same. His correspondence was as continuous and wide-ranging as his travels, and although we have no accurate figure of the number of people Whitefield wrote to, some impressions of the scale of his correspondence can be gained from his published letters and journals. He wrote regularly to all the main revival figures in Britain.


17 Nuttall, Philip Doddridge. Dr. Williams's Library, London, has the Doddridge MSS collection, and a calendar of his letters has been prepared. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge D.D. (London, 1979), and John D. Humphreys, The Correspondence and Diary of Philip Doddridge, 5 vols. (London, 1829–31).
and America and to hundreds of other ministers and lay people. Gillies published nearly 1,500 of his letters in the early 1770s, and the evangelical magazines of the 1740s included many items from his correspondence. One unpublished collection contains letters from over fifty different correspondents.18 When Whitefield sent letters from the colonies to London for distribution, he did so by the trunkload. He received so many letters himself that he was glad to accept the secretarial help of lay evangelicals, such as stockbroker William Seward and teacher John Syms, although the replies were nearly always Whitefield's own.19 American correspondents received instructions through the Pennsylvania Gazette "to direct their letters [for Whitefield] to be left with Mr. James Hutton, Bookseller without Temple, London."20 Many who wrote were ordinary men and women who sought spiritual advice from Whitefield, thanked him for preaching, or gave him local revival news. Their letters reflect their intense personal experiences and the importance of Whitefield as a focal point in the revival world. His centrality explains the exclusive emphasis that historians have placed on him, but Whitefield did not work alone, and the international dimension of the revival would not have had the same significance had it relied solely on the activities of one individual.

Within just seven years of the Northampton revival, an international epistolary circuit had developed. Although the emergence of the circuit owed a great deal to the common focus evangelicals had in Whitefield, it owed just as much to the meaning that many participants invested in the revival, and particularly in its widespread occurrence. Jonathan Edwards reflected on this meaning in a letter to James Robe of Edinburgh: "The Church of God, in all Parts of the World, is but one; the distant members are closely united in one Glorious Head. This Union is very much her Beauty; [as is] the mutual and friendly Correspondence of the various members in distant parts of the world."21 Others perceived the conjunction of the Northampton revival with the conversions of Howell Harris, George Whitefield, and the Wesleys, as heralding a special work of God, perhaps even the beginning of the millenium. "The Lord seems to have some great Event upon the Wheel just now," wrote Hugh Kennedy of the Scottish Church in Rotterdam, "and I would fain hope, the Glory of the Latter days is not far off. The present convulsions and reelings among the nations, as well as the stirring of Dry Bones in Scotland, America and other places, confirms me more and more in this


19 William Seward (1711–40) described himself as a "Gentleman, Companion in Travel to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield." See Dallimore, George Whitefield, 1: 252. He had been brought up on the estate of a country squire near Bristol, where his father was a private secretary and had gone into stockbroking. Until his death, Seward was Whitefield's financial backer. See Journal of the Calvinistic Methodist Historical Society, 25 (1940), and 58 (1973). John Syms worked at the London Tabernacle where, at one time and another, he taught in the boys' school, dispatched letters, and kept the accounts for Whitefield's books. See Edwin Welch, ed., Two Calvinistic Methodist Chapels 1743–1811: The London Tabernacle and Spa Fields Chapel (London, 1975), 1: 5–7, 12; and Gomer M. Roberts, Selected Trevecka Letters 1742–1747, Trevecka Records Series no. 1 (Caernarvon, 1956), 215.

20 Pennsylvania Gazette, December 4, 1740.

opinion." Spurred on by this sense of the unique times in which they were living, ministers began to correspond with people they did not plan to visit. Initially, the desire to acknowledge and share a common experience was sufficient to prompt a letter between strangers. Ministers saw themselves as co-workers and "friends in God." They found one another's names in revival publications, Whitefield's published journals, the religious press, or through a friend: "It was a most pleasing surprise to me to receive your kind letter from New York," Colman wrote to Whitefield, "and the valuable Present of Journals, Sermons and Letters which accompanied it. I think myself under happy Direction of Providence in my writing to Mr. Pemberton since it has brought me into correspondence with you." It was common to solicit a correspondence by referring to a mutual friend or a published work by the recipient. For example, Thomas Gillespie of Carnock in Scotland recommended himself to Edwards by praising Edwards's works: "The two performances you published on the subject of the late glorious work in New England, well adapted to that in Scotland, gave me great satisfaction. . . . I have many a time, for some years, designed to claim humbly the privilege of correspondence with you. . . . My friend and countryman Robert Abercrombie will inform you about me, if you have occasion to see him or hear from him." In the case of John Hamilton of the Barony Parish in Glasgow, contact was made through a traveler and mutual friend: "This letter, I trust shall be deliver'd to you," he wrote to Thomas Prince, Sr., "by our Brother Mr. George Brown, Minister of St. James Island in South Carolina . . . , who is to go by way of Boston; which gives me the opportunity of sending my compliments to you and of introducing myself into your Acquaintance and favour." Even printers were drawn into the epistolary circuit, for example, John Lewis of London, who worked for the revivalists, and whose print shop was often a useful clearing house for correspondence and revival literature. Lewis felt honored to be recognized by Thomas Prince: "Who could ever imagine that such a poor insignificant creature as little I should ever have been thought of so many thousands of miles off. . . . I received your kind letter and . . . I shall be very glad to have a correspondence with you."

