American Presbyterianism owes a big debt, if not its very existence, to the coming of the Scotch-Irish to the New World. Of all the national groups who came from Europe to America the Scotch-Irish were the most uniform in religion—they were uniformly Presbyterian. A few Scotch-Irish came to America in the seventeenth century. About 1710 the number began to increase. By 1720 Scotch-Irish emigration to America was a growing flood that continued to grow till the American Revolution. American Presbyterianism is the product of English Puritanism, Scottish Presbyterianism and Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism as they blended and were modified and reshaped in colonial America. When the Scotch-Irish began coming in significant numbers there were already enough Presbyterians in the colonies to have attracted their attention to the New World. By 1700 twelve Presbyterian Churches had been formed in the American colonies. There were five in Maryland, two in Virginia, two in Delaware, and one each in Pennsylvania, New York and South Carolina. Francis Makemie in 1706 had taken the lead in organizing the first American presbytery in Philadelphia.

WHO WERE THE SCOTCH-IRISH AND WHY DID THEY COME TO AMERICA?

After England turned Protestant, the English conquered Catholic Ireland and tried unsuccessfully to force Protestantism on the Irish. Early in the 17th century King James I of England sought to put an end to the almost ceaseless Irish uprisings by displacing the Roman Catholic population of northern Ireland by confiscating their property, forcing most of the Irish to flee to southern Ireland, and inviting English and Scotch settlers to make their homes in northern Ireland. The English confiscated some 3,800,000 acres in the six counties of Northern Ireland and divided the land into estates of two thousand acres or less. These estates were granted to English and Scotch men of wealth and standing who would agree to live on their Irish estates and to bring over enough Scotch and English settlers to till the land. The settlers built homes, churches, and fortifications. A gigantic wave of emigrants from the lowlands of southwestern Scotland poured into Ireland. The more troublesome Highland Scots were not wanted. A smaller number of the poorer Englishmen were recruited to be tenants. Among the first and most numerous of the proprietors of the estates were English and Scotch nobles and men of wealth and political importance. They were given the lowest rents and most favorable terms and best lands. They filled their estates with Scotch Presbyterians. Some of the proprietors were English military officers who recruited former soldiers and who were allowed to have Irish tenants. A few wealthy Irish nobles were allowed to have estates with Irish tenants but they had to pay the highest rents. The Irish were given the poorest lands. There was almost no intermarriage with the Irish. Special grants of land were given to the Anglican controlled Trinity College of Dublin and to the Established Episcopal Church of Ireland. The City of London was given a large part of Derry County. Between 1610 and 1620 between 30,000 and 40,000 settlers arrived in northern Ireland. By 1641 some 100,000 Scots and 20,000 English were in Ulster. The Scots were solidly Presbyterian. They brought Scotch Presbyterianism, including ministers, organization, doctrine, discipline and ways, to northern Ireland. Many of the ministers were not of the highest quality. For several years the Scots lived in the rudest huts while
clearing the forests. They lived in constant danger from the raids of the half-wild, angry and mistreated Irish. Many Scots seemed to weaken or lose their religion. Among the devout were many who were the scum of both Scotland and England. Atheism, complete disregard for religion and decency, fighting, murder, theft and adultery abounded.

A Scotch Presbyterian minister named Glendinning, deeply troubled over the decay of religion began preaching the wrath of God against sin. It was the beginning of an emotional revival that awakened the consciences of both men and women and filled them with fear of an angry God. The revival swept through northern Ireland. It was followed by the more moderate preaching of another Presbyterian, Robert Blair of Bangor, who sought to awaken love for the Lord and joy in godliness. By 1688 the Irish Presbyterian Church had eighty ministers, about one hundred congregations, and five Presbyteries. The Presbyterians in northern Ireland outnumbered the Irish Episcopalians fifty to one. Some of the congregations around Londonderry had over a thousand active members. By 1717 there were one hundred forty congregations with some two hundred thousand members.

But things had not gone well with the Presbyterians in northern Ireland. The English king had offered low rentals to attract the Scotch colonists. When time came to renew the leases the rents were doubled. Then they were trebled. England placed harsh restrictions on the importation of food from Ireland into England. Restrictions were placed on beef, mutton, pork, butter and cheese. Ireland was cut off from all colonial trade. All direct trade with Europe was forbidden. The Scotch in Ireland were reduced to great poverty and even to famine. In 1699 the English passed the Woolens Act that ruined the woolen industry in northern Ireland.

