At the end of the colonial period the Presbyterians were the second largest church group in the colonies. In numbers the Presbyterians were surpassed only by the Congregationalists. Both Presbyterians and Congregationalists belonged to the Reformed branch of the Reformation, often called the international branch of the Reformation.

The name "Presbyterian" refers to a church ruled by "presbyters" or "elders" as opposed to churches ruled by a bishop. The Reformed churches looked to John Calvin's Geneva as furnishing the model of the only true gospel order of church government. As the movement developed and spread the local congregations of an area met together periodically in a "presbytery." The presbyteries of a larger district formed a "synod" that would meet periodically. The synods of a country met in a "general assembly. The Reformed believed that this hierarchy of church government or church courts was the Scriptural order. With various minor national modifications it was the system of church organization of the Swiss Reformed, the French Huguenot, the German Reformed, the Dutch Reformed, and the Presbyterian churches. The Scotch Presbyterian Church has often been considered the model Calvinistic or Reformed Church. John Knox brought back from his exile in Geneva this pattern of church organization. After Knox it was perfected under the leadership of Andrew Melville. Each local congregation had a pastor who was responsible for the preaching of the Word and the training of young ministers. A board of lay elders was in charge of church discipline. A board of deacons was in charge of the charity work of the congregation. A teacher or teachers carried on the education of children and younger members. One of the distinctive features of the Scotch Presbyterian system was the deliberate attempt to achieve a balance of power between the ordained pastor and the lay elders. The Scotch were anxious to make sure that the pastor could not become a "little pope." On the other hand they did not want untrained lay elders to become tyrannical over an educated ministry. The Scotch Presbyterians sought to keep this balance of power in the presbytery composed of the congregations of a district, the synod composed of the presbyteries of a larger district, and in the general assembly made up of the synods of the country.

In 1560 the Scottish Parliament adopted as the confessional standard of faith, the confession prepared by John Knox and his closest associates that came to be known as "The First Confession of Faith." It was supplemented in 1581 by "The Second Scottish Confession" or "National Covenant" issued and subscribed to in an effort to oppose any attempt to revive Romanism in Scotland. Knox also provided the church with what was known as "The First Book of Discipline" that was adopted in 1560. Andrew Melville prepared in 1578 "The Second Book of Discipline," which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1581 to meet the threat of episcopacy. In 1562 the General Assembly adopted "The Book of Common Order" to direct the worship of the church. It was the directory of worship that Knox had prepared to guide the English congregation in Geneva in 1556.

The Scotch Presbyterians were known for their great emphasis on correct doctrine. They maintained Calvin's emphasis on the sovereignty of God and double predestination. Following Calvin's emphasis on the Psalms as the only music
worthy of being offered to God, the Scotch developed the Scotch Psalter—their own version of the Psalms for singing. Just as distinctive of Scotch Presbyterianism was its emphasis on ethical and social discipline. The Scotch were known for orderliness, moral correctness, reverence for sacred things, and deference to authority. The church was known for its rigorous and continuous pressure for the extirpation of vice. This was in great contrast with the reputation of the Scotch for wilfulness and lawlessness before the Reformation.

As Presbyterianism was developing in Scotland, Puritanism was growing in England. The Puritans had also been exiles in Geneva. Under Elizabeth, Thomas Cartwright and William Ames sought to introduce presbyterianism to replace episcopacy in England. Under the severe repression of Archbishop Whitgift, Puritanism tended to result in either Congregationalism or Calvinistic episcopacy. Separatist Puritanism kept alive much of the influence of Geneva. Whereas Presbyterians stressed the universal church with the local congregations being members of the body of Christ, Congregationalism emphasized the authority of the local congregation. In England Presbyterians and Congregationalists recognized ties of kinship and often cooperated in various projects. In the Civil War they united with the Scotch Presbyterians to oust the Stuarts and in the Westminster Assembly drew up the Westminster Confession which became the doctrinal standard of both English and Scotch Presbyterians. The Westminster Confession was ratified by the General Assembly of Scotland on August 27, 1647, and by the English Parliament, after revisions, on June 20, 1648. Cromwell restrained the Presbyterians, recognizing the important role other dissenters had played in the war. The high-handedness of the Presbyterians led to the restoration of the Stuarts. Presbyterianism was greatly weakened in England but continued dominant in Scotland.