22 William McCulloch, ed., Glasgow Weekly History (Glasgow, 1742), no. 43, p. 1. For another contemporary millennial view, see John Erskine, The Signs of the Times Consider'd, or the high Probability that the present Appearances in New England, and the West of Scotland are a prelude of the Glorious Things promised to the Church in the Latter Ages (Edinburgh, 1742).
23 Colman to Whitefield, 1742, MHS, Benjamin Colman Papers. This letter has been dated 1742, but it is more likely to have been 1739 since it was printed in 1739 with two other of Whitefield's letters. See George Whitefield, Letter from New Brunswick and Letter in Answer to the Presbytery of Newcastle (Philadelphia, 1739). Whitefield corresponded with Colman before 1742. See Whitefield's Journals, 457. He refers to Ebenezer Pemberton, at the time pastor of Wall Street Presbyterian Church, New York City.
24 Gillespie to Edwards, November 24, 1747, in Sereno E. Dwight, Life of President Edwards (New York, 1890), 244. This is volume 1 of Dwight's ten-volume edition of Edwards's Works.
25 Hamilton to Prince, Sr., March 3, 1739, MHS, Miscellaneous MSS Collection.
26 John Lewis, who was originally from Monmouthshire, was a member of the London Tabernacle and the official printer to the Calvinist Methodists. See Journal of Calvinist Methodist Historical Society, 4 (1919): 84–92 and 5 (1920): 6–11.
These individual initiatives created a letter-writing network that had a core of ten leading ministers—Edwards, Colman, and Thomas Prince, Sr., of New England; James Robe, William McCulloch, John M'Laurin, and John Erskine of Scotland; and English ministers Watts, Whitefield, and Doddridge. Their interlocking and overlapping connections made them a close-knit group. Whitefield was in contact with every member of this group, as was Edwards, while the rest corresponded with at least seven others. Colman, Watts, Doddridge, and Prince were simply continuing and extending their existing practice of communicating with like-minded ministers abroad. Prince, for example, was too elderly and infirm to take an active part in preaching the American revival, but he was able to promote it and lend it his authority through his correspondence. In contrast to these "old hands," none of the Scottish ministers, with the exception of John M'Laurin, had initiated long-distance communications before the 1740s, but they soon became regular and conscientious correspondents. John Erskine, for example, visited Cambuslang as an undergraduate, and after talking to revival ministers, he actively pursued contacts in England, Scotland, and America. He was a young man of independent means who did not hesitate to use his wealth to supply books free of charge and to pay postage if he thought doing so would aid the cause. Later, Erskine became minister of Old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh and a leader of the evangelical party in the Church of Scotland. The contacts between the Scottish revivalists and their American counterparts are the most impressive set of bilateral relations in the revival, since they did not rely on any single figure and involved some relatively obscure individuals.

Just beyond this inner core was another group of promoters who, though less closely connected, nonetheless had a broad range of revival correspondents. These ministers, lay evangelists, financial backers, and printers were all in touch with Whitefield and at least one other leading revival minister, with several of their own local revival ministers, and sometimes with one another. Included in their number were London printers John Lewis and Samuel Mason, Boston printer Daniel Henchman, and lay promoters such as Thomas Noble of New York, Samuel Hazard of Philadelphia, and Ann Dutton of Huntingdonshire, England. The

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28 The major manuscript, biographical, and periodical sources for this analysis are cited elsewhere in these notes. For a full discussion and citation, see Susan Durden, "Transatlantic Communications and Influence during the Great Awakening: A Comparative Study of British and American Revivalism, 1730-1760" (Ph.D. dissertation, Hull University, 1978).

29 Erskine to Hall, July 15, 1743, MHS, Erskine Papers, 28-37; and Erskine to Cooper, January 8, 1743, MHS, Erskine Papers, 8-14.

30 There is an extensive literature on the economic, cultural, and religious links between Scotland and America. See, for example, John Clive and Bernard Bailyn, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 11 (1954): 200-13; Andrew Hook, Scotland and America; A Study of Cultural Relations 1750-1835 (Glasgow, 1975); and Scottish Historical Review, 63 (1984). The latter volume is entirely devoted to essays on Scottish-American connections.

31 Daniel Henchman's Ledgers and Wastbook are part of the Hancock Collection, Harvard Business School, Boston. Thomas Noble was a merchant, one-time High Constable of New York, and a Moravian sympathizer who spent over £100 on revival texts from Henchman. He also commissioned Benjamin Franklin to print revival sermons and Whitefield's journals. See George S. Eddy, Account Books Kept by Benjamin Franklin, Ledger 'D' (New York, 1929). Samuel Hazard had many business and religious contacts in Britain and the colonies and acted as a clearing house for transatlantic correspondence and packages. See Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Hazard Collection.
only revivalist who does not fit easily into either the inner core or this second grouping is the Welsh preacher Howell Harris. He wrote prolifically to his associates in England and Wales but as far as is known had no American correspondents. This lack of American contacts is surprising since Harris was more concerned than others were with maintaining the "catholic" or international spirit of the revival and, as one-time organizer at the London Tabernacle, was well placed to take part in a transatlantic network. Perhaps he failed to cultivate foreign correspondents because he felt his status as a mere "exhorter" was too lowly to warrant international attention. Even though he did not participate personally in the transatlantic communication network, his name was known abroad.