From the beginning the Irish Presbyterians had been taxed to support the Established Episcopal clergy. Early in the reign of Queen Anne the Irish Parliament, dominated by the English bishops in the upper house, passed an act (1704) requiring that all office holders must receive the Sacrament according to the rights of the Episcopal Church. When the Irish Presbyterians refused they were cut off from holding even the humblest offices in districts where they were an overwhelming majority. Then it was made illegal for Presbyterian ministers to perform marriage ceremonies. The Scotch-Irish Presbyterians turned to America for refuge.

THE SCOTCH-IRISH EMIGRATION

The great emigration began in 1710 and increased year by year—from three to six thousand a year. Between 1714 and 1720 the greatest number came through the port of Boston. They were attracted to New England by the publicity that had been given the New England Puritans and because of the Calvinism they shared with the Puritans. The first large group, numbering 600-800 with two ministers, landed in Boston in 1718. They did not receive the welcome they had expected. The Boston authorities would not permit them to settle in the vicinity of Boston. They were forced on to the frontier to serve as a buffer against the Indian raids. They continued to come—some fifty-four ship loads. Some two hundred made their way into the province of Maine where they settled in the neighborhood of what would become Portland. Others moved on into southern New Hampshire. Led by their minister, James MacGregor, they founded Londonderry and established a Presbyterian Church. By 1724 they had built a meeting house and a parsonage. By 1730 the township had four flourishing schools. They were the majority of the population and controlled the town government. The
The Congregationalists called the Presbyterian Church "The Irish Church." In Maine and New Hampshire the civil authorities did not molest the Presbyterians. They did not mix with Congregationalists and had to pay taxes to support the Congregational ministers.

A group of the Scotch-Irish sought to settle in Worcester, Massachusetts. From the first they were not welcome but were permitted to worship with the Congregationalists. In 1740 when they decided to build their own meeting house they met with fierce opposition. Before the building was finished, a mob that included persons of "respectability and consideration" gathered at night and demolished the building and burned or carried off the building materials. The Presbyterians moved west to the frontier and founded Coleraine, Massachusetts and Pelham, New Hampshire. Scotch-Irish moved from western Massachusetts and New Hampshire into Vermont where they established Londonderry, Vermont.

The Scotch-Irish attempted to establish a Presbyterian Church in Milford, Connecticut, in 1741. They invited Samuel Findley to be their minister. Upon his arrival he was arrested, fined as a vagrant, and driven from the colony as a disturber of the peace. Later Findley became president of the College of New Jersey.

Many of the Scotch-Irish in New England found that the only way to overcome the hostility of the Congregationalists was to convert to the Congregational Church—a change that their common Calvinism made attractive.

After 1720 the flow of emigrants greatly increased but news of the hostility of New England led the Scotch-Irish to land in New York. Soon the Presbyterians had settled Orange and Ulster counties on the west side of the Hudson.

Fear of the Anglican establishment in New York caused the Scotch-Irish to make Philadelphia their main port of entry. Even as early as 1720 Presbyterians had begun to scatter throughout Pennsylvania. In 1720 they sailed up the Delaware and founded settlements in Bucks County. They spread to the Susquehanna and crossed over into Cumberland County. In 1729 James Logan, secretary to William Penn, wrote: "It looks as if Ireland is to send all its inhabitants thither for last week not less than six ships arrived and every day two or three arrive also." They scattered throughout Pennsylvania and then spread out from Pennsylvania in every direction. They moved into western New York and into the back country of New Jersey. They poured into the Potomac Valley. As early as 1732 they had moved into the Shenandoah Valley. By 1740 Scotch-Irish settlements reached from Virginia to Georgia. The Piedmont region was one of the centers of their greatest strength. After 1740 Scotch-Irish in considerable numbers moved into central and western North Carolina and some crossed the mountains into Tennessee. In the 1750's the French and Indian attacks on the frontier caused many of those on the frontier of North Carolina to migrate into western South Carolina and Georgia. After 1750 Charleston, South Carolina, became one of the leading ports of entry for the Scotch-Irish. Some travelled north until they met those coming down from Pennsylvania and Virginia. Others went south into Georgia. Some pressed westward into what would be Tennessee and Kentucky. By the mid-eighteenth century no colony was totally devoid of Scotch-Irish and Rhode Island was the only colony without a Presbyterian Church. In most of the colonies they were found in significant numbers to be a great influence. In the later 1740's some 12,000 arrived each year. In the 1770's some 50,000 came to America.
There were times when the exodus from Ireland was especially heavy. One of the early flood times was 1717-18 because of a new drastic increase in the rents in Ireland. Emigration was especially heavy in 1727-28 and 1740-41 because of poor harvests and famine. Another flood time was 1771-73 because of the decline of the Irish linen industry. In 1776 Benjamin Franklin estimated the number of Scotch-Irish in Pennsylvania at 350,000—a third of the colony's population.

