

The
KENTUCKY REVIVAL
Selected Core Documents

Edited by

Robert Evans.

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I.S.B.N. 978-0-9945203-4-0.
January, 2018.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Kentucky Revival of 1800 was a famous and major part of a much larger Evangelical Awakening, between about 1798 and 1842, in the United States of America, which historians usually now call The Second Great Awakening.

The Great Awakening, that is – the first one, is a name generally applied to a great spiritual movement in the United States of America between about 1730 and 1745, but with aspects which continued in certain parts of the country until the 1790s. This movement involved names such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and the Tennent brothers in New England, and in the Middle colonies of New Jersey and New York, with later extensions into Virginia.

On an even wider, international canvass, this First Great Awakening was a part of a world-wide spiritual movement springing originally from the Moravian Revival in Germany in 1727, spreading then to England, and involving the conversion and ministry of John Wesley, and the wonderful growth of Methodism, the great ministry of George Whitefield, leading to the so-called Evangelical revival which transformed so many features of British life and culture.

The First Awakening also included powerful revivals in Wales and Scotland linked to the preaching of Whitefield, and to that of Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland in Wales, and James Robe and William McCulloch in Scotland, and many others.

One of the features in this first Great Awakening was that a group of Scottish ministers issued a call to united and

extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion. This call was prepared and published by the Rev. John Erskine.¹

Copies of this paper were sent to various people who might be interested around Great Britain, and copies were also sent across to ministers in New England who were in correspondence with Erskine. These included Jonathan Edwards. Edwards was so impressed with this paper that he determined not only to introduce this praying into his congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts, but to encourage as many of his friends to be involved as he could.

In pursuing this end, Edwards wrote a supporting paper, which got so long that he eventually published it as a book. This book was also spread widely. The eventual result of this correspondence was that an international Concert of Prayer was arranged, and was carried out for some years in a number of churches in Great Britain, and in America.²

The period between 1750 and 1800 was badly affected, from a spiritual point of view, by the rise of Infidelity in France and England, by the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, and by the disintegration of morality associated with War. There were, of course, some revivals associated with the growth of Methodism, but not nearly as many as appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century. There were also, as noted, some revivals in the southern and middle colonies of the USA. But

¹ John Erskine. *Signs of the Times Considered: or the high Probability that the Present Appearances in New England and the West of Scotland, are a Prelude to the Glorious Things Promised to the Church in the Latter Ages.* Edinburgh. John Traill. 1742.

² Jonathan Edwards. *A 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, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the Last Times.* Boston. 1747.

these were not sufficient to counteract the corrupting influences of these other factors in the American situation.

The Second Great Awakening sprang from a Concert of Prayer, which began in a small way in the year 1784. John Sutcliffe and Andrew Fuller were Particular Baptist pastors in the Leicestershire area of England. Along with the aid of a cobbler named William Carey, they initiated a call to prayer in their Association of churches, meeting in Northampton, England. They were inspired by the fact that the elderly Rev. John Erskine had sent them re-printed copies of Edwards's book of 1747.

The Leicestershire Association of Baptist ministers agreed to adopt this call to prayer for all their churches. Andrew Fuller preached the sermon for this Association meeting, and when this sermon was published he included in it a number of points of encouragement to back up the call to united prayer for the revival of religion.

As a few years went by, other Baptist Associations, and some Congregational churches also adopted this call to prayer. The first major event to flow from this call was the development of the Baptist Missionary Society, which sent William Carey to India as their first missionary. But, as more churches joined in the Concert of Prayer, revivals began to appear in various churches, and the period from about 1795 for thirty years became a period of widespread revivals in various parts of England. In a few years, the Congregational churches brought to birth the London Missionary Society. Then the evangelical Anglicans hatched the Church Missionary Society. This was soon followed by the Religious Tract Society, and then by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In the United States, a call to prayer was sent out in 1792. Details appear below. After several years, this call had been adopted by a wide range of denominations and individual

churches. The prayer movement developed and spread. The main answer to all these prayers started to come in 1798 in New England. A few smaller revivals had occurred a few years earlier in Virginia, but the answer in the West came with the Kentucky Revival in 1800.

Chapter One of our documents tries to provide insight into the problems which faced the churches in America as the eighteenth century reached its end, and as the new century approached. Perhaps the best overall summary of this topic can be found as chapter one in Dr J. Edwin Orr's book *The Eager Feet*.

Chapter Two gives us documents which describe the start of the Monthly Concert of Prayer in the United States, and gives an idea as to how basic this was to the success that followed. More details about the history and evolution of the Monthly Concert can be found in my book *The Prayer Which Brought a Great Revival*.

Chapter Three gives us documents which provide a brief glimpse of the beginnings of the Second Great Awakening in New England and north-eastern America. A few revivals occurred before 1798, but the solid rain came to New England in 1798, and in New York, and continued for several years.

Chapter Four contains Presbyterian accounts of the Kentucky Revival, followed by documents which came from men who broke away from the Presbyterian Church after the revival had basically passed, starting new denominations in some cases, or who became involved in cult-like movements.

Chapter Five contains accounts of the Revival provided by people who broke away from the Presbyterian Church. They

either formed new denominations, or joined cult-like groups. Dr B. W. McDonnold was one of the historians of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Other documents were written by Richard McNemar, Barton W. Stone and Levi Purviance. These men either started new churches, or joined the Shakers.

Chapter Six contains Kentucky Methodist documents. As tends to happen when a history is written very close after the event being described, several of the Methodist writers declared that the Revival had begun under the Methodist preaching of the Rev. John McGee. While this view is not entirely mistaken, the first signs of the revival had begun in the Rev. James McGready's congregations a year or more earlier than the visit by Rev. John McGee.

Chapter Seven contains some Baptist documents relating to Kentucky, and the adjacent States.

Chapter Eight starts our look at the neighbouring States which were strongly affected by this Revival. This chapter contains documents about the State of Tennessee.

Chapter Nine. These Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist documents explain how the revival spread through North Carolina.

Chapter Ten contains documents about South Carolina.

Chapter Eleven contains documents about Virginia.

Chapter Twelve contains documents about Georgia.

Comments on Sources.

The obvious recent authority in the history of this great revival movement is Dr John B. Boles. His book is recommended to the reader. You will need to buy your own copy. I have tried to avoid using this book amongst the documents presented here for two reasons. One is that it would have been necessary for me to quote so much of John Boles's book that I would have run into copyright issues with his publisher. The other reason is that I adopted the policy here to reproduce OLD documents only, - ones which were written much closer to the time of the event which is being described.

Catherine Cleveland's earlier book, printed first in 1916, is also an old classic, and this book has also NOT been quoted, for similar reasons, apart from a few pieces drawn from her Appendices, when she is reproducing an old document.

In this way this present book can become a great resource of information about the Great Revival, and the Camp Meeting movement which followed, providing a range of old documents which would not be readily available for most other readers. My private library in this area of the history of evangelical revivals was rich enough to enable me to reproduce all these documents for members of the public, without leaving my desk. Copies of the books were all in the garage which serves as my library room – either as bound volumes, photocopies, on microfilm, or as e-books.

So, this volume allows others to benefit from my collection built up over many years.

However, a reader who is not widely literate in history may well miss an important feature of the books by Boles and Cleveland. Along with most other modern history books, these two books are written to fit into the canons of academic history – which is now a secular activity in most universities. No historian is allowed to say that God is an active agent in any

situation, or to say anything directly about the supernatural. This obviously places a great restriction upon the way that any historian can describe the activities in a great revival movement. The story has to be told in terms of human factors only. This simple fact places a twist upon the story, which must be borne very much in mind by readers.

Originally, it was my intention to include in this book a Prelude, before Chapter One, which provided a short study of John Wesley's experiences in the first three revivals in which he was involved, in Bristol, London and Newcastle, in the U.K, and in which he had a range of experiences of "Bodily exercises," – of people falling down as if shot, under deep conviction of sin, and describing how he gained an understanding of what was happening, and how he handled the situation. A part only is included at the end.

The whole of this document on Wesley's experience will hopefully be published in the Journal of the Uniting Church's Historical Society, "Church Heritage", in Sydney, Australia, in Volume 20, number 3, for March, 2018. The Society is an arm of the Uniting Church's Synod of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

CHAPTER ONE.

THE NEED.

Concern Amongst the Baptists in Georgia, 1795.

A committee of leading Baptists from the Charleston Association issued a series of Circular Letters to other Associations and friends. Their Circular Letter of 1795 contains the following admonitions:

"The situation of the church calls for deep humiliation before God, serious concern respecting the state of our souls, vigorous exertion in the cause of God, and diligent use of the appointed means of grace. In vain do we acknowledge our imperfections, or professedly lament our leanness, if our hearts are not affected. And what blessings can we reasonably expect, while the rational and most proper means, which God has put within our power, and to which his word directs us, are neglected? Permit us, dear brethren, to suggest our fears, that the duties of the closet and the discipline of the heart, are awfully neglected in the present day. We fear the views of even those who have made the most serious profession, are too limited to the present life. Have we not almost forgot to consider ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth? Is not the spirit of ambition, pride, and covetousness prevalent to a high degree? Who are they that feel anxiously concerned for the things which are Jesus Christ's? Who burn with zeal for the honour of Jehovah; mourn for the abominations of the land; and feel bowels of compassion for perishing and immortal souls? Has not the gracious and holy Spirit of God, the Comforter,

been grieved by our untender walk, by our unbelief, ingratitude, formality, and neglect or abuse of our privileges? Have not the solemn meetings for prayer, repeatedly recommended, been either shamefully neglected, or attended with a coldness and indifference unbecoming those who profess to know Jesus Christ, or to believe the awful realities of eternity?