The new community created by international correspondence was, in part, a continuation of the seventeenth-century Puritan letter-writing community, but its spirit of evangelism marked a point of departure. Evidence suggests that revival correspondence was not only of personal significance to those involved but that it also served evangelical functions. Although letters between neighboring ministers were often of a practical nature—making arrangements for meetings and the exchange of pulpits, for example—those between distant and especially between international correspondents could be a means to convert the unconverted. In addition, because ministers discussed revival issues in their letters, their correspondence also helped to shape their attitudes to evangelism. These letters are a record of both the international workings of the revival and the issues that were of interest and concern to its leaders.

One of the primary and most straightforward purposes of letter writing was to describe the revival in one's own locality, and many of the revival letters were narrative and purely descriptive, particularly during the two years from 1740 to 1742 before the revival began to encounter opposition and internal disagreements. The same was true for correspondence within a region, but there was a heightened sense of excitement in writing to someone hundreds of miles away, and ministers were aware that news from afar could encourage the revival spirit in their own congregations: "In yours of Jan. 25 you acquainted me that what I wrote to Archibald Webster concerning the success of the Gospel in our American World, was most agreeable to you; and that it, with what was written by others, had refreshed many souls in my native country, Scotland, and filled their mouths with Praises." Letters could be full of names of unknown ministers and places and details about individual converts, all written up in exuberant style: "I am now to inform you, that since my Last our exalted Saviour has been riding forth in his magnificence and Glory . . . , both Whites and Blacks, both Old and Young, both Prophane and Moral, awakened and made alive to God . . . at Taunton.

32 The Trevecka Collection, University Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, includes about 3,000 of Harris's letters. See Roberts, Trevecka Letters and Tom Benyon, ed., Howell Harris, Reformer and Soldier, 1714-1733, Trevecka Records Series, no. 2 (Caernarvon, 1958).
33 Tom Benyon, ed., Howell Harris’s Visits to London (Aberystwyth, 1960), 43.
34 Abercrombie (New England) to Leslie (Scotland), May 25, 1742, Glasgow Weekly History, no. 34, pp. 1-4.
Bridgewater, Abington, York, Ipswich, Rowley, Cape Ann."\textsuperscript{35} Despite the distance between correspondents and their probable ignorance of the local geography, the letters contained catalogues of new revival areas, and ministers often requested such detail from one another. They attached great importance to explicitness, both because it helped to establish the authenticity of the revival and, they believed, "it had more influence because it came from a Foreigner."\textsuperscript{36} Through narrative detail, correspondents were able to encourage one another and develop a sense of unity in a known and shared world.

As part of their descriptions, ministers included information about their own conduct and leadership. The exchange of information can be seen as an early development of revival techniques, because the communication of various methods and approaches and discussion of their effects encouraged a process of convergence within evangelicalism. Presbyterian minister John Moorhead of Boston was one of the many who gave information about the methods he used in his parish. He encouraged parishioners to examine their own thoughts and feelings, listen to itinerant preachers, organize fasts, and heed the reading by heads of families of the "most pungent Discourses they could find that treated on the Nature of Conversion and the New Birth." Although he emphasized the educative role of societies for prayer and instruction, he was concerned that these should be properly organized by the minister.\textsuperscript{37}

Ministers who exchanged views in this way did not always find it easy to decide about the limits of their own role or the efficacy of human effort in bringing about conversion, but in spite of their qualms, they were influenced by the apparent success of this or that particular practice. They occasionally discussed the controversial issue of revivalistic "means to grace." "We ought not only to praise God for everything that appears favourable to the interests of religion, and to pray earnestly for a general revival, but also use means that are proper in order to it," Edwards wrote to Erskine. The practice under scrutiny here was weekly sacraments, which Edwards considered "a proper means," and which Erskine said he had been striving to establish in the face of "bigotry and prejudice."\textsuperscript{38} Other revival means discussed regularly by correspondents included the use of prayer societies, the practice of itinerant preaching, and coordinated prayer days—all of which were recognized as potentially threatening to a minister's control. Besides offering practical advice, these epistolary exchanges were of more general significance, since they influenced the writing of revival tracts, devotional materials, and theological treatises of the revival. The writers formulated their opinions within a transatlantic context and those opinions in turn established a number of views and patterns of response within that same transatlantic world. A key example of this process was the conversion experience.

\textsuperscript{35} Prince, Sr., to Whitefield, December 6, 1741, \textit{Glasgow Weekly History}, no. 15, pp. 1–3.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Christian Monthly History}, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{37} Moorhead to a Gent. in N. Britain, June 14, 1743, \textit{Christian Monthly History}, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 11–23.