By the time of the American Revolution the Scotch-Irish had some 70 communities surviving in New England. In New York there were between 30 and 40 communities. New Jersey had between 50 and 60. There were some 130 Scotch-Irish communities in Pennsylvania and Delaware. There were more than 100 in Virginia, Maryland, and over the mountains into eastern Kentucky and Tennessee. North Carolina had 50 communities of Scotch-Irish. South Carolina and Georgia had 70. By 1788 the Presbyterian Church in America consisted of some 220 congregations organized in sixteen presbyteries divided into four synods. The church was served by 177 ministers. The dominant influence was that of the Scotch-Irish.

THE EXPANSION OF COLONIAL PRESBYTERIANISM AND THE FIRST SYNOD

The growing Scotch-Irish population was a challenge to the first American Presbytery, founded in Philadelphia in 1706, almost from its beginning. The minutes of the meetings of the Presbytery reflect a keen awareness of the shortage of ministers. Over and over there were calls for ministers. The minutes of 1707 attempted to respond with the charge: Let "every minister of the Presbytery supply neighbouring desolate places where a minister is wanting, and opportunity of doing good offers." The minutes of 1708 reported: "a letter sent by the people of and about White Clay Creek in New Castle County, reporting their desire and petition to the Presbytery, to have the ordinances of the gospel administered with more convenience and nearness to the place of their abode, for the greater advantage and ease to their several families, promising withall due encouragement to the minister that shall be appointed thus to supply them."

In spite of the constant calls and great need for ministers the Presbytery was determined not to lower the educational standards for ministers that the Presbyterians had brought with them when they came to America. In 1710 information came to the Presbytery that a young Welsh layman, David Evan, was preaching to Welsh settlers in the Great Valley and that he "had done very ill." The Presbytery suggested to him that he lay aside all other business for a twelve month period and apply himself to learning and studying under two members of the Presbytery. He accepted the suggestion and year after year was examined and ordered to continue his studies. It was not until 1715 that he was finally ordained.

By 1716, with the influx of the Scotch-Irish, the first Presbytery had grown to include 19 ministers, 40 churches, and 3000 communicant members. The leaders decided that the time had come to divide into four presbyteries and to unite them in a Synod. The four presbyteries would be Philadelphia, New Castle, Long Island, and Snow Hill. The Presbytery of Philadelphia would include the churches in eastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey. The Presbytery of Long Island would include the churches of New York and eastern New Jersey. The Presbytery of New Castle would include the churches in Delaware with their six ministers. These three were organized and functioned. The fourth, Snow Hill,
was to include the churches of Maryland and Virginia. It failed to materialize. The Established Anglican Church in Maryland put so much pressure on the Presbyterians in Maryland that some turned Anglican and others migrated. Mackemie's congregation in Virginia ceased to exist at his death. Other meetings were largely dependent on help from Maryland and with the weakening of the Maryland churches Presbyterianism for a time ceased to exist in Virginia. The Established Anglicans had made things very hard and unpleasant for Presbyterians.

The first Synod met in 1717 but its powers were vague and things did not go smoothly between Synod and Presbyteries. The Synod formed three regional courts over which it sought to exercise general jurisdiction. Difficulties arose over the division of powers between Synod and Presbyteries. Both were plagued with quarrels between congregations and their ministers and by reports of moral offenses of both ministers and members. Van Vleck, a minister of Dutch extraction was accused and found guilty of bigamy. A very unhappy relationship developed between the people of the Woodbridge congregation and their minister, Wade. In 1720 a minister was brought before the Synod for fornication. He confessed "with great seriousness, humility, and signs of true repentance." His attitude seemed so satisfactory to the Synod that it permitted him to continue preaching after a suspension of four Sabbaths. Another minister was repeatedly overtaken with drink and accused of abusive language, with quarrelling and with stabbing a man. Another minister had to be tried for lying in a bargain of a horse, with folly and with levity unbecoming a gospel minister. George Gillespie in a letter of 1723 declared that many congregations had been erected or were erecting. Within five years near 200 families had arrived from Ireland—mostly Presbyterians. But though ministers and congregations were multiplying there was little of the power and life of religion with either. His synod had some 50 ministers and probationer preachers. Six had had to be tried for grossly scandalous conduct. Suspension for four Sabbaths had been the greatest censure inflicted. One of the ministers suspended for four Sabbaths was Robert Laing who had had the temerity to wash himself in the creek on the Lord's Day.