Rouse, brethren, from your lethargy; reason, interest, obligation call; judgments threaten; mercies invite; all that is sacred to the heart of a rational immortal creature, requires your activity, seriousness, and diligence, in the cause of your God and Redeemer. Render to Jehovah his unquestionable and too long detained due, and prove him herewith, if he will not pour you out a blessing, that there even shall not be room sufficient to receive it.”³

A Major Statement of the Problem.

A pastoral letter from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America, to the people in their communion. 1798.

Dear friends and brethren,

The aspect of divine providence, and the extraordinary situation of the world, at the present moment, indicate, that a solemn admonition, by the ministers of religion and other church-officers in General Assembly convened, has become our indispensable duty. When formidable innovations and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and

³ David Benedict. *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*. Two volumes. Boston. Printed for the author. 1813. This edition – Gallatin, Tenn. Church History Research and Archives. 1985. Vol. 2, pages 142 – 144.

religion; when scenes of devastation and bloodshed, unexampled in the history of modern nations, have convulsed the world; and when our own country is threatened with similar calamities, insensibility in us would be stupidity; silence would be criminal. The watchmen on Zion’s walls are bound by their commission to sound a general alarm, at the approach of danger. We therefore desire to direct your awakened attention, towards that bursting storm, which threatens to sweep before it the religious principles, institutions, and morals of our people. – We are filled with a deep concern and an awful dread, whilst we announce it as our real conviction, that the Eternal God has a controversy with our nation, and is about to visit us in his sore displeasure. A solemn crisis has arrived, in which we are called to the most serious contemplation of the moral causes, which have produced it, and the measures which it becomes us to pursue.

With regard to the causes of these national calamities, which we either feel or fear, a little reflection may convince us, that these may be traced to a general defection from God and corruption of the public principles and morals. These usually keep an equal pace, and they uniformly precede the ruin of nations.

The evidences of our guilt are, unhappily, too numerous and glaring. We perceive, with pain and fearful apprehension, a general dereliction of religious principle and practice amongst our fellow-citizens – A great departure from the faith and simple purity of manners for which our fathers were remarkable – A visible and prevailing impiety, and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity which, in many instances, tends to Atheism itself; which contemptuously rejects God’s eternal Son, our Saviour; ridicules the gospel and its most sacred mysteries; denies the providence of God, grieves and insults the Holy Spirit; in a

word, which assumes a front of daring impiety and possesses a mouth filled with blasphemy.

In the midst of the alarming situation of the public mind, which we have noticed above, we perceive a degree of supineness and inattention amongst too many of the ministers and professors of Christianity which seems to threaten a dissolution of religious society. Formality and deadness, not to say hypocrisy: a contempt for vital godliness, and the spirit of fervent piety; a desertion of the ordinances, or a cold and unprofitable attendance to them, visibly pervade every part of the church, and certain men have crept in amongst us, who have denied, or attempt to explain away, the pure doctrines of the gospel; to introduce pernicious errors which were either not named, or named with abhorrence, but which have within a few years since been embraced by deluded multitudes. The Lord's Day is horribly profaned, and family religion and instruction lamentably neglected.

Our ingratitude to God enhances our dreadful guilt. No people have been more highly favoured in our original establishment, our increasing prosperity, and particularly in our contest during the revolutionary way, and its prosperous issue; but alas! we have abused his favours and turned them into engines of opposition against himself – “He has nourished and brought us up as children, and we have rebelled against him”

The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportioned to our declension in religion – Profaneness, pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness, and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence greatly abound. And “shall not the Lord visit for these things? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” Are not our crimes enormous, as they are numerous? Are they not peculiarly aggravated? Have we not known our Master's will, and refused, or at least neglected to do it? Have we not possessed uncommon means of information, with regard to our

duty, without a proportionate improvement? – And have not our uncommon advantages been abused without shame or remorse? As surely as there is a righteous God, so surely will he visit us in his just displeasure, unless his grace prevent, by awakening us to a sense of our guilt and recalling us to a practice of our duty. – Our circumstances loudly demand a public and solemn acknowledgement of God as our moral governor and righteous judge.

It is time to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; to look beyond second causes, and openly confess the hand and agency of God in the world. Let Christians unite more cordially, and openly, in adhering to their Master's cause, and opposing infidelity in all its forms. God hath a controversy with us! Let us prostrate ourselves before him! Let the deepest humiliation and the sincerest repentance mark our sense of the national sins; and let us not forget, at the same times the personal sins of each individual, that have contributed to increase the mighty mass of corruption! Let the ministers of religion weep and intercede for themselves and a guilty people! Let all descriptions of persons lament their iniquities and reform! Let us practice all righteousness! Let us be earnest and fervent in prayer, that God, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, would pour out his gracious spirit upon ministers and people; and that he would revive his work not only amongst our churches; but amongst all denominations of Christians, until the blessed promises and predictions with regard to the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom, be completely fulfilled! Let us conduct ourselves as quiet and peaceable citizens, submitting conscientiously to the laws of our own making and the government of our own choice! Let us treat with candour and respect our civil rulers! Let us reflect that the Scriptures-precepts upon this subject are applicable to no people, if not to us, under a representative government; yet as in the present imperfect state of human nature, differences in opinion must

exist, let us carefully cultivate the sentiments of brotherly kindness, mutual forbearance and charity.

With a view to give the greater effect to the admonitions and exhortations in this letter expressed, we recommend, that the last Thursday of August next, be observed in all the congregations, under our care, as a day of solemn humiliation, fasting and prayer, and that the ministers of our communion do then read this letter to the people of their charge, and enforce the truth it contains in such discourses founded on the word of God, as shall appear best adapted to effect so desirable a purpose.⁴

EDITOR'S COMMENTS on this Document.

(a.) A Rough Context and Outline of "The Pastoral Letter." of 1798.

1. In the American Revolutionary War, the Congress had called the people to turn to God in prayer for help at critical points in the war against Britain, and at that time they all believed that God had helped them at critical moments. It looked like God's Providence was at work behind the formation of the United States, and that this new country would have a special place in God's plans for the world – helping to bring freedom, democracy and the Christian Gospel to the world, and leading hopefully to God's golden age.

2. However, the newly-formed United States of America, with its thirteen States, had recently become allied to France, through the influence of men like Benjamin Franklin

and Thomas Jefferson, and because of their common enemy – Great Britain.

At this time, 1798, the French Revolution had just occurred, followed by the Reign of Terror, with its great bloodletting – when a great many people had been executed on the guillotine, and the NEW RELIGION had been announced – the new God of REASON, which was a new form of ATHEISM. Then Napoleon Bonaparte had arisen, as the new Emperor, and dictator, leading to massive military campaigns against all their major enemies.

3. In American society, by 1798, it looked like the Churches would be swept away, as well as democratic principles, and the morality which had come from the Pilgrim Fathers. Blasphemy and atheism were being preached by Tom Paine and others, and this was being widely and enthusiastically received by many, especially by the more educated classes.

A general defection from God was being felt in many parts of society, and throughout the country.

A general dereliction of religious principle and practice had occurred.

- A visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the law;
- An abounding infidelity, and widespread use of blasphemy.
- A contemptuous rejection of Jesus Christ, and a ridiculing of the Gospel,
- Americans had been given a vision of God's will, but had rejected it.
- America's uncommon advantage before God had been abused.
- Such blatant rejection of God was a sign of COMING JUDGMENT.

⁴ Extracts. Op cit. 1798, pages 11 – 15.

- The country is now marked by profaneness, pride, luxury, intemperance, lewdness debauchery and indulgence.
- We have known the Master's will, but now we are neglecting and rejecting it.

4. Christians should unite in dedication to God, and in opposing this infidelity. The deepest humiliation should be our reaction to these national sins. God has a controversy with this country. Let the ministers weep and intercede for a guilty people. Let everyone lament over our sins.

5. Let us be earnest and fervent in prayer that God, for Christ's sake, would pour out His gracious Spirit upon ministers and people, and revive His work in this country, until the blessed promises from God about the spread of Christ's Kingdom around the world shall be finally fulfilled.

6. There will be a special day of humiliation, fasting and prayer on the last Thursday in August next, when our national and personal sins will be acknowledged. On that day, this Pastoral Letter will be read in all of the Presbyterian Churches, and sermons preached to enforce its impact.

7. Another fundamental and foundational feature leading to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit appeared in 1798, which was a call to repentance and renewed dedication, issued for the spiritual benefit of all Presbyterians, by the General Assembly, in the form of a **Pastoral Letter**.

This document was very reminiscent of the ninth chapter of the Book of Daniel.

The need for repentance was based upon the seriousness of the crisis being faced by the churches. This seriousness is

reflected in the many things about which the church members were hereby called upon to repent.