\textsuperscript{38} Edwards to Erskine, November 15, 1750 and July 5, 1750; Dwight, \textit{President Edwards}, 1: 417 and 407–09.
Although conversion was a personal experience, a matter between God and the individual, it was also of crucial interest to ministers. Perhaps because of the high regard in which New England was held by British revivalists, and certainly because of Edwards's writings on conversion, British ministers discussed features of the conversion experience with their American correspondents. In seeking to resurrect the centrality of individual conversion, revivalists drew on Puritan traditions, reprinting the works of seventeenth-century divines and recommending these to "seekers." But the existence of a well-worked tradition did not obviate their own need to discuss contemporary conversions and their own particular experiences as the human promoters and arbiters of salvation and grace. Indeed, letters dealing with possible ways to distinguish a valid from a non-valid experience might be 5,000 words long and supported by specific instances and cases for discussion. Ministers showed a desire to define and categorize the workings of grace, and, as their seventeenth-century counterparts had done, they provided models of the conversion experience that influenced the laity. A rare glimpse of this influence at work is afforded by Sarah Gill's diary entry for April 1742: "The next sabbath I heard dear Mr. Edwards," she wrote, "I trust I had the Presence of Christ with me, and by the marks laid down I concluded I had been drawn to Christ." Ministers recommended to one another the practice of interviewing parishioners and questioning them closely on their spiritual life. John Moorhead explained how he made "each Person successively relate how far they had been acquainted with a work of conviction and Conversion upon their Souls." This was also the practice at Cambuslang, as the 110 conversion accounts taken down by McCulloch show. The many marginal notes and comments made by these ministers throughout the Cambuslang conversion accounts being prepared for publication reflected their concern to sort out proper from improper experiences. James Robe of Kilsyth was happy to share his own method with others: "I have kept a book wherein from Day to Day, I wrote down whatever was most material in the Exercise of the Distrest. This may appear an unsupportable Labour at first view, especially where the Number of the Distrest is so many. Yet I found it to be very easy . . . An Index I kept, brought me soon to the part of the Book, where the Person's case was recorded . . . I saw what Progress their Convictions had made, and knew where I was to begin with them." Robe published many of these cases in his Kilsyth

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39 For a discussion of the literature of the revival, including both the reprinting of Puritan literature and the publication of new revival materials, see Susan Durden, "Transatlantic Communications," chap. 5.
40 See, for example, Erskine to Prince, Sr., July 17, 1742, MHS, Erskine Papers.
43 New College Library, Edinburgh, MS. W. 13. b. 212, "Examination of Persons under Scriptural Concern at Cambuslang during the Revival in 1741–42 by the Revd. William MacCulloch, Minister at Cambuslang, with Marginal Notes by Dr. Webster and Other Ministers." The two volumes are paginated separately and individuals identified by a two-letter system. References here are to pages.
A Transatlantic Community of Saints

Narrative, which was reprinted in America and Holland and extracted in the Boston Christian History, where the editor recommended Robe's methods.44

Detecting a "defective" conversion was probably one of the most difficult and serious problems faced by a revival minister, but the heightened emotional tension so often inherent in a revival meeting could cause other problems. Were trances and dreams, for example, legitimized by Scripture? In New England, Christian History put across the view that "outcries" and excesses of expression were only to be expected but should not be taken as signifying conversion without other indicators. Aware that none of these experiences were new, the editor generally attempted to play down the emotionalism in the hope that people would thereby be discouraged from "indulging" themselves. As J. William T. Youngs has argued, many of these activities worried the very ministers who had encouraged the revival as a way to reunite and spiritualize the community, and who subsequently came to recognize that the same forces could impinge on their authority.45 Troubled by these conflicting concerns, ministers could at least turn to a sympathetic community to voice their fears and obtain advice.

Because private correspondence intensified their emotional identification with one another and reinforced a set of beliefs and practices, revival leaders soon realized that its usefulness could be multiplied if the news and information related in the letters were shared more widely. One simple and obvious method was to pass a letter around among friends. Another was to make a copy and pass the letter on, or to read it aloud to a congregation or prayer group. But the most sophisticated technique evolved by evangelicals was to found newspapers and magazines whose main content was revival letters. The first and most natural step was to use the ready-made networks of friends and colleagues among whom letters could be circulated. New England ministers, for example, circulated letters at their regular association meetings, which were neighborhood affairs, while others added new forms to achieve the same effect. Scottish ministers began a special "correspondent meeting," which reflected their desire to be more organized in their evangelism.46 Originally, few of the letters read aloud at these meetings would have been written for such a purpose, but once ministers established the practice of public readings,

44 James Robe, A Faithful Narrative of the Extraordinary Work of One Spirit of God at Kilsyth and other Congregations in the Neighbourhood (Glasgow, 1742), reprinted in Gillies, Historical Collections (1754; reprint edn., 1981), 450. The Narrative was reprinted in Christian History (Boston, 1743), nos. 1–7 and went into three editions in Holland.