Often the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were not very highly thought of by outsiders. They were scoffed at as "psalm-singing covenanters" and "rigid Calvinists." They were noted for their violent antipathy to anything Anglican. They were thought of as bold, courageous, restless frontiersmen, not especially pious, and often having no minister. They were described as "lawless, individualistic, resentful of constituted authority, hard drinkers, haters of Indians, and inveterate 'squatters' on land they had not bought. They showed no respect to estates that were not occupied. James Logan, secretary to William Penn, described them as "bold and indigent strangers from Ireland, who occupied land without legal title on the ground that it was against the laws of God and nature, that so much land should be idle while so many Christians wanted it to labour on."

When the first Synod was formed in 1716 the Presbyterian Churches of New England and South Carolina remained independent of the Synod. Presbyteries were organized in both areas. The Londonderry Presbytery was organized in 1730 for the churches of New Hampshire. It was the first in New England. The second New England Presbytery was the Boston Presbytery formed in 1745. The James Island Presbytery was the first in South Carolina, formed in 1722.
HEROES AMONG THE PRESBYTERIANS

The Scotch-Irish congregations were poor and frequently unable to support a minister. Sometimes they could not abide one that they could afford. There was much contention and strife between congregations and ministers. But like all the other early Presbyterians they continued to put a high value on education. Candidates for the ministry were expected to undergo rigorous training that included proficiency in the original languages of Scripture, the study of theology, and of the homiletic arts. The members expected simple services that featured long scholarly expositions of Scripture. After the long sermons the members might repair to the local tavern for refreshment but would return to the church for the afternoon service.

No such training was offered in the early years in America except at Harvard and Yale in New England. The result was a large Congregational influence when ever the ministers came from New England. Ministers also came from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but there were never enough.

Most of the pioneers in the South came without ministers. They sent urgent appeals to established Presbyteries to send pastors. The Presbyteries encouraged the pastors of established congregations to leave their congregations to go on mission tours often of several months. At first three months was suggested and then the term was extended to six months. The Presbyteries required all candidates for ordination to serve a period on the frontier before ordination. There were never enough men for the expanding population.

New England gave its share of giants to the ministry of colonial Presbyterianism. As Synods were organized great gains were made in leadership. One of the heroes of the early Presbyterians was Jonathan Dickinson (1688-1747) who became pastor of the Puritan Church at Elizabethtown, New Jersey. He was from a highly respected New England family. He was educated in Yale and ordained to the Congregational ministry in 1709. He served as pastor at Elizabethtown for almost forty years. He favored affiliation with the new presbytery but would not press the matter because the majority of his congregation preferred to remain independent. The increasing numbers of Scotch-Irish strengthened his leanings toward Presbyterianism and also influenced the congregation. By 1717 he was able to lead the congregation to adopt Presbyterianism. In 1720 he was appointed a standing member of the Synod. In 1721 he became the moderator. With calm judgment and tact he exercised a powerful influence on the growing Presbyterianism in its formative years.

John Pierson, educated at Yale and son of Yale's first president, became pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Woodbridge, New Jersey.

The year following the formation of the Synod, James Anderson of Newcastle was called to be the first minister of the Presbyterian Church in New York City. For a time the little congregation worshipped in the City Hall. The congregation attempted to erect its own building but grounds and building proved far more expensive than anticipated. The debt was so large that the congregation was unable to complete the building. The unfinished building and the Presbyterians were the object of ridicule. Dr. John Nichol, a leading New York Presbyterian layman sent urgent appeals to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and to the Synod of Glasgow. Liberal gifts from Scotland enabled the congregation to complete the building. The minister became so unpopular that a group pulled
off and formed a separate congregation in 1722. The new congregation called
the eighteen-year old Jonathan Edwards, who had just graduated from Yale, to
be their minister. After eight months Edward's pastorate was terminated and
the congregation returned and was absorbed in the older congregation and
Edwards returned to the Congregationalists.