(b.) The Meaning of this Pastoral Letter for Australia in 2018.

1. In the earlier history of Australia since 1788, evangelical Christianity had played a substantial role, through the heritage which early white settlers brought from Great Britain, and which was built upon by the early 19th century evangelical revivals, and the work of various evangelists, culminating in a peak of impact of evangelicalism just prior to the First World War.

Between the First War and the Second World War, the evangelical churches struggled to maintain this impact, but with declining success. There were various reasons for this. Another smaller peak was reached in the early "baby-boomer" years, up until the first Crusade led by Dr Billy Graham in 1959.

2. Australia does not have any special sense of "Manifest Destiny," or of having a special role to play in the Christian destiny of the world. Australia has not experienced major evangelical awakenings or revivals such as have occurred in North America or in Great Britain.

3. Since 1965, a major, steady and disastrous decline has occurred in the mainstream churches in Australia, and in their impact upon the country, although the population has grown three or four times. Alongside this, has occurred the steady growth of secularism, culminating at the present time in a very strong attack upon the moral and spiritual mores of Australia, by forces which are impacting the country with a godless, secular, atheistic philosophy of life, with ethical values which drift with the changes in the way people feel.

4. There are other ways, however, in which Australia in 2017 is remarkably like eastern U.S.A. in 1798. The number of practising Christians in Australia has declined seriously since 1965, and a growing, oppressive, secular left-wing atheism is rapidly changing the country away from what it was before, when Christian roots and values had more sway. The roots of our culture are being altered by determined people who are trying to make Australia into a secular country based upon relativistic ethics. Indeed, their philosophy has now developed so much that it can be called **Secular Fundamentalism**.

5. The average person in Australia has no conscious awareness of their responsibilities to God, or of the fact that they must be accountable to God for what they do or say. There is no fear of God in their eyes. They have no concept of the Holiness of God, or that they should love Him. They judge themselves by simple, godless standards, which can be called “the way of the world.”

6. They are totally unaware that they have considered God’s love as unworthy of their interest; and that Christ’s death upon the cross has been considered as beneath their concern. The general opinion is that, if there is any after-life, every one of them will go to heaven, because they have not done anything worthy of damnation.

7. Australian Christians normally are so much an accepting part of this secular, godless cultural scenery that they do not consider it strange, and do not realize how inconsistent it is with their profession of love for God. Nor are they cut to the heart by the degree to which this is offensive to God. To use Ezekiel’s vision, today’s Christians do not sigh or cry before God over the abominations which are committed against God

before their eyes every day. As a result, they cannot travail in birth for conversions, nor can they bring down God’s revival power upon their churches through their prayers and intercessions. They are unable to fulfil the conditions of revival, expressed in Second Chronicles 7: 14.

Dr JOHN BOLES States the Problem.

The Southern historian with the most expertize in Kentucky’s religious history, Dr John Boles, has a chapter in his classic book on the Kentucky Revival, entitled “Feeling of Crisis.” In this chapter he enlarges upon the serious decline of religion in the U.S.A. before 1800, and the effect that this feeling of desperation had upon many Christians. Despite the revivals which appeared in Virginia in the years 1787 to 1789, the positive effects they created soon wore off. However, these earlier revivals did involve and inspire one young Presbyterian minister who was to play a major role after 1800. This was the Rev. James McGready, who later followed some of the members of his congregation who moved to Kentucky, and took charge of three small congregations in Logan County.

John Boles includes the following statement:

“As gray and wintry as the religious season appeared to the representatives of the major denominations in the older States of the South, the western States of Kentucky and Tennessee exhibited even less religious vitality. Here, too, despite occasional murmurings against deism and infidelity, the primary complaint was of simple apathy to religion.

Francis Asbury, moulder of American Methodism, confessed to himself while in Tennessee that ‘Good religion and such good land are not so easily matched together.’

Peter Cartwright recorded in a famous passage from his classic *Autobiography* that Logan County, Kentucky, in 1793 was infamous as a ‘rogues harbor’; law was unheard of, thieves and ruffians predominated. Sunday was spent at everything

except worship, and in such an environment, Cartwright piously recalled that he was quite ‘naturally a wild, wicked boy.’

A 1794 letter from Kentucky to John Rippon’s international yearbook of Baptist activities informed the editor ‘with concern... that religion appears to be at a very low ebb with every denomination in this state,’⁵

Dr J. EDWIN ORR States the Problem.

Noted historian of revivals, Dr J. Edwin Orr, spends a chapter describing this very low situation in chapter one of his book *The Eager Feet*. In this book we find an attempt to describe the world-wide evangelical awakenings which occurred between 1790 and 1840. The religious decline before the year 1800 was due to the infidelity which spawned the French Revolution of 1789, and which flowed into the U.S.A. after that event. Also the American Revolution produced its own flood of godlessness in the U.S.A., flowing from the results which war brings to a community.

“It was obvious that American Christianity had declined, for morals were bankrupt and infidel clubs abounded, with the usual deterioration in matters of sex permissiveness.

The moral decline was reflected in the life of the students in colleges. Collegians were intoxicated with the idea of independence, the responsibilities of which made little appeal while the laxities produced a surge of debauchery.

The University of Pennsylvania, Transylvania College, Columbia College in South Carolina, and others had influential ‘free-thinkers’ on their faculties. An anti-church play was featured at Dartmouth. At Yale and Princeton, as at William and Mary, the student bodies were overwhelmingly sceptical, if

⁵ John Boles. *The Great Revival: 1787 – 1805. The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind*.

Lexington. University of Kentucky Press. 1972. pages 16 – 17.

not infidel. At Bowdoin, as at Yale, the number of believers was counted on the fingers of one hand.

[The undergraduates of Yale] welcomed the newer revolutionary doctrines, not so much on account of their promise of social justice as their invitation to unrestrained gratification. The collegians acted as if the light of human wisdom had just begun to dawn; anything more than thirty years old was suspect; morality was fitted only for children; revelation was without authority or evidence; the world was probably eternal, and materialism the only reality; if however, there was a God, man was created only to be happy, and, as animal pleasure is the greatest happiness, they resolved to enjoy it to the full.”

From France, Germany and Britain, affirmed Timothy Dwight, ‘the dregs of infidelity were vomited upon us... the whole mass of pollution was emptied upon this country.’

Dr Orr says: On the eve of the French Revolution, there were half a million adherents, more or less, of the reformed Faith in France. About one hundred and eighty pastors cared for Reformed flocks. By 1793, all the churches in Paris were closed and many pastors abandoned their charges for the heady life of political action. Abjurations were common and abject. In the historic Huguenot South, half the pastors abjured. In all of France, almost every last Protestant church was shut up. In 1798, France annexed Geneva, and a landslide into infidelity followed. D’Alembert was delighted to report that in the citadel of Calvin there were pastors who no longer believed in the deity of Jesus Christ.

The French Revolution affected all of the countries of Western Christendom, and other countries with whom its citizens had relations, especially the contiguous countries. It began in France, but there were much worse tyrannies in the world of 1789 than that of the French Monarchy and aristocracy. It started in an absolutist Roman Catholic regime, but its philosophers shared ideas with those of the Protestant

countries. It was resisted most in the English-speaking world, where also there were gross injustices, but where a progression of reformations and revivals of New Testament Christianity had provided a safety valve for the tremendous pressures building up.

In every great movement for social justice, the Enemy of men's souls is prone to take advantage of the turmoil to attack the guarantors of freedom – God and morality.

The onslaught made by infidelity between 1789 and 1815 against Christianity made an enormous impact on evangelical religion. Kenneth Scott Latourette said, "Again it looked as though Christianity were a waning influence, about to be ushered out of the affairs of men." At that time, Voltaire was predicting that Christianity would be forgotten in thirty years, and Tom Paine was gleefully repeating this to English-speaking folk on both sides of the Atlantic.

George Washington received a letter from an intimate friend in 1796, predicting that national affairs were leading to some crisis, some revolution; and Washington agreed, saying that he was unable to foretell what might happen.

George Washington, Patrick Henry, John Adams, and kindred spirits were much opposed to the new ideas, but other national figures were not, for Thomas Jefferson was a Deist, Henry Dearborn was an unbeliever, and General Charles Lee was a violent opponent of Christianity.

It was obvious that Christianity was declining badly, that morals were bankrupt, infidel clubs abounded, with the usual deterioration in matters of sex permissiveness, a much higher degree of drunkenness, and the very widespread use of profanity and blasphemy.⁶

⁶ J. Edwin Orr. *The Eager Feet. Evangelical Awakenings. 1790 – 1830.* Chicago. Moody Press. 1975.
Chapter One, espec. pages 8 – 9.

WAR and INFIDELITY.

Three MAJOR factors, and many minor factors, contributing to THE NEED. These were – (1.) Infidelity – Voltaire's campaign against Christianity; - (2.) The influence of France upon early U.S. history; - (3.) The demoralizing effects of WARS, both against Indians, and international war.