it affected the style of the letters, making many of them more formal and impersonal. In England and Wales, where distances hindered meetings of like-minded ministers, workers at the London Tabernacle undertook a letter-transcribing service for revivalists outside London. Howell Harris provided this service for a time, as did John Symm, although they frequently complained that they lacked the work force to do the job thoroughly.47 Instances of letter copying were to be found in Scotland and New England, too, but the practice was never as centralized or as systematic as it was in England and was likely to happen only if a letter were of exceptional interest. Daniel Wadsworth of Hartford, Connecticut, for example, recorded in his diary that he "saw a copy of a letter from Rowlands to Noble giving wonders wrought by his preaching" in Wales, and the same letter appears in the copybook of Ebenezer Parkman of Westborough, Massachusetts.48 Even areas remote from the centers of communication could be brought in touch through the extension of local or internal networks. John Bonar of Torpichen wrote to McCulloch that he had heard of the revival in Cambuslang and other places in Britain and America and asked for "a particular account about this matter," which he received almost by return mail.49 Henry Davidson of isolated Galashiels in Scotland cultivated fruitful exchanges with the Reverend Thomas Davidson of Braintree, Essex, England, and with the merchant William Hogg of Edinburgh, who in turn had contacts with the London Tabernacle and received American letters arriving in London and Edinburgh.50 Similarly, Ebenezer Parkman conducted correspondence with Gilbert Tennant, Jonathan Edwards, and William Cooper, who were other colonials also involved in the transatlantic network, and with local ministers Andrew Eliot, John Webb, and Samuel Bliss.51

After circulating correspondence at their meetings and in private exchanges, ministers began to read letters, or at least some of the more stirring parts of them, to their congregations, in the hope that this experience would encourage people and communicate the idea of a special Providence from God. William McCulloch "frequently read to his hearers missives, attestations and journals which he had received from correspondents, giving an account of conversions which had taken place in different parts of the world, especially in New England."52 One of his congregation, nineteen-year-old Elizabeth Jackson, included in her conversion account specific reference to the impact that McCulloch's readings had made on her: "Hearing a minister on a fast day, after a sermon, read some papers relating

47 Roberts, Selected Trevecka Letters, 152.
48 Diary of Rev. Daniel Wadsworth (Hartford, Conn., 1894), 55. Wadsworth had correspondence with Philip Doddridge, Benjamin Colman, and Jonathan Edwards and he subscribed to Christian History (Boston). MHS, Parkman MS, Copybook.
to the success of the Gospel abroad, I was greatly affected at the thought that so many were getting good, and I was getting none." Another, Margaret Richardson, "was very glad to hear that there was such a work of conversion in those distant places [New England] and was very busy from time to time contriving methods how [she] might get there." By the late 1740s, Jonathan Edwards was able to reflect with some satisfaction on his own part in spreading the news. Implicit in his recollection is a sense of the processes and stages by which information moved outward: first, "by taking great pains to communicate to others" and, then, equal pains "to extract from all letters" received. He went on to make the contents of this correspondence public by readings to his congregation "and also to the association of ministers . . . and occasionally to many others." This work did not exhaust his evangelical outreach, for he copied sections of letters and sent them to other parts of Massachusetts and to Connecticut with advice to the recipient that he too should "communicate it to other ministers and . . . to his people." It is difficult to imagine how any individual could have done more without intervening directly.

Public readings of foreign and domestic news known as Letter Days became institutionalized as a regular part of the society calendar in England and Wales, through the organization of the Calvinist Methodist Tabernacles. Limitation of the practice to these two countries may reflect the lower levels of literacy and stronger oral traditions in England and Wales as compared to New England andlowland Scotland, especially among those involved in the revival. The English revivalists were also directly affected by the Church of the Brethren (the Moravians), a German pietist community that had been in England since 1735 under its leader Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The Moravian practice of Gemeintag, or mass meeting for the reading of missionary reports, impressed the new revival societies in England and Wales, which were particularly susceptible to Moravian influences. Gemeintag had been central to Moravian community life since 1728, and although it included ordinations, marriages, and prayer, the main feature was "the communication of the latest accounts from the churches and missions from all parts."

The Moravians conducted their Letter Days wherever they went including the Fetter Lane Society in London, whose meetings Whitefield, the Wesleys, and other members of the Oxford Club attended. As early as 1739, English evangelicals had adopted the practice of Letter Days. After separation from the Moravians in 1741, Whitefield and the Wesleys started their own Letter Day at the society in the Foundry in London, although they and their followers continued to attend the Moravian Letter Day, too. Howell Harris recorded in his diary that he "went to

53 "Examination of Persons under Spiritual Concern at Cambuslang," 1: 103, 2: 333.
hear the letters read in the Foundry . . . then again to Fetter Lane to hear the Moravian letters." And in a letter to Daniel Rowlands, which reflected the early pluralism of the revival, Harris reported that "yesterday we Whitefield's Methodists had our monthly Day for reading letters about the Progress of the Gospel elsewhere—such accounts as we had from America and Scotland your ears never heard of. . . . Yesterday was the Letter Day with the Moravians where was glorious accounts from Pennsylvania."58 The Calvinist Methodists established regular Letter Days as early as 1741, meeting in London on the second Monday of the month and in Bristol on the first Monday in the month.59 These monthly readings continued for at least seven years as an important feature of the Whitefieldian movement.