In New England one of the Presbyterian heroes was James MacGregor, the
first minister at Londonderry, New Hampshire. Throughout his ministry
southern New Hampshire was frontier territory and Indian attacks were frequent.
MacGregor was accustomed to go into his pulpit with gun loaded and primed.
The able-bodied men of the congregation came to church armed. The first New
England Presbytery was organized at Londonderry in 1730, the year after the
death of Pastor MacGregor. As more Scotch-Irish arrived a new parish was
established in West Londonderry in 1737 and David MacGregor, the son of the
first Londonderry minister, became the pastor in the new congregation. He
had been educated for the ministry by his father's successor at Londonderry
and was one of the first of the American Presbyterian ministers to be educated
under private tutelage. Two years later in 1739 an East Londonderry parish was
formed. Londonderry was one of the strongest and most active Presbyterian
centers in New England. As the number of Scotch-Irish increased the churches
in and around Boston formed the Boston Presbytery in 1745. A little later the
Maine churches formed the Eastward Presbytery. Another Presbytery was formed
at Grafton in New Hampshire. By 1755 there were thirty-six organized
Presbyterian Churches in New England: fourteen in Maine, eleven in New
Hampshire, six in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut. By the time of the
Revolution the Presbyterians had organized one Synod and three Presbyteries.
There were two independent Presbyteries outside the Synod. New England had
fourteen Presbyterian ministers.

Northern Ireland furnished the American Presbyterians one of their
greatest leaders, William Tennent (1673-1746). He was educated at the University
of Edinburgh and licensed by a Scottish Presbytery. In 1704 he was ordained
in the Anglican Church in Ireland, probably because of government pressure. In
1718 he arrived in Philadelphia and applied for acceptance by the Synod of
Philadelphia. He gave the Synod six reasons why he disented from the
Established Church of Ireland. The Presbyterians found his statement of faith
satisfactory and enrolled him as a minister. He became the pastor of the church
in East Chester, New York. The church flourished under his leadership and he
was called to the larger parish at Bedford, New York, in 1720. Tennent's
greatest contribution was in the field of education. He had four sons. While
serving the New York churches (1718-1726) he trained his oldest son, Gilbert,
for the Presbyterian ministry. The elder Tennent gained a wide reputation for
learning. He was well trained in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, philosophy, and theology.
In 1726 he moved to Bucks County in Pennsylvania, where he served the churches
of Neshaminy and Doylestown on the south branch of Neshaminy Creek. He remained
at Neshaminy until his death in 1746. A cousin, James Logan, granted Tennent
a fifty-acre tract of land to erect a log school house, twenty feet square.
Outsiders in derision called it the "Log College." Tennent educated his three
other sons, William Jr., Charles and John. Ten other young men were trained
for the Presbyterian ministry in his Log College: Charles Beatty, John Blair,
Samuel Blair, William Dean, Samuel Finley, James McRae, Daniel Lawrence, John
Roan, William Robinson and John Rowland—men who would play a major role in
developing Presbyterianism.
Tennent's Log College became the pattern of higher education on the frontier. Samuel Blair established a Log College at Fagg's Manor in Pennsylvania that graduated Samuel Davies, John Rodgers, Robert Smith, James Finley, Hugh Henry and Alexander Cummings who became important Presbyterian ministers. Robert Smith founded Pequea Academy in Lancaster county and Samuel Finley established Nottingham Academy in Maryland. This was the background of the College of New Jersey that was opened the year that the elder Tennent died in 1746. By the end of the century the Presbyterians had established a hundred Log Colleges, Academies, and Classical Schools, some of which developed into permanent colleges.