James I who had been reared in Presbyterian Scotland proved a great disappointment to Presbyterians when he became king of England. The persecution of non-conformists under James I and Charles I led to the great early migrations to America. The attempt to force Anglicanism of the Scotch was one of the major factors in precipitating the war.

Among the Puritan Congregationalists in New England there were constant outcroppings of Presbyterianism. The Congregationalism that developed among New England Puritans drew sharp criticism from Puritan divines in England in 1637-39. The English Independents saw a Congregationalized Presbyterianism in "the New England Way." In 1636 the Massachusetts authorities invited a ship-load of Scotch Presbyterians of Ulster to settle on the Merrimac River. They set sail with two pastors, Robert Blair and John Livingston, but the ship was driven back by contrary winds and the project was abandoned. It was somewhat midway between Presbyterianism and Independency. John Eliot in his The Divine Ordinance of the Councils in 1665 showed Presbyterian leanings. John and Cotton Mather advocated ideas that leaned in a Presbyterian direction. The Puritan congregations at Hingham and Newburyport were almost Presbyterian. The synod of Massachusetts churches in Cambridge on August 15, 1648, adopted "The Platform of Church Discipline" that became known as "The Cambridge Platform." There were Presbyterian overtones in the synod. The Platform was drawn up by Richard Mather, with a preface by John Cotton. It defended the organization of the Massachusetts churches as Congregational. The Massachusetts churches moved in a Congregational direction. When Presbyterians came to Massachusetts they tended to conform to Congregationalism. There were Presbyterian leanings in the convention of pastors in 1705 that called for tighter church government by establishing associations with final authority in dealing with controversial issues and in passing on ministerial candidates. The proposals were approved by a Boston Convention in 1706, but were not implemented in much of Massachusetts.
Congregationalism continued to prevail.

In 1708 the Connecticut churches adopted the Saybrook Platform that made the Connecticut churches less congregational and more presbyterian. The Connecticut churches began to look away from Massachusetts and toward the growing Presbyterianism of the Middle Colonies.

When New England Puritans migrated to New York and New Jersey where Dutch Reformed influence was strong they tended to move in a Presbyterian direction. Sometimes they are described as Presbyterian Congregationalists. As the Presbyterian Church took form in America they became an important part of it. Included are the congregations at Southampton (1640), Newton (1642), Hempstead (1643), East Hampton (1648), Huntington (1658), Jamaica (1661), Setauket (1665), Smithtown (1677), and Bridgehampton (1695). By 1700 there may have been as many as fifteen of these Presbyterian congregations in New York and New Jersey. The same was true of the New England Congregationalists who migrated to Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina.

Persecution against the Presbyterians in Ulster in the 1650's led a number of Scotch Presbyterians to seek new homes in the Barbadoes, Maryland and Virginia. Francis Doughty came to Maryland by way of New Amsterdam as early as 1659 to minister to Presbyterians. The Calvert's made Doughty's brother-in-law, Captain William Stone, governor of Maryland as a safeguard against interference from the Commonwealth government in England. After the restoration of the Stuarts Captain Vivian Beale brought Presbyterian colonists to Maryland from Fifeshire to escape the persecution in Scotland.

A number of Scotch Presbyterian ministers were driven from Scotland by the attempt to establish episcopacy in Scotland in 1662. Some of them sought refuge in New England. A considerable number accompanied by members of the Scotch Presbyterian Church migrated to Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina.

Richard Baxter persuaded an English Presbyterian, Matthew Hill, to make his home in Maryland to minister to the people. Hill wrote back to Baxter in 1669, "We have many of the Reformed religion, who have a long while lived as sheep without a shepherd, though last year brought in a young man from Ireland, who hath already had good success in his work. We have room for more ministers."

Richard Salwey was one of the early Presbyterian ministers in Maryland. In 1680 the Scotch-Irish in Maryland applied to the Irish Presbytery of Laggan for another minister. This Irish Presbytery was arrested and deported before they could respond; they had angered the Anglican authorities by keeping a public fast. The moderator of the Presbytery at Laggan, William Trail, came to Maryland in 1882. Another from this Presbytery, Francis Makemie, came to Maryland in 1683. He would become the most famous of the early Presbyterian ministers and is remembered as the "Father of American Presbyterianism."

