

The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790.

By WESLEY M. GEWEHR: 262 pages, portraits, bibliography,
index. 18/-. Camb. Univ. Press.

DUKE UNIVERSITY in North Carolina may well be proud of the publications it is putting forth, in many departments. Here we have a fine treatment of the first Revival, as it affected the most aristocratic of provinces, with an established church, the original Old Dominion. Hitherto we have heard more from the side of Jonathan Edwards; here we see, from original sources, how complete and far-reaching was the revolution in the home of Jefferson, Madison, and Washington, far away from New England. The start was due to George Whitefield, but the out-working was purely colonial, and non-Anglican.

Presbyterians began the native work, with their Log College on Neshaminy Creek: they were in the line of the Tryers in Cromwell's day, insisting first of all on "experience of a work of sanctifying grace," and then imparting the requisite training. Of course there were others who placed first value on learning, and at one time there was a split; but the evangelistic party had the future. Scotch-Irish and Germans had migrated into the west from Pennsylvania, and it was among these that the Presbyterians did best: then Samuel Davies tackled the older settlements in the tide-water. He had the legal fight as to toleration, and had to acquiesce in the local interpretation of the Toleration Act, that houses might be registered at the option of the owners, preachers licensed at the option of the magistrates. When he left for Princeton in 1759, the first phase was over, and the Presbyterians lost the lead. They had however won many gentry, and started work among slaves.

Baptists took up the running. Socially they were despicable, intellectually they were ignorant, numerically they were insignificant, but religiously they were zealots. The Regulars were immigrants from the north, and in twenty years they had only 624 members in ten churches. It was the Separates under Shubael Stearn on Sandy Creek who multiplied like bacteria. With them we hear of the jerks, barking, and other physical phenomena at their meetings. The leaders almost despised

human learning, and borrowed from Paul only his unceasing itinerancy and his enthusiasm. They scoffed at the idea of asking for licences, and sharply attacked the parsons as lazy and pleasure-loving. As a reward, they were mobbed, whipped, smoked out, treated to snakes and hornets, and almost lynched even in jail. But they were not thus to be checked, and the old aristocrats found them irrepressible. Leland was once interrupted in his preaching by a cavalier in the name of the law, but worsted him: the astonished magistrate told his mother, "Why, he stamped at me, and made no more of me than if I had been a dog; I'll have no more to do with them." Their first phase ended with the outbreak of civil war in 1776, when they had sixty churches in Associations.

Methodists began as a Society within the established church, being led by two rectors; by 1772 Wesley's lay preachers were itinerating in harmony with them. They therefore escaped the legal and social difficulties of the Baptists, and dealt with the same class. At the 1777 Conference, they reported 3,449 members, despite the suspicion of Toryism attaching to them. When the war was over, the 1784 Conference at Baltimore organized and appointed Bishops. The autocratic position of these officers, with the usual local organization, and the fervid song, assured Methodists a splendid future.

Next year, all three denominations entered on a new revival, and now, often in concert with one another. John Leland alone baptized 300 in 1788; Upper-King-and-Queen church had Theodore Noel as pastor, and in August 1788 he baptized 50, in September 60, nor were there ever fewer than ten a month for a year. When the revival period was over, Semple reckoned that Baptists were now the most numerous denomination in the state. John Rippon on this side of the Atlantic published several notes as to the progress.

So far, this is but raw material. Dr. Gewehr has done well in evaluating results. He recognizes, what many did even then, that some converts were unstable, others had been swept off their feet emotionally, a few were hypocrites; but when this is admitted, he traces fine results in three directions, politically, educationally, socially.

Politically, the common man came to his own. The old Anglican established church was wrecked, and in this process we ought to allow that there was some loss; though even here we should think of men rather than machinery, and we hear of men in powder and ladies in silks grovelling in the agony of conversion. A man who in a Baptist church took his full share in worship, finance, management, would not put up with being governed by a set of pig-tailed planters. The First Families of

Virginia had to share power, and find that no one would be insulted with "toleration." The story is often repeated how one of the magnates responsible for the new constitution learned his lesson in a Baptist church-meeting, and assured the footing of democracy for the United States.

Educationally, the gain was not so marked; there was still the temptation to regard zeal and learning as incompatible. Presbyterians did well, but Baptists were very slow, and only at the end of the century supported elementary education, and special training for ministers.

The Revival led directly to work among the slaves, and some Presbyterians presently attacked slavery: one Baptist freed all his slaves, and crossed to Kentucky to begin a new life; another actually persuaded the General Committee of 1789 to declare that "slavery is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature and inconsistent with a republican government." Methodists were as outspoken, and even passed Rules, which however had to be "suspended" in face of mob violence and indictments. Conscience did not win in this battle. In other respects we see that the Revival bore fruit. Baptist churches dealt with men who played the violin, associated with wicked men, were intemperate, did not attend worship, beat their wives, lied, fought, wore cocked hats, powdered their hair or tied it, wore a white stock and a black stock at once, wore gold; while women who tried high-crowned caps, rolls, necklaces, ruffles, stays and stomagers, found that they too were the objects of solicitude.

We are abundantly thankful for this readable and thoughtful picture, which abounds in suggestiveness for those who see the need of another revival.