The beginnings of the College of New Jersey were shaky. During the planning Governor Lewis Morris died and the interim governor had to issue the charter. Dickinson was chosen to be the first president and Caleb Smith, a Presbyterian minister, was tutor. There were eight to ten pupils in the parsonage at Elizabethtown. Classes began in May, 1747. After five months the president, Dickinson, died. He was followed by a New England Presbyterian, Aaron Burr, son-in-law of Jonathan Edwards. He moved the students to his parsonage at Newark. Jonathan Belcher, the new governor, issued a stronger and better charter and enlarged the board of trustees. Burr improved the financial support of the school and moved it to Princeton where he erected Nassau Hall—the finest college building in America at the time. Burr died in 1757. He was followed by his father-in-law, Jonathan Edwards, who returned to the Presbyterians, but who died of a smallpox vaccination in 1758. Samuel Davies, the next president, died in two years. Samuel Finley who followed died in 1766. The college had grown in size and influence. It had 120 students and became the educational leader of Presbyterianism. The trustees chose as the next president, John Witherspoon (1723-94) of Scotland and after great efforts persuaded him to come to America. He landed in Philadelphia in August 1768. He was joyfully escorted to Princeton and for twenty-five years successfully led the college, raised money, became a major force among the Presbyterians, and took a very active part in shaping the new nation and its constitution. In 1776 he was chosen a member of the New Jersey provincial congress to frame a constitution. He was one of five delegates representing New Jersey in the Continental Congress. He was the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. Among the Presbyterians he swung the prevailing spirit from the New Englanders to the spirit and traditions of Scotland. He was one of the main leaders in the organizing of the General Assembly of the Presbyterians in America.

Southern Presbyterianism had its heroes. In 1738 John Caldwell and a group of Presbyterians petitioned Lieutenant Governor William Gooch for freedom to worship in Virginia. Gooch was sympathetic and replied:

As I have always been inclined to favour the people who have lately removed from other provinces to settle on the western side of our great mountains so you may be assured that no interruption shall be given to any minister of your profession who shall come among them, so as they conform themselves to the rules prescribed by the act of toleration in England, by taking the oaths enjoined thereby, and registering the places of their meetings, and behave themselves peaceably towards the government.
In 1737 Samuel Gelston had entered the valley of Virginia as a missionary of the Donegal Presbytery. By 1740 James Anderson was holding services in Presbyterian communities in Virginia. In 1740 John Craig became the first settled pastor in western Virginia with the Augusta and Tinkling Spring congregations. He spent the rest of his life in the valley. Augusta, Tinkling Spring and Frederick were new settlements west of the Ridge that had been formed in 1738. When Augusta and Frederick were made counties in 1738 they were declared parishes of the Established Church. In Augusta the majority of the population were Presbyterians and when the vestry was elected it was composed of a majority of dissenters. When the Established minister arrived the Presbyterians required him to preach without the surplice and the congregation insisted on receiving the sacrament standing according to the Presbyterian usage. Such a situation did not last—Presbyterians did not trust Anglicans—they could never forget how they had suffered in the old country. In 1741 John Thomson began an itinerant ministry to the growing Presbyterian settlements in western Virginia.

THE ADOPTING ACT OF 1729

As the number of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians increased there were growing tensions and jealousies between the Scotch-Irish and the Presbyterians who had come out of New England Congregationalism. Many of the Scotch-Irish brought with them to America fears of heresy that had been aroused in Scotland and Ireland. The Scotch-Irish had seen Presbyterianism in the old countries deeply troubled by increasing Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, and Freethinking. Efforts to combat the growing heresy in Scotland had led to efforts to require strict subscription to the Westminster Confession and Catechism. As early as 1720 Scotch-Irish ministers were advocating a tightening up in doctrine and discipline and protesting the mildness of the Synod in ministerial discipline. The Newcastle Presbytery passed a requirement of strict subscription to the Westminster Confession in 1724. The New England and Welsh ministers formed a non-subscription party and strongly opposed the movement of the Scotch-Irish. John Dickinson became the leader of the non-subscription party. He insisted that required subscription would lead to schism. He declared that subscription would neither "detect heretics, nor keep concealed heretics out of the church." He urged that the purity of the church would be better guarded by a close examination of every candidate's religious experiences and the strict discipline of scandalous ministers. He urged that the Westminster Confession itself declared that God alone is "Lord of the conscience." To require subscription would make the Westminster Confession an end in itself with no standard by which to judge, revise and correct itself. Only Scripture should be the final authority.

In 1722 a compromise was reached by allowing presbyteries and synods to exercise authority of judgment on individual cases, but the controversies continued. In 1729 at Philadelphia the Adopting Act was finally passed. Under the influence of Dickinson provision was made for ministers and licentiates to express any scruples they felt as to any article in the Confession. The presbytery or synod would judge whether such scruples were "essential and necessary articles of faith." The essentials were not defined but left to the judgment of the presbytery or synod. Controversy would continue and where the Scotch-Irish prevailed the tendency was to enforce strict adherence to the Confession without the least variation or alteration. New England liberality waned and the Scotch-Irish strictness increased.

The Great Awakening would find fertile soil among the Presbyterians.