A Letter Day assembly usually began with an exhortation followed by a reading of letters, each of which might be concluded by communal singing of a specially written verse. Another exhortation and prayer rounded off the service. The meeting lasted several hours and was an occasion of great excitement, "the Tabernacle being filled in all its Parts for Peoples sitting and many standing on the outsides of the seats."60 Two sorts of letters were sent to the Tabernacle, one a personal letter donated by its recipient, the other a letter specially written to be read aloud and usually referred to as an "account" by the preachers who sent them in. Like the Epistles of Paul and the letters of George Fox to the Quakers, the second type of letter was consciously addressed to a large group of listeners and the style and content were adapted to that forum. Exhorters and superintendents of the societies were urged to send in a full account of their preaching, the persecutions they experienced, the new converts made, and new societies formed.

Letter Days, confined as they were to the centers of communication even in England, could not by themselves solve the problem of limited access to the news. From the outset, revivalists asked themselves how they could best multiply the effects they were achieving beyond their own immediate circles. The London printer John Lewis supplied the answer when, in September 1740, he began editing and printing a weekly revival newspaper.61 His concern was with "the

58 Harris's diary, October 4, 1742, Benyon, Reformer and Soldier, 26; and Harris to Rowlands, September 14, 1742, Roberts, Selected Trevecka Letters, 46.
59 Luke Tyerman, Life of the Rev. George Whitefield, 2 vols. (London, 1876–77), 1: 542. Whitefield wrote to the Welsh evangelists, December 28, 1741: "I am about to settle a monthly meeting in Bristol and London where correspondents' letters are to be read aloud and usually referred to as an “account” by the preachers who sent them in. Like the Epistles of Paul and the letters of George Fox to the Quakers, the second type of letter was consciously addressed to a large group of listeners and the style and content were adapted to that forum. Exhorters and superintendents of the societies were urged to send in a full account of their preaching, the persecutions they experienced, the new converts made, and new societies formed.

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Progress of the Gospel both at Home and Abroad,” and, from the first edition, he used letters as the main substance of the paper. Whitefield himself had seen the value of newspaper publicity, and, before Lewis’s venture, had attempted to use the secular press to promote the revival. But he encountered too many obstacles to the success of this project, including a lack of interest by secular editors and difficulty in controlling his copy. He found an independent paper to be a more useful instrument. By April 1741, Whitefield had officially adopted Lewis’s paper for publishing up-to-date revival news. From 1741 onward, the London paper became increasingly closely linked with Letter Day, eventually publishing little besides the letters read at the Tabernacle. Copyists transcribed letters received at the Tabernacle into books so that the leaders could make selections for publication and for public readings. Moreover, Lewis found imitators in Scotland and New England. William McCulloch of Glasgow, James Robe in Edinburgh, and Thomas Prince, Jr., of Boston took up Lewis’s idea and edited revival papers or magazines. All of these ministers, as active members of the communications network, were well placed to take on this new role.62 Even so, they relied heavily on one another to make a success of their papers. McCulloch drew on the London Weekly History for his Glasgow Weekly History, concentrating on reprinting letters to the near exclusion of other forms of literature. In his Christian History, Thomas Prince, Jr., aimed to print “extracts of written letters both from England, Scotland, New York, New Jersey, South Carolina and Georgia of a religious Nature as they shall be sent hither from creditable Persons and communicated to us.” James Robe, who put together the Christian Monthly History, was aware that “a very extensive correspondence must be established for the carrying on a Design of this sort to purpose.” Robe and Prince solicited letters for publication, but all the editors received unsolicited correspondence, including some from lay people. Once the editors had made contact with one another and exchanged complete sets of their own papers, coverage became as complete as was possible.63

Only this inexpensive and full reprinting of letters overcame the limitations of other methods of dissemination adopted in the early to mid-eighteenth century. It gave each English-speaking revival country its own newspaper or magazine that, for a few pence, brought the reader current with all the latest revival news. Individuals could read the newspapers privately or a minister could use them in


many different ways. In the Ross-shire village of Nigg, for example, John Balfour wrote to James Robe: “I procured most of your Narratives and Letters; and this Post I commission for an entire set of them, and for Copies of the Christian Monthly History... and have recommended to some others to procure them and will to more. . . . The Design is very laudable and has already been of great Use. It is a choice Means to promote the Communion of Saints upon Earth.”64 Three thousand miles away from Nigg, Nicholas Gilman of Durham, New Hampshire, read to his parishioners from the Glasgow Weekly History and lent copies out as part of his parish library scheme. From Somerset, England, Risdon Darracott, a Presbyterian minister, wrote thanking Lewis for his good work, telling him that he had “distributed the Weekly Papers among my People and they are much affected with them.” John Harrison, Nonconformist minister in Braintree, Essex, thought the London papers particularly useful for keeping the young people out of temptation’s way, which he did for nearly three hours at a time by reading “the substance of near 30 of Mr. Lewis’s Papers.”65 All the papers were miscellanies of news from Scotland, England, Wales, the American colonies, and Holland, in the form of letters, narratives, and extracts from printed works. Each paper reflected the views and abilities of its editor. The Boston paper, for example, which came out weekly for two years, was purposefully organized by Prince to “reaffirm the special covenant meaning of New England’s past, by associating the revival with Puritan traditions,” but, even so, almost one-third of the paper contained news and articles from Scotland, with Prince drawing attention to the similarities between the two areas.66