R. N. Price States these problems – Helped by Dr Timothy Dwight.

Our country, in its earliest history, was more influenced by Europe than now. The year 1728 is noted as the culminating era of infidelity in Europe. This was just one year before the organization of the Holy Club in the University of Oxford. This club was not an accident. God saw the preparations of the powers of darkness for an exterminating onset upon Christianity; and in all parts of Christendom he was enlisting his soldiers, organizing and drilling, and with infinite wisdom and prescience planning a campaign of defence, as well as of aggressive war on infidelity, immorality and lawlessness.

As to the low state of religion in the West before the beginning of the revival, and as to the tremendous success of the efforts that had been making to uproot Christianity in Europe and America, I quote the following passage from the pen of the Rev. Dr Timothy Dwight, President of Yale College:

"Voltaire, for the purpose of blotting out Christianity, engaged, at several succeeding periods, a number of men distinguished for power, talents, reputation, and influence – all deadly enemies of the gospel, atheists, men of profligate principles and profligate lives.

This design he pursued with unabated zeal fifty years; and was seconded by his associates with an ardour and industry scarcely inferior to his own. In consequence of their united labours, and of the labours of others, from time to time combined with them, they ultimately spread the design throughout a great part of Europe, and embarked in it individuals, at little distances, over almost the whole of that continent.

Their adherents inserted themselves into every place, office, and employment in which their agency might become efficacious, and which furnished an opportunity of spreading their corruptions.

They were found in every literary institution, from the abecedarian school to the academy of sciences; and in every civil office, from that of the bailiff to that of the monarch. They swarmed in the palace; they haunted the church. Wherever mischief could be done, they were found; and wherever they were found, mischief was extensively done. Of books, they controlled the publication, the sale, and the character.

An immense number they formed; an immense number they forged; prefixed to them the names of reputable writers, and sent them into the world, to be sold for a song; and when that could not be done, to be given away.

Within a period shorter than could have been imagined they possessed themselves, to a great extent, of a control, nearly absolute, of the literary, religious, and political state of Europe.

With these advantages in their hands, it will easily be believed that they left no instrument unemployed and no measure untried to accomplish their own malignant purposes. With a diligence, courage, constancy, activity, and perseverance which might rival the efforts of demons themselves, they penetrated into every corner of human society.

Scarcely a man, woman or child was left unassailed wherever there was a single hope that the attack might be successful. Books were written and published in innumerable multitudes, in which infidelity was brought down to the level of peasants, and even of children, and poured with immense assiduity into the cottage and the school. Others of a superior kind crept into the shop and the farmhouse; and others of a still higher class found their way to the drawing-room, the university, and the palace.

The business of all men who were of any importance, and the education of the children of all such men, were, as far as possible, engrossed, or at least influenced, by these banditti of the moral world; and the hearts of those who had no importance but in their numbers and physical strength. A sensual, profligate nobility, and princes, if possible, still more sensual and profligate, easily yielded themselves and their children into the hands of these minions of corruption. Too ignorant, too enervated, or too indolent to understand, or even to inquire that they might understand, the tendency of all these efforts, they marched quietly on to the gulf of ruin, which was already open to receive them.

With these was combined a priesthood, which, in all its dignified ranks, was still more putrid, and which eagerly yielded up the surplice and the lawn, the desk and the altar, to destroy that Bible which they had vowed to defend as well as to preach, and to renew the crucifixion of that Redeemer whom they had sworn to worship.

By these agents and these efforts the plague was spread with rapidity, and to an extent which astonished heaven and earth; and life went out not in ordinary cases, but by a universal extinction.

While these measures were thus going on, with a success scarcely interrupted, Dr Adam Weishaupt, Professor of the Canon Law in the University of Ingoldstadt, a city on Bavaria, a

man of no contemptible talents, but of immense turpitude, and a Jesuit, established the Society of Illuminees. Into this establishment he brought all the systematised iniquity of his brotherhood – distinguished beyond every other class of men for cunning, mischief, an absolute destitution of conscience, and absolute disregard of all the interests of man, and a torpid insensibility to moral obligation.

No fraternity, for so long a time or to so great an extent, united within its pale such a mass of talents, or employed in its service such a succession of vigorous efforts. The serpentine system of this order Weishaupt perfectly understood. The great design of the Jesuits had always been to engross the power and influence of Europe and to regulate all its important affairs.

The system of measures which they had adopted for this end was superior to every preceding scheme of human policy. To this design Weishaupt, who was more absolutely an atheist than Voltaire, and as cordially wished for the destruction of Christianity, superadded a general intention of destroying the moral character of man. The system of policy adopted by the Jesuits was, therefore, exactly fitted to his purpose; for the design, with this superadded, was exactly the same.

With these advantageous preparations he boldly undertook this work of destruction, and laid the axe at the root of all moral principle and the sense of all moral obligation by establishing a few fundamental doctrines, which were amply sufficient for this purpose. These were: that God is nothing; that government is a curse, and authority a usurpation; that civil society is the only apostasy of man; that the possession of property is robbery; that chastity and natural affection are mere prejudices; and that adultery, assassination, poisoning, and other crimes of a similar nature are lawful and even virtuous.

Under these circumstances were founded the Society of Illuminism. They spread, of course, with a rapidity which nothing but fact could have induced any sober mind to believe.

Before the year 1786 they were established in great numbers throughout Germany, in Sweden, Russia, Poland, Austria, Holland, France, Switzerland, Italy, England, Scotland, and even in America. In all these were taught the grand and sweeping principle of corruption that the end sanctions the means – a principle which, if everywhere adopted, would overturn the universe.

The design of the founder and his coadjutors was nothing less than to engross the empire of the world and to place mankind beneath himself and his successors.

Voltaire died in the year following the establishment of Illuminism. His disciples, with one heart and one voice, united in its interests and, finding a more absolute system of corruption than themselves had been able to form, entered eagerly into all its plans and purposes.

Thenceforward, therefore, all the legions of infidelity are to be considered as embarked in a single bottom; and as cruising together against order, peace, and virtue on a voyage of rapine and blood.

The French Revolution burst upon mankind at this moment. Here was opened an ample field for the labours of these abandoned men in the work of pollution and death. There is much reason to believe that every individual Illuminee, and almost, if not quite, every infidel on the continent of Europe lent his labours when he could – and his wishes when he could not – for the advancement of the sins and miseries which attended this unexampled corruption.

Had not God taken the wise in their own craftiness, and caused the wicked to fall into the pit which they had digged, and into the snares which their hands had set, it is impossible to conjecture the extent to which they would have carried their devastation of human happiness.

But, like the profligate rulers of Israel, those who succeeded regularly destroyed their predecessors.

Between ninety and a hundred of those who were leaders in this mighty work of destruction fell by the hand of violence. Enemies to all men, they were, of course, enemies to each other. Butchers of the human race, they soon whetted the knife for each other's throats; and the tremendous Being who rules the universe, whose existence they had denied in a solemn act of legislation, whose perfections they had made the butt of public scorn and private insult, whose Son they had crucified afresh, and whose word they had burned by the hands of the common hangman, swept them all by the hand of violence into an untimely grave.

The tale made every ear which heard it tingle, and every heart chill with horror. It was, in the language of Ossian, "the song of death." It was like the reign of the plague in a populous city. Knell told upon knell, hearse followed hearse, and coffin rumbled after coffin, without a mourner to shed a tear upon the corpse, or a solitary attendant to mark the place of the grave. From one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, the world went forth and looked after the carcasses of the men who transgressed against God, and they were an abhorring unto all flesh."⁷

In Collins's *Kentucky*, we find the following paragraph:

Early in the spring of 1793 circumstances occurred which fanned the passions of the people into a perfect flame. The French Revolution had sounded a tocsin which reverberated throughout the whole civilized world. The worn-out despotisms of Europe, after standing aghast for a moment in doubtful inactivity, had awakened at length into ill-concerted combinations against the young republic, and France was engaged in a life-and-death struggle against Britain, Spain,

⁷ R.N. Price. *Holston Methodism*. Nashville. Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South. 1904. pages 324 – 329.

Prussia, Austria, and the German principalities. The terrible energy which the French Republic displayed against such fearful odds, the haughty crest with which she confronted her enemies and repelled them from her frontier at every moment, presented a spectacle well calculated to dazzle the friends of democracy throughout the world.

The American people loved France as their ally in the Revolution, and now regarded her as a sister republic contending for freedom against banded despots.

Dr A. H. Redford says:

"The widespread sympathy of this country with France was natural. But France had embraced infidelity. The Bible there had undergone a total eclipse; its hallowed teachings despised and spurned; "death declared to be an eternal sleep;" while atheism – the very worst form of infidelity – was openly professed by all classes of society. We too had just emerged from a long and bloody war, and were not free from the vices and demoralization always consequent upon a protracted sanguinary strife.

Vice, in hideous form, in the light of noon-day, walked through the land. The writings of Paine, Voltaire and others intended to sap the foundations of Christianity, and at the same time, offering no other "balm to the wounded spirit," were sown broadcast throughout the land. Not only were their sentiments embraced by the masses of the American people, but many, holding high positions of public trust and belonging to the more influential walks of life, imbibed these doctrines and openly avowed their disbelief in the Word of God."