Between 1670 and 1680 Scotch Presbyterians settled on the eastern fork of the Elizabeth River, near Norfolk, Virginia. For a time they were served by a minister from Ireland. He died in 1683. By 1683 there was a Presbyterian Church in Rehoboth, Maryland.

As early as 1690 Puritans from New England formed a church in Charleston, South Carolina that was Presbyterian. In 1695 a Puritan Congregation in Charlestown, Massachusetts, migrated with its pastor to Dorchester, South Carolina, where it too, became Presbyterian.
In the 1690's Presbyterians and Congregationalists in London formed the Presbyterian and Congregational Union of London to cooperate with Massachusetts and Connecticut churches in sending ministers to Pennsylvania and Delaware to minister to Presbyterian congregations. Among the churches were a Presbyterian church in Philadelphia and a Presbyterian church in Newcastle, Delaware.

In 1698-99 Scotch Presbyterians of Scotland planned to establish a colony on the Isthmus of Darien in Panama. When the colony failed, many of the members and their ministers sought refuge in New England. One of the ministers, Archibald Strobo, driven by a storm, landed at Charleston, South Carolina, where he became pastor of a Presbyterian church.

By 1700 a considerable number of Presbyterians—the majority Scotch or Scotch-Irish—were scattered throughout all the colonies. By 1700 there were twelve distinctly Presbyterian Churches in the colonies. Five were in Maryland, two in Virginia, two in Delaware, and one each in Pennsylvania, New York and South Carolina. Many more were still Presbyterian Congregational churches—actually Presbyterian in embryo. They still lacked Presbyterial organization.

FRANCIS MAKEMIE THE FATHER OF AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM

Francis Makemie was born of Scotch parentage in Donegal County of North Ireland, in 1658. His boyhood was the time of fierce Anglican persecution against Presbyterians—the boot, the thumb screw and the scaffold were used to enforce submission to the Anglican bishops. Makemie was converted at fifteen years of age by a godly school-master. He set his mind on becoming a minister. Presbyterian students were barred from the Irish colleges. Makemie went to the University of Glasgow. When he completed his studies he returned to Ireland. In 1681 he preached his trial sermon before the Presbytery of Laggan and received his license to preach. The next year, 1682, he was ordained for mission work in America but before he could be sent the Presbytery was banished by the Anglicans. In 1683 Makemie made his way to the Barbados. He reached Maryland in 1683. He began travelling up and down the coast preaching in Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas, supporting himself in business. He formed four or five new churches, two of which were Rehobeth and Snow Hill in Maryland. In 1692 he began a Presbyterian church in Philadelphia. In 1701 Jedediah Andrews became pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. He was a New Englander by birth and education. From 1696-1698 Makemie was back in Barbados combining preaching and business. On his return he married the only daughter of a wealthy landowner in Accomac County in Virginia. He became the settled minister of the Rehobeth Church. He still spent considerable time preaching up and down the coast.

In 1704-05 he went to England to plead for help from the Presbyterian Union of London. He secured two missionaries and promise of their support. One was John Hampden, a Scotch-Irishman, and the other was George McNish, a Scotchman, both graduates of the University of Glasgow. On their arrival in America Makemie set them over four of the churches he had formed in Maryland. The year they began their work Anglicanism was established in Maryland and in South Carolina. Makemie and his helpers had to face persecution and intolerance.

In the spring of 1706 Makemie invited six other ministers to meet with him in Philadelphia and they formed the Philadelphia Presbytery. It was the first American Presbytery and is considered Makemie's greatest achievement.
Makemie was elected to be the first moderator of the Presbytery. The others were the two missionaries, Hampton and McNish; Samuel Davis, pastor at Lewes, Delaware; Jedediah Andrews of the church in Philadelphia; John Wilson of New Castle; and Nathaniel Taylor of Patuxent, Maryland. Of his associates one was Scottish, two were Scotch-Irish, and the other three were from New England. Their congregations were quite diverse. All were loyal to the Westminster Confession. The members were not hung up on questions of doctrinal uniformity or matters of organization. Their goal was the growth of the church in America. They received financial assistance from London and New England—not from Scotland or Ireland. They were completely independent of foreign control. One of their primary goals was securing ministers for the American churches. They claimed the right to examine and ordain ministers. From the first they had good relations with the Presbyterian Congregational churches that would continue to move in a Presbyterian direction.