Although evangelical papers and magazines were the most innovative and effective method for spreading the word, more traditional methods continued alongside them. Whitefield's correspondence, for example, found its way into print most commonly through his Journals, and he occasionally also had it printed on the back of sermons and pamphlets or used it to break up some longer and weighty piece of prose. Three American letters to Whitefield were bound between his own Letter to New Brunswick and Letter in Answer to the Presbytery of Newcastle. Whitefield and other revival leaders regarded these letters, and other personal correspondence, as general revival property that could be published for the edification of the community at large.67 By combining their private networks for the dissemination of news and literature with their outlets for more general publication, revival leaders had an effective vehicle for launching specific projects or for conducting campaigns on an international level. In this way, they adopted

64 CMH, vol. 1, no. 4.
65 Nicholas Gilman MS Diary, New Hampshire Historical Society. See, for example, the entry for October 19, 1742. Darracott’s letter was printed in WH, no. 46; Harrison’s in WH, no. 52 and reprinted in GWH, no. 18, pp. 1-4.
67 See, for example, Copy of Three Letters, the first written by Dr. John Nicol at New York, to Mr. William Wardrobe, Surgeon in the Grass-market of Edinburgh; the second by a dissenting minister in England to a Gentleman in Scotland; the third from a minister at Boston to his friend at Glasgow, Giving an Account of the Progress and Success of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Edinburgh, 1740). For another example, see Dwight, President Edwards, 1: 407.
and supported Whitefield's Georgia Orphan House, donated money to missionaries, and helped to establish the Presbyterian College of New Jersey. Above all, they initiated and sustained the United Concert for Prayer, a parish-based international movement that became another of the major legacies bequeathed by the mid-eighteenth-century revivals to evangelical protestantism.

The successful establishment of coordinated prayer days, organized as the United Concert for Prayer, is solid evidence for the effectiveness of the communication networks. Initially, revivalists simply adopted the Puritan tradition of days of prayer, and, by 1741, the practice of setting aside a named day for prayer and fasting for the general revival of religion was common among the various religious societies and meetings in Britain and America. At this date, each group acted independently of the others. Whitefield, for example, made his society's day the sixteenth of the month, and many Calvinist Methodist societies in England and Wales kept the same day. In Dundee, in March 1742, Church evangelicals "agreed to observe Thursday next for Thanksgiving to the Lord in all our prayer societies and others are invited to join in Praising the Lord." Jonathan Edwards, too, recommended in Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival, published in 1742, that a shared day of prayer and fasting form the basis of a covenant between God and the converted. His Thoughts were widely read among Scottish revival activists and may have encouraged their own interest in shared prayer. By 1743, the practice was well organized in Lowland Scotland: "There was a Proposal from the Praying Societies at Edinburgh transmitted in a short printed Memorial to us and other Places to set apart Friday the 18th now past for Thanksgiving... and Prayer... There was a serious and apparent concern among the People." In the space of two years, the prayer day had become increasingly organized. By 1744, these Scottish ministers were ready to take the concept a stage further. Their proposal in October for joint action with their English and American counterparts in a United Concert for Prayer created something new out of the old tradition. Societies and individuals would commit themselves to weekly and quarterly prayer times in which prayer would be offered for a universal revival of religion. The proposers drew societies in, partly by making use of the well-developed personal correspondence network and partly through the Edinburgh Christian Monthly Collections were continually made for the Orphanage in Britain. See Welch, Two CM Chapels, xv, 8, 13. On missionary work, it is interesting to note that correspondence across the Atlantic continued through the 1750s and 1760s, as for example between Eleazor Wheelock, founder of an Indian Charity School at Dartmouth, New Hampshire, and his British patrons. Leon B. Richardson, An Indian Preacher in England (Hanover, N.H., 1933). William McCulloch himself spent £227 on missionary work; Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival, 216. British revivalists were also warm supporters of New Jersey College and the correspondence across the Atlantic about its foundation survives in the Burr MSS, Princeton University Library. Rev. Samuel Davies went on a fund-raising trip to Britain on behalf of the College, 1753–55. See George W. Pilcher, The Rev. Samuel Davies Abroad: The Diary of a Journey to England and Scotland, 1753–55 (London, 1955).

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69 GWH, no. 26, p. 7.

70 Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival, 225.

History, which devoted a complete issue to the Concert.\textsuperscript{72} The universal evangelism and catholic spirit of the Concert idea recommended it to the many shades of theological opinion within the revival movement,\textsuperscript{73} and, when the two-year pledge period was over, a fresh Scottish proposal to continue for a further seven years was accepted. The new proposal, made in August 1746, took the form of a printed Memorial that could be circulated within the network. Edwards, as the main American supporter of the Concert, received 500 copies for distribution, which he seems to have redistributed using the “tree” method: “I have very lately received a Pacquet from Scotland,” he wrote to Joseph Bellamy, “with several copies of a Memorial, for the continuing and propagating of an Agreement for joint Prayer, for the general Revival of religion, three of which I send to you, desiring you to dispose of two of ’em where they will be most serviceable.”\textsuperscript{74} When originally proposing the Concert, revivalists in Scotland had been hesitant about advertising it too publicly, possibly fearing that it might be regarded by some as “superstitious” and by others, especially employers, as “interfering with other duties.”\textsuperscript{75} By 1746, they were emboldened (perhaps because none of their fears were realized) to print and circulate the Memorial on the grounds that “notwithstanding of what may be done by private letters it is humbly expected that a Memorial . . . may reach where they will not.”\textsuperscript{76}