The Rev. Jonathan Stamper says:

"To add to the darkness of the moral horizon, most of the Churches had sunk into mere formality, so that the doctrines of the new birth – implying that radical change of heart which

brings with it the evidence of pardon and adoption – was quite ignored or totally repudiated. The dogmas of election and reprobation, predestination and decrees, were the themes of the pulpit, and they rather confirmed than weakened the popular disposition to reject revelation. The masses considered such doctrines a slander upon God’s justice as well as his goodness, and concluded that if the Bible afforded such views of Jehovah it could not be true.”⁸

⁸ Both passages are quoted in R. N. Price. *Holston Methodism*. Vol. One. pages 335 – 336. The French Revolution started in 1789. The events of 1793 to which Stamper refers are called THE REIGN OF TERROR, when the revolutionaries started executing each other, and many other people. This series of events in 1793 revealed the true and terrible nature of what had been the natural result of this Revolution.

CHAPTER TWO.

THE MONTHLY CONCERT of PRAYER.

Around 1793, the Rev. Isaac Backus, and the Rev. Stephen Gano, both Baptist ministers in New England, led in the issuing of a call to all the churches, calling upon Christians everywhere to unite in special and extraordinary prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to revive the churches, transform their nation, and to convert the heathen to Jesus Christ.

It followed a similar call which had been made in England some years earlier, in 1784, by the Particular Baptist ministers of the Northamptonshire Association, and which had led to first signs of revival in some English churches, and also to the birth of the Baptist Missionary Society, followed by several other similar Societies.

There was a good response to the American call to prayer, including by a number of Congregational ministers in Connecticut. Presbyterian ministers who made official visits to the General Association of Connecticut’s meeting in 1796, provided a report upon this which led to the general Assembly adopting the same practice for the whole Presbyterian Church.

Strickland’s Account –

How the Concert of Prayer started in America.

The “Circular Letter” – Call to Prayer.

A group of twenty-three New England ministers, including Stephen Gano, of Providence, and Isaac Backus, of Middleboro, issued a “Circular Letter,” calling the ministers, and, through them, the churches, to pray for a revival. They

had the precedent of two similar historic calls of the same character. One was issued by ministers in Scotland in 1746: a little later, the other by Jonathan Edwards. These calls entered largely into the kindling of revival fires in Scotland and in the United States. This Circular Letter contains the following interesting paragraphs, showing it was based on these former calls to prayer:

“To the ministers and churches of every Christian denomination in the United States, to unite in their endeavours to carry into execution the 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.

“In execution of this plan, it is proposed that the ministers and churches of every Christian denomination should be invited to maintain public prayer and praise, accompanied with such instruction from God’s Word, as might be judged proper, on every first Tuesday, of the four quarters of the year, beginning with the first Tuesday of January, 1795, at two o’clock in the afternoon, if the plan should be ripe for a beginning, and so continuing from quarter to quarter, and from year to year, until the good providence of God prospering our endeavours, we shall obtain the blessing for which we pray.”

This proposition for a nation-wide “Concert of Prayer” met with cordial response. This came because earnest souls believed the only hope of the church was in a revival from God. Dr Green, of Princeton, replied: “The plan for a concert has my most cordial approbation, and I shall endeavour by all means in my power to carry it into effect. Our presbytery will meet in a fortnight from the present time, when I hope, if my life and health are spared, to lay it before them. I pray and hope that the contemplated union in prayer may be the presage of good.”

In the same way Bishop Elwine, of the Moravian Church, responded from Bethlehem, Pa., Oct. 9, 1794: “It was

as though I did hear David call, ‘O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper who love thee.’ We have the promise of our Lord that every two or three who agree to pray for anything in his name shall be heard and their prayer granted. I can only answer for myself. I promise faithfully and regularly to appear before the Lord with my prayer, and will make my beginning the first Tuesday in January next and will continue so to do every first Tuesday the four quarters of the year, and will encourage my brethren to do the same.”

Theodore Hinsdale, moderator of the North Association of Hartford County, Conn., wrote a lengthy letter in response to the appeal. In this he said: “We are highly delighted with the piety and the design and anxious that success may attend the proposal. We, as an Association would with our brethren, in our respective associations of this state take up the matter and act upon it so far as to refer it to the general association of this state and by their commissioners to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America,... that such general measures be taken or adopted as may promise to give the proposed concert the most extensive diffusion.”

The Presbytery of New York and the Synods of New York and of New Jersey recommended the Circular Letter call to all their churches. They also called for a day of fasting and prayer. The Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church did likewise. In the study of the widespread revival which followed, one notes many allusions to this “Concert of Prayer.” The response was general among the denominations and their churches in all sections of the country. The church in the darkest hour of its night of declension had found the way out. Their feet had been placed in the pathway to prayer which inevitably leads to revival.

Nathan Bangs, in his *History of Methodism*, writes of this fact: “Solemn exhortation to the church followed, to be read from all the pulpits, and a day of prayer and fasting followed

The first Tuesday of every quarter was observed for this purpose, from 1796, to the close of the century. On the first Tuesday in March, 1796, the Methodist Episcopal Church observed a general day of fasting and prayer for the same reasons.”

On the Western frontiers “Covenants were entered into by Christian people to spend the third Saturday in each month in fasting and prayer for the out pouring of the Holy Spirit and one half hour at sunset every Saturday night and at sunrise every Sunday morning for the same object.”

In the minutes of the Shaftesbury Baptist Association for 1795, the following item was recorded: “Item 13. Whereas, a number of well-disposed people on this continent have agreed to unite in a general concert of prayer, for the outpouring of God’s Spirit, on the first Tuesdays of January, April, July and October; this Association, with heartfelt satisfaction, approves of the same. We, therefore, recommend the observance of said days to the churches which we represent. In this concert, we hope there will be no distinction of denomination but that all will unite in the love and fear of God.”

Thus the prayer movement was promoted, under associational leadership. The Districts, the Synods, the Presbyteries and the Associations led their respective churches into a great intercessory movement. It became general and led to a widespread revival.

There were little praying groups all over the country. A revival was in the hands of these intercessory minorities. In after years, Rev. E. Porter, D.D., of Andover, wrote a series of letters on revivals to the “Revival Association” of Andover Seminary. This was an organisation of students which met to study the history of revivals. Their leaders believed that “to cherish the spirit of revivalism in our seminaries is the direct way to multiply revival ministers.” Writing of The Great Revival, Dr Porter tells of “Aaron and Hur Societies” formed in

the churches to hold up the hands of the ministers through intercession. These praying people met prior to the Sunday services. Groups of young men also met here and there to pray for other young men. Groups of parents met to pray for their children’s conversions. The great need for God’s help everywhere was driving loyal Christian people to prayer. Man’s extremity thus became God’s opportunity. With such an atmosphere a revival was inevitable. It met a national necessity.⁹

Charleston Association. (Baptist.)

Some Circular Letters were drawn up, from time to time, by a Committee, led by Furman, Mercer, Mosely, and Holcombe.

In 1793 [in the Circular Letter], the attention of the churches was called to “the threatening and warning dispensations of Providence, and the declension of religion,” and the third Wednesday of December was appointed as a day of solemn fasting and prayer, to implore the mercy of God on the churches and the country at large; to pray for the peace and prosperity of the United States; for a general reformation among the people, and for the direction and preservation of the government; also, for a sanctified use of the afflicting dispensations of Providence, particularly that by which Philadelphia had been recently visited. (that is - an outbreak of yellow fever.)

They also took into consideration the General Concert of Prayer, proposed to be holden on the first Tuesday of January,

⁹ A.B. Strickland. *The Great American Revival*. Cincinnati, Ohio. Standard Press. 1934. pp. 44-49.

April, July and October; the object of it being to unite with a number of good men of different denominations at home and abroad, for “the revival of religion among Christians; the propagation and success of the gospel among the heathen, and the conversion of the Jews to Christianity.”

The observance of this Concert was earnestly recommended, and the recommendation renewed from year to year.¹⁰

The General Assembly Acts.

The Call to United and Extraordinary Prayer for the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

At the General Assembly in 1796, “The delegates who were appointed last year to meet the General Association of Connecticut, made the following report, which was accepted. viz:-

That the whole delegation of the Assembly attended the General Association, during the entire period of its session, and were received and treated with the utmost cordiality and respect. That the greater part of the business of the Association related, as is usual, to the peculiar circumstances of those churches of which it is constituted an advisory council.

That there were two articles, however, which as having a more extensive relation, your delegates think proper to specify; the first of these was the sending of missionaries to preach the gospel and organize churches on the frontiers of the country; in which your delegates were happy to observe the Association animated with a very laudable zeal, governed in general by a

^{10 10} David Benedict. *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America*. Two volumes. 1985 edition. Vol. 2, page 142.

system similar to that adopted by the Assembly, and disposed fully to harmonize with them in the pursuit of the important object; - the second article, particularly referred to, was a recommendation to the churches under the care of the Association, of seasons for special prayer for the revival of religion, in which was mentioned with approbation a plan which had already been adopted in some churches, both under their care, and that of the Assembly, of appropriating to this purpose the afternoon of the first Tuesday of every quarter of the year.”¹¹

An addendum to these Extracts from the 1796 General Assembly Minutes, was a report saying that a Committee was appointed to arrange the missionary business for the ensuing year. It dealt with three items of business – (1.) the appointment of several missionaries; and (2.) the revision of the Confession of Faith, but with the result that the book could not be printed because not enough money was available.