After the adjournment of the second meeting of the Presbytery in Philadelphia in October, 1706, Makemie and John Hampden set out on a trip to consult with Boston ministers. Cotton Mather had shown great interest in the progress of the Presbyterian churches. On the way to Boston Makemie and Hampden travelled through New Jersey visiting Presbyterians. They attended a meeting of Presbyterians in Freehold, New Jersey. They reached New York City in January 1707. The Congregationalists invited Makemie to preach and the Dutch church was offered for the sermon but the Royal Governor, Lord Cornbury, refused to permit it. Makemie preached in a private home in New York and he and Hampden went on to Long Island where he preached at Newtown. The next day he and Hampden were arrested on a warrant of the governor for preaching without his permission. Charges were dropped against Hampden but Makemie was kept in prison until March, when he refused to give bond not to preach. He replied to the Governor, "If your Lordship require it, we will give security for our behaviour; but to give bond and security to preach no more in your excellency's government, if invited and desired by any people, we neither can nor dare to do it." Makemie defended his right to preach arguing that the law permitting liberty of worship in New York had no limiting clause. Cornbury argued that certificates for preaching in Virginia and Maryland were not valid in New York. Makemie was ordered to stand trial in June, 1707. He appealed to the Boston ministers for help. They appealed to the United Brethren in London. Three of the ablest lawyers in the colonies, one of whom was David Jameson, defended Makemie in the trial that aroused great interest among the colonies. The lawyers argued that Makemie had complied with the English Toleration Act in that he had secured a license to preach under that act while he was in the Barbados, and that the license was valid throughout the Queen's dominions. The jury ordered the acquittal of Makemie. The vengeful Cornbury forced Makemie to pay all the costs of the trial which amounted to eighty-three pounds. Makemie's wife was able to pay the costs. The colonists were outraged and an irate New York Assembly passed a bill rendering the action against Makemie illegal. The bill prohibited the assessment of such costs in the future. Word spread among the colonists that Lord Cornbury was a spendthrift, a grafter, a bigoted oppressor, and a drunken fool. Charges of bribery and encroachment of the liberties of the people were brought against him at the next meeting of the New York Assembly. Shortly after that he was recalled in disgrace.

Lord Cornbury, in a letter to the Lord Commissioners of Trade and Plantations, described Makemie as a Jack-of-all-trades, a preacher, a doctor of Physic, a merchant, an attorney, a counselor-at-law, and a disturber of governments. He accused him of disturbing the peace of Virginia and Maryland before coming to New York.
The whole story of Makemie's arrest, imprisonment, and trial was published in Boston in 1707 by a "Learner of Law, and a Lover of Liberty" under the title, A Narrative of a New and Unusual American Imprisonment, of Two Presbyterian Ministers, and Prosecution of Mr. Francis Makemie, one of them, For Preaching One Sermon in the City of New York. The colonists understood that Lord Cornbury intended the establishment of Anglicanism and the outlawing of all other churches. In his defense of Makemie Jameson pled for liberty of conscience that had been guaranteed to all. He pointed out that during the more than forty years that the province of New York had been under the Crown of England this was the first case of this nature and he hoped it would be the last. He pointed out that the majority of the people of New York were Dissenters.

Makemie went on to Boston where he made a very favorable impression on Cotton Mather who praised him as "a reverend and judicious minister."

The long and arduous journey and the imprisonment were too much for Makemie. The following year (1708) he died and was buried on his farm in Virginia.

Presbyterianism in America was on the verge of a tremendous growth that would make it second among the colonial churches in size. A number of factors played an important part in this upsurge. A major factor was the great influx of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. This led to the formation of more Presbyteries and the formation of Synods. One of the most important factors was the Great Awakening that worked with unusually great force among Presbyterians although it aroused some strong opposition that brought fierce debates and even divisions.