It is not easy to assess the number of societies and individuals associated with the Concert. Robe reported in 1749 that letters from New England told of the “great progress this Concert has made in these provinces. Many ministers, private Christians, yea congregations and churches, have entered into it and continue to enter.”\textsuperscript{77} But he gives no names or numbers. Certainly, the Concert received an additional boost from the publication by Edwards in 1747 of his \textit{Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayers}, which gave the genesis and the history of the Concert and included the entire text of the 1746 Scottish Memorial. As late as 1754, revivalists maintained sufficient interest to ask for a second seven-year extension of the arrangement.

Evangelicals of the 1740s were eager to prove the existence of good Scriptural and Reformation precedents for the coordination of prayer, and they cited chapter and verse to support their case.\textsuperscript{78} But their very strenuousness indicates an awareness that they were open to criticism for innovation. With benefit of hindsight, we can see that they had moved in the direction of a more instrumental approach to revivalism. Because it was planned on a large scale and was well organized and purposefully instrumental, the Concert, like the magazines, marked

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{CMH}, vol. 2, no. 1.
\textsuperscript{73} John Wesley accepted an invitation to join, and himself suggested to Erskine that Edwards and Gilbert Tennent would probably agree to take part; Telford, \textit{Letters of John Wesley}, 2: 93.
\textsuperscript{74} Frank B. Dexter, ed., \textit{Manuscripts of Jonathan Edwards} (Cambridge, Mass., 1901), January 15, 1746.
\textsuperscript{75} Gillies, \textit{Historical Collections} (1754; reprint edn., 1981), 462–64.
\textsuperscript{76} Jonathan Edwards, \textit{An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on Earth} (Boston, 1747), 23.
\textsuperscript{77} Gillies, \textit{Historical Collections}, 464.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, 462–64.
a shift in position by evangelicals. A number of them had constituted themselves into a group, with George Whitefield at its center, and created an evangelical community that consciously, if gradually, transformed revival practices.

The revival activities described here provided a link between eighteenth and nineteenth-century revivalism. The Concert for Prayer, for example, was resuscitated in the 1780s by a group of Northamptonshire English Baptists. When this group, which included Pastor Andrew Fuller, received a copy of Jonathan Edwards's *Humble Attempt*, in a parcel of books sent by John Erskine, they agreed to try to promote a revival of religion through a "prayer call." These late eighteenth-century evangelicals were undoubtedly less hesitant about using these means for promoting revival than their original proponents had been, and the confidence of later revivalists came in part from knowledge of precedent and example. The Concert came to them with a solid evangelical pedigree; they did not have to pioneer this form.

The mid-eighteenth-century revivalists had created the first evangelical magazines. Even if the appearance of these magazines accompanied a general expansion of periodical literature and of a magazine-reading public, the publication of evangelical magazines at this early date was not inevitable. Given the sheer effort required of amateurs to collect copy, print, distribute, and finance such a publication, it is hardly surprising that the magazines died when the revival impulse flagged. The absence of institutional support systems led in the 1750s to a lull in the publication of the magazines, despite their usefulness to evangelicals. By the last twenty years of the century, however, the magazines revived and became an integral and vital element in Christian outreach, so that in the nineteenth century, evangelicals often used the periodical press to promote and encourage revivals in ways reminiscent of the *Christian's Amusement* and its successors. These later publications of course reflected the growth of denominationalism and the concomitant decline of ecumenical protestant evangelicalism. Historians of nineteenth-century revivalism have not neglected these magazines as source material, or failed to see in them the mark of a more instrumental revivalism.

The history of connection, interconnection, and direct assistance between evangelicals in different countries and across generations is understandably recounted with triumph by evangelical historians, even though they have shown less interest in the human agencies involved. Other historians of the same events have been well aware of this evangelical tradition, relying as they have on the materials collected by men such as Prince or Gillies, who recorded the details of chronology and location but did not regard them as significant. A familiar portrait of revival history has emerged from the evangelical tradition, painted with broad,
bold strokes on a large canvas. In their turn, social historians have sought to get beyond these generalities to the particular nature of a revival in a specific place and at a specific period. By setting the religious behavior of mid-eighteenth-century men and women in the context of local social and political structures, they have rightly enmeshed the revival in community affairs. In their work, human activities and human emotions have replaced the hand of God as the focus of interest.

The evidence presented here shows that it is not necessary or helpful for historians to focus solely on local events. Revivals did indeed take place within particular communities, and we need to understand the complex relationships between revivalism and local religious and social groupings. But the international dimension of evangelicalism in the transatlantic world of the 1740s also needs to be recognized and understood. This dimension is as capable of explanation as the local context, and the human agencies are just as visible. The broad dissemination of news did not necessarily cause revivals, but the exciting knowledge that clergy and lay people acquired about events elsewhere shaped individual behavior and individual understanding of what the Lord had "upon the Wheel."