The third item of its business was:- “The General Assembly, taking into serious consideration the general aspect of religion, the great decay of vital piety, and the prevalence of infidelity and immorality, and being deeply affected thereby, agreed to urge in the most earnest manner upon all their members the utmost diligence, prudence, zeal, and perseverance, in the discharge of the duties of their office and stations; and that they prosecute those measures, agreeable to the word of God, which they may judge most conducive to counteract the existing evils, and most effectually serve the interests of evangelical principles and of true and undefiled religion; and would recommend that some particular times be

¹¹ *Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Published by the Assembly. 1803. 1796, pages 7 and 8.

set apart, as special seasons of prayer with respect to these objects, as may be found most convenient in their respective circumstances.”¹²

CHAPTER THREE

REVIVALS BEGIN in the EAST.

“A Field of Divine Wonders” 1797 – 1802.

In 1832, Edward D. Griffin famously wrote in a letter to William Sprague:- “About the year 1792 commenced three series of events of sufficient importance to constitute a new era. That year the blood began to flow in Europe, in that contest which, with short intervals, was destined to destroy the ‘man of sin’ and to introduce a happier form of society and the glorious state of the church. That year was established at Kettering in England, the first in the continuous series of societies which have covered the whole face of the Protestant world and introduced the age of missions and of active benevolence. And that year or the year before began the unbroken series of American revivals.

There was a revival in North Yarmouth, Me, in 1791. In the summer of 1792 one appeared in Lee, in the county of Berkshire [Massachusetts]. The following November, the first that I had the privilege of witnessing, showed itself on the borders of East Haddam and Lyme, Conn. which apparently brought to Christ about a hundred souls. Since that time revivals have never ceased. I saw a continued succession of heavenly sprinklings at New Salem, Farmington, Middlebury, and New Hartford (all in Connecticut) until, in 1799, I could stand at my door in Hartford, Litchfield county, and number fifty or sixty contiguous congregations laid down in one field of divine wonders, and as many more in different parts of New England. By 1802 revivals spread themselves through most of

¹² Extracts, op cit. 1796. pages 12 and 13.

the western and southern States; and since that time they have been familiar to the whole American people.”¹³

“The scattered sprinklings of 1792, however, were far removed from the torrential outpouring of revival in the late 1790s, when the revival spread from house to house, church to church, village to village. Young and old, parents and children, males and females, farmers and merchants, rich and poor – all types of people were caught up in the ground swell. By the turn of the century, Hartford and Litchfield counties [Connecticut] were awash with revival.”¹⁴

The first revival in Yale College, New Haven, occurred in 1802. It was followed by many others. Extensive revivals in the city of Boston did not occur until 1826, although other smaller revivals had occurred amongst the Baptist churches earlier.

Seeing that this book is deliberately about the Western Revivals, one example only of one of the Eastern Revivals will be given. It would be easy to produce a great many other such accounts. The main source is the various volumes of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*.

The Beginnings of the Revival in Norfolk, Connecticut, 1799.

About five years past, the concert for prayer proposed to be observed quarterly, and which was attended in many parts of the land, was also set up here, and the members of the Church

¹³ W. B. Sprague. *Lectures on Revivals*. First publ. in U.S.A. in 1832. Banner of Truth edition. 1959. Griffin’s letter appears in the Appendix, pages 151 – 152.

¹⁴ David W. Kling. *A Field of Divine Wonders*. The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut. 1792 – 1822. Pennsylvania University Press. 1993. pages 2 – 3.

with some others attended. These seasons appeared to be solemn, and were animated and encouraging to numbers of God’s people. But nothing special appeared respecting a revival of religion, until Jan. 1799, when it was noticed that our religious assemblies were more solemn and attentive. The religious people about this time hearing of some revival of religion in two or three towns in the vicinity; and having before this heard of the work of God at a further distance, were induced to hope and ardently to pray that we might have a gracious visit also.

Although no special instances of awakening, as yet, appeared to take place; there is reason to conclude that numbers of God’s dear people in secret, as well as in a special way, did most earnestly plead at the throne of grace, that the Lord would get glory to his name in reviving his work among us, and in infinite mercy send his holy Spirit to arrest the progress of thoughtless sinners, who were in the broad way to eternal ruin. Soon it was whispered among some of our serious people, that one and another in this or that part of the town were in trouble and very serious. Our congregation on the Sabbath became fuller than ordinary and very solemn indeed. In February and March, the attention became so general that it was thought proper at the desire of many that religious conferences should be set up. They accordingly were, in four and sometimes five different parts of the town. A public lecture was also appointed to be preached every Thursday, and became a matter of course through the summer and into the autumn; so that there was no need of warning; but when the day came, the house was filled with people almost like the Sabbath. Ministers from abroad were generally procured to preach on these occasions. And they were undoubtedly, by the blessing of God, a means of

promoting the work, of instructing and edifying young converts, and guarding them from errors and intemperate zeal.¹⁵

CHAPTER FOUR

THE KENTUCKY REVIVAL.

KENTUCKY PRESBYTERIAN DOCUMENTS.

The Great Western Revival.

Perhaps the best known and wisest description by a Presbyterian eye-witness of the Great Kentucky Revival, which broke out through the year 1800, in answer to the prayers of a great many people, was provided in a private letter from Dr George Baxter, President of the Washington Academy in Virginia, written to the Rev. Archibald Alexander, who was then President of the Hampden Sidney College, [later at Princeton,] at that time also in Virginia.

This letter was circulated widely, and published on several occasions. [Ed.]

“The following is an extract of a letter from the Rev. Archibald Alexander, President of Hampden Sidney College in Virginia, to the Rev. Nathan Strong, Hartford. Mr. Alexander is a gentleman of eminent science and judicious piety, and by his late tour through New England, became known and beloved by many of our Christian readers.

To the Editor of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.

Prince Edward. January 25, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I have deferred writing until this time, that I might have it in my power to communicate some authentic intelligence of

¹⁵ *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*. Volume 1. February 1801. pp. 312 – 313. by Ammi R. Robbins. [The full account is much longer.]

the extraordinary revival of religion which has lately taken place in Kentucky. The enclosed letter was written to me, by the President of Washington Academy, in this state; who visited Kentucky for the very purpose of examining into the nature of the remarkable religious appearances which existed there. In this inquiry he obtained complete satisfaction, and now entertains no doubt of its being a glorious work of God, as you will see by the contents of his letter. I scarcely know a man on whose judgment, in a matter of this kind, I could more confidently rely than upon his. Possessing a clear, discriminating mind, and rational piety, he was in as little danger of being deceived by delusive appearances as any other person with whom I am acquainted. You will however judge of the narrative for yourself, and may make use of it, as you think proper. I have sent it with a view to publication in the *Evangelical Magazine*, if the editors think it would be useful to the public.

In North Carolina a revival attended with similar appearances, has lately taken place, chiefly amongst the Presbyterians. I am not able to furnish you with the names of the counties or congregations, but I am informed it has extended over a tract of country about twenty miles square. The congregations are nearly as large, and instances of falling down as common as in Kentucky.

In this state, religious appearances are sometimes better, than when I left it. At Christmas a number of ministers of different denominations, met together in the county of Bedford, to consult upon the best measures for uniting their efforts, in defence of Christianity against the torrent of vice and infidelity which threatened to overflow the land. Their meeting was remarkably harmonious, - prejudice and party spirit seemed to have no place amongst them, but with one accord they consented to a scheme of friendly intercourse, and general union. Whilst they were together many sermons were delivered,

and the effect was great – An uncommon awakening has taken place amongst the people in that neighbourhood – and it is hoped a revival of true religion has commenced.

Washington Academy, January 1, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I now sit down, agreeably to my promise, to give you some account of the late revival of religion in the state of Kentucky. You have no doubt been informed already respecting the Green-River and Cumberland revivals. I will just observe, that the last is the fourth summer since the revival commenced in those places, and that it has been more remarkable than any of the preceding, not only for free and fervent devotion amongst Christians, but also for awakenings and conversions among the careless. And it is worthy of notice, that very few instances of apostasy have hitherto appeared. As I was not in the Cumberland country myself, all I can say about it depends on the testimony of others; but I was uniformly told, by those who had been there, that their religious assemblies were more solemn, and the appearance of the work much greater, than what had been in Kentucky. Any enthusiastic symptoms, which might at first have attended the revival, were greatly subsided, whilst the serious concern and engagedness of the people were visibly increased.

In the older settlements of Kentucky, the revival made its first appearance among the Presbyterians last Spring. The whole of that country about a year before was remarkable for vice and dissipation; and I have been credibly informed, that a decided majority of the people were professed infidels. During the last winter appearances were favourable among the Baptists, and great numbers were added to their churches. – Early in the Spring, the ministrations of the Presbyterian clergy began to be better attended than they had been for many years before. Their worshipping assemblies became more solemn, and the people

after they were dismissed shewed a strange reluctance about leaving the place. They generally continued some time in the meeting-houses, and employed themselves in singing or religious conversation. Perhaps about the last of May, or the first of June, the awakenings became general in some congregations, and spread through the country in every direction with amazing rapidity. I left that country about the first of November, at which time, this revival in connection with the one in Cumberland had covered the whole state of Kentucky, excepting a small settlement which borders on the waters of the Green-River, in which no Presbyterian ministers are settled, and I believe very few of any denomination.

The power with which this revival has spread, and its influence in moralizing the people, are difficult for you to conceive, and more so for me to describe. I had heard many accounts, and seen many letters respecting it before I went to that country; but my expectations, though greatly raised, were much below the reality of the work. Their congregations, when engaged in worship, presented scenes of solemnity superior to what I had ever seen before. And in private houses it was no uncommon thing to hear parents relate to strangers, the wonderful things which God had done in their neighbourhoods, while a large family of young people collected around them would be in tears. On my way to Kentucky, I was informed by settlers on the road, that the character of Kentucky travellers was entirely changed; and that they were now as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissoluteness and immorality. And indeed I found Kentucky, to appearance, the most moral place I had ever seen. A profane expression was hardly ever heard. A religious awe seemed to pervade the country, and some deistical characters had confessed, that from whatever cause the revival might proceed, it made the people better.

Its influence was not less visible in promoting a friendly temper among the people. Nothing could appear more amicable, than that undissembled benevolence which governs the subjects of this work. I have often wished, that the mere politician or the deist could observe with impartiality their peaceful and amicable spirit. He would certainly see, that nothing could equal the religion of Jesus for promoting even the temporal happiness of society. Some neighbourhoods visited by the revival, were formerly notorious for private animosities and contentions; and many petty lawsuits had commenced on that ground. When the parties in these quarrels were impressed with religion, the first thing was to send for their antagonists, and it was often very affecting to see their meeting. They had both seen their faults, and both contended they ought to make their acknowledgements, till at last they were obliged to request one another, to forbear all mention of the past, and to receive each other as friends and brothers for the future.

Now, sir, let modern philosophists talk of reforming the world by banishing Christianity, and introducing their licentious systems; the blessed Gospel of our God and Saviour is shewing what it can do.

Some circumstances have concurred to distinguish the revival in Kentucky from almost any other of which we have had any account. I mean the largeness of their assemblies on sacramental occasions – the length of time they continued on the ground, in the exercise of public or private devotions – and the great numbers who have fallen down under religious impressions. On each of these I will give you some remarks.

With respect to the largeness of their assemblies. It is generally supposed that at many places, there were not less than eight, ten, or twelve thousand people. At one place called Cain Ridge meeting-house, many are of opinion there were not less than twenty thousand. There were an hundred and forty wagons which came loaded with people, besides other wheel-carriages:

and some people attended who had come the distance of two hundred miles. The largeness of these congregations was a considerable inconvenience.

They were too numerous to be addressed by any one speaker. Different ministers were obliged to officiate at the same time at different stands. This afforded an opportunity to those who were but slightly impressed with religion, to wander backwards and forwards between the different places of worship, which created an appearance of confusion and gave ground to such as were unfriendly to the work, to charge it with disorder. There was also another cause which conduced to the same effect. About this time the people began to fall down in great numbers under serious impressions. This was a new thing among Presbyterians. It excited universal astonishment, and created a degree of curiosity which could not be restrained. When people fell down even in the most solemn parts of divine service, those who stood near were so extremely anxious to see how they were affected, that they frequently crowded about them in such a manner as to disturb the worship. But these causes of disorder were soon removed. Different sacraments were appointed on the same Sabbath which divided the people; and the falling down soon became so familiar as to excite no disturbance. I was in that country during the month of October. I attended three sacraments. The number of people at each was supposed to be about four or five thousand; and everything was conducted with strict propriety. When persons fell down, those who happened to be near took care of them, and everything continued quiet till the worship was concluded.

The length of time the people continued on the ground was another important circumstance of the Kentucky revival. At Cain-Ridge the people met on Friday morning, and continued until Wednesday evening, night and day without intermission, either in the public or private exercises of devotion; and with such a degree of earnestness, that heavy

showers of rain were not sufficient to disperse them. On other sacramental occasions, they generally continued on the ground till Monday or Tuesday evening.

And had not the ministers been exhausted and obliged to retire, or had they chosen to prolong the worship, they might have kept the people any length of time they pleased. And all this was or might have been done in a country where, not a twelve-month before, the clergy found it a difficult matter to detain the people during the common exercises of the Sabbath.

The practice of camping on the ground was introduced, partly by necessity, and partly by inclination. The assemblies were generally too large to be received by any common neighbourhood. Everything indeed was done which hospitality and brotherly kindness could do, to accommodate the people. Public and private houses were both opened, and free invitations given to all persons who wished to retire. Farmers gave up their meadows before they were mown to supply the horses. But notwithstanding all this liberality, it would in many cases have been impossible to have accommodated the whole assembly with private lodgings. But, besides, the people were unwilling to suffer any interruption in their devotion, and they formed an attachment for the place where they were continually seeing so many careless sinners receiving their first impressions, and so many deists constrained to call on the formerly despised name of Jesus. They conceived a sentiment like what Jacob felt at Bethel, when he said, "Surely God is in this place – this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The number of persons who have fallen down under serious impressions in this revival, is another matter worthy of attention, and on this I shall be more particular, as it seems to be the principle cause, why this work should be suspected of enthusiasm, than some other revivals. At Cain-Ridge sacrament (the place mentioned above) it is generally supposed, that not less than one thousand persons fell prostrate to the ground, and

among them were many infidels. At one sacrament which I attended in that country, the number that fell was thought to be upwards of three hundred. Persons who fall are generally such as have manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour. Immediately before they become totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor; and sometimes though not frequently they utter one or two piercing shrieks. Persons in this state are affected in many different degrees from those who receive convictions in other revivals; excepting, that their distress is more severe. Indeed, extraordinary power is the leading characteristic of this revival. Both saints and sinners have more striking discoveries of the realities of another world, than I have ever known on any other occasion.

I trust I have said enough on this subject, to enable you to judge how far the charge of enthusiasm is applicable to it. Lord Littleton in his letter on the conversion of Saint Paul observes (and I think very justly) that “Enthusiasm is a vain, self-righteous spirit, swelled with self-sufficiency, and disposed to glory in its righteous attainments.” If this definition be a good one, there is perhaps as little enthusiasm in Kentucky as in any other revival. Never in my life have I seen more genuine marks of that humility, which disclaims the merits of its own duties, and looks to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of acceptance with God. I was indeed highly pleased to find that Christ was all and in all in their religion, as well as in the religion of the Gospel. Christians in their highest attainments were most sensible of their entire dependence on divine grace; and it was truly affecting to hear with what agonizing anxiety awakened sinners inquired for Christ, as the only Physician who could give them any help. Those who call these things enthusiasm, ought to tell us what they understand by the Spirit of Christianity. In fact, Sir, this revival operates, as our Saviour

promised the Holy Spirit should when sent into the world. It convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; a strong confirmation to my mind, both that the promise is divine, and that this is a remarkable fulfilment of it.

It would be of little avail to object in all this, that perhaps the professions of many of the people were counterfeited. Such an objection would rather establish what it meant to destroy. For where there is no reality there can be no counterfeit; and besides, when the general tenor of a work is such as to dispose of more insincere professors to counterfeit what is right, the work itself must be genuine. But as an eyewitness in the case, I may be permitted to declare, that the professions of those under religious convictions, were generally marked with such a degree of engagedness and feeling, as wilful hypocrisy could hardly assume. The language of the heart when deeply impressed is easily distinguished from the language of affectation.

Upon the whole, Sir, I think the revival in Kentucky among the most extraordinary that have ever visited the church of Christ. And all things considered it was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country into which it came. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature appeared necessary to arrest the attention of a giddy people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream. This revival has done it. It has confounded infidelity, awed vice into silence, and brought numbers beyond calculation under serious impressions.

Whilst the blessed Saviour was calling home His people and building up His church in this remarkable way, opposition could not be silent. At this I have hinted above, that the clamorous opposition which assailed the work at its first appearance has been in a great measure borne down before it. A large proportion of those who have fallen, were at first

opposers; and their example has taught others to be cautious, if it has not taught them to be wise.

I have written on this subject to a greater length than I first intended. But if this account should give you any satisfaction, and be of any benefit to the common cause, I shall be fully gratified.

Yours with the highest esteem,
Geo. A. Baxter.¹⁶

Walter B. POSEY's Review of this Letter. (1952.)

“Probably the most oft-quoted supporter of the revivals was George A. Baxter, president of Washington College in Virginia, who visited Kentucky at the height of the revival period of 1801.

Later Baxter changed his opinion regarding the revival programme and considered much of the work ‘false, erratic and unholy.’ When he learned that the *New York Evangelist* had printed his letter of 1802, he planned to write a reversal of his earlier, favourable views, but his intention was defeated by death.

In the earliest days of the revivals the Presbyterians in Kentucky and Tennessee, spurred by the lethargy of the church and the pressing immoralities of the West, were willing and eager to participate in the movement. Under the leadership of McGready the results were highly pleasing, but as the camp meetings progressed there were injected, largely by the Methodists, a religious fervour and fanaticism that led to excesses, which the orthodox Presbyterian theologian could not accept. As a rule, the Presbyterian minister seldom deviated from the standards in the Confession of Faith – stern and unbending as it was. Naturally, any side-step from Calvinism

¹⁶ *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*. Volume Two. March, 1802. pages 354 – 360.

was called heresy, and revision in procedure resulted in theological controversy and denominational divisions.

Especially in Kentucky, where the control of the Synod was firmly in the hands of the Conservative element, the forces of revivalism were smothered, and the chief protagonists were either driven out of the church or were lured back into the fold of the regular Presbyterian way.”

Richard McNemar thought that the various bodily exercises, which frightened off the Presbyterians, would have been accepted as a good thing, if they had occurred backing up Calvinist doctrines of the decrees, election, reprobation and final perseverance, rather than the modified doctrine of the Methodists, that Christ had died for all, and that all were welcome.¹⁷

NARRATIVE of the COMMENCEMENT and PROGRESS of the REVIVAL of 1800.

By the late Rev. James M'Gready.

In a letter to a Friend, dated “Logan County, Ky., Oct. 23,
1801.”

“But I promised to give you a short statement of our blessed revival; on which you will at once say, the Lord has done great things for us in the wilderness, and the solitary place has been made glad: the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.

¹⁷ W. B. Posey. *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest*. pages 28 – 29.

In the month of May, 1797, which was the spring after I came to this country, the Lord graciously visited Gaspar River congregation (an infant church then under my charge.) The doctrines of *Regeneration*, Faith and Repentance, which I uniformly preached, seemed to call the attention of the people to a serious inquiry. During the winter the question was often proposed to me, Is religion a sensible thing? If I were converted, would I feel it, and know it? In May, as I said before, the work began.

A woman, who had been a professor, in full communion with the church, found her old hope false and delusive – she was struck with deep conviction, and in a few days was filled with joy and peace in believing. She immediately visited her friends and relatives, from house to house, and warned them of their danger in a most solemn, faithful manner, and plead with them to repent and seek religion. This, as a mean, was accompanied with the divine blessing to the awakening of many. About this time the ears of all in this congregation seemed to be open to receive the word preached and almost every sermon was accompanied with the power of God, to the awakening of sinners. During the summer, about ten persons in the congregation were brought to Christ. In the fall of the year a general deadness seemed to creep on apace. Conviction and conversion work, in a great measure, ceased; and no visible alteration for the better took place, until the summer of 1798, at the administration of the sacrament of the supper, which was in July. On Monday, the Lord graciously poured out his *Spirit*; a very general awakening took place – perhaps but few families in the congregation could be found who, less or more, were not struck with an awful sense of their lost estate. During the week following but few persons attended to worldly business, their attention to the business of their souls was so great. On the first Sabbath of September, the sacrament was administered at Muddy River (one of my congregations). At this meeting the

Lord graciously poured forth his spirit, to the awakening of many careless sinners. Through these two congregations already mentioned, and, through Red River, my other congregation, awakening work went on with power under every sermon. The people seemed to hear, as for eternity. In every house, and almost in every company, the whole conversation with people, was about the state of their souls.

About this time, the Rev. J.B. [Balch] came here, and found a Mr. R. to join him. In a little time, he involved our infant churches in confusion, disputations, &c., opposed the doctrines preached here, ridiculed the whole work of the revival; formed a considerable party, &c., &c. In a few weeks this seemed to have put a final stop to the whole work, and our infant congregation remained in a state of deadness from the fall, through the winter, and until the month of July, 1799, at the administration of the sacrament at Red River. This was a very solemn time throughout. On Monday, the power of God seemed to fill the congregation; the boldest, daring sinners in the country covered their faces and wept bitterly. After the congregation was dismissed, a large number of people stayed about the doors, unwilling to go away. Some of the ministers proposed to me to collect the people in the meeting-house again, and perform prayer with them. Accordingly, we went in, and joined in prayer and exhortation. The mighty power of God came amongst us like a shower from the everlasting hills – God's people were quickened and comforted; yea, some of them were filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Sinners were powerfully alarmed, and some precious souls were brought to feel the pardoning love of Jesus.

At Gaspar River (at this time under the care of Mr. Rankin, a precious instrument in the hand of God) the sacrament was administered in August. This was one of the days of the Son of Man, indeed, especially on Monday. I preached a plain Gospel sermon on Heb. 11:16. - The better country. A great

solemnity continued during the sermon. After sermon Mr. Rankin gave a solemn exhortation – the congregation was then dismissed; but the people all kept their seats for a considerable space, while awful solemnity appeared in the countenances of a large majority. Presently several persons under deep convictions broke forth into a loud outcry. – many fell to the ground, lay powerless, groaning, praying and crying for mercy. As I passed through the multitude, a woman, lying in awful distress, called me to her. Said she, ‘I lived in your congregation in Carolina; I was a professor, and often went to the communion; but I was deceived; I have no religion; I am going to hell.’ In another place an old grey-headed man lay in an agony of distress, addressing his weeping wife and children in such language as this: ‘We are all going to hell together; we have lived prayer-less, ungodly lives; the work of our souls is yet to begin; we must get religion, or we shall all be damned.’ But time would fail me to mention every instance of this kind.

At Muddy River the sacrament was administered in September. The power of God was gloriously present on this occasion. The circumstances of it are equal, if not superior to those of Gasper River. Many souls were solemnly awakened; a number, we hope, converted – whilst the people of God feasted on the hidden manna, and, with propriety, might be said to sing the new song. All that I have related is only, as it were, an introduction. Although many souls in these congregations, during the three preceding years, have been savingly converted, and now give living evidences of their union with Christ; yet all that work is only like a few drops before a mighty rain, when compared with the wonders of Almighty Grace, that took place in the year 1800.

In June, the sacrament was administered at Red River. This was the greatest time we had ever seen before. On Monday multitudes were struck down under awful convictions; the cries of the distressed filled the whole house. There you

might see profane swearers, and Sabbath-breakers pricked to the heart, and crying out, ‘What shall we do to be saved?’ There frolickers and dancers [were] crying for mercy. There you might see little children of ten, eleven and twelve years of age, praying and crying for redemption, in the blood of Jesus, in agonies of distress. During this sacrament, and until the Tuesday following, ten persons, we believe, were savingly brought home to Christ.

In July, the sacrament was administered in Gasper River Congregation. Here multitudes crowded from all parts of the country to see a strange work, from the distance of forty, fifty, and even a hundred miles; whole families came in their wagons; between twenty and thirty wagons were brought to the place, loaded with people, and their provisions, in order to encamp at the meeting-house. On Friday, nothing more appeared during the day, than a decent solemnity. On Saturday, matters continued in the same way, until in the evening. Two pious women were sitting together, conversing about their exercises; which conversation seemed to affect some of the by-standers; instantly the divine flame spread through the whole multitude. Presently you might have seen sinners lying powerless in every part of the house, praying and crying for mercy. Ministers and private Christians were kept busy during the night conversing with the distressed. This night a goodly number of awakened souls were delivered by sweet believing views of the glory, fullness and sufficiency of Christ, to save to the uttermost. Amongst these were some little children – a striking proof of the religion of Jesus.

Of many instances of which I have been an eye-witness, I shall only mention one, viz, a little girl. I stood by her while she lay across her mother’s lap almost in despair. I was conversing with her when the first gleam of light broke in upon her mind – She started to her feet, and in an ecstasy of joy, she cried out, ‘O he is willing, He is willing – he is come, he is

come – O what a sweet Jesus he is – O what a precious Jesus he is – O what a fullness I see in him – O what a beauty I see in him – O why was it that I never could believe! that I never could come to Christ before, when Christ was so willing to save me?’ Then turning round, she addressed sinners, and told them of the glory, willingness and preciousness of Christ, and plead with them to repent; and all this in language so heavenly, and at the same time, so rational and Scriptural, that I was filled with astonishment. But were I to write you every particular of this kind that I have been an eye and ear-witness to, during the past two years, it would fill many sheets of paper.

At this sacrament a great many people from Cumberland, particularly from *Shiloh* Congregation, came with great curiosity to see the work, yet prepossessed with strong prejudices against it; about five of whom, I trust, were savingly and powerfully converted before they left the place. A circumstance worthy of observation, they were sober professors in full communion. It was truly affecting to see them lying powerless, crying for mercy, and speaking to their friends and relations in such language as this: ‘O, we despised the work that we heard of in Logan; but, O, we were deceived – I have no religion; I know now there is a reality in these things; three days ago I would have despised any person that would have behaved as I am doing now; but, O, I feel the very pains of hell in my soul.’

This was the language of a precious soul, just before the hour of deliverance came. When they went home, their conversation to their friends and neighbours, was the means of commencing a glorious work that has overspread all the Cumberland settlements to the conversion of hundreds of precious souls. The work continued night and day at this sacrament, whilst the vast multitude continued upon the ground until Tuesday morning. According to the best computation, we

believe, that forty-five souls were brought to Christ on this occasion.

Muddy River sacrament, in all its circumstances, was equal, and in some respects superior to, that at Gasper River. This sacrament was in August. We believe about fifty persons, at this time, obtained religion.

At Ridge Sacrament, in Cumberland, the second Sabbath in September, about forty-five souls, we believe, obtained religion. At Shiloh Sacrament, the third Sabbath in September, about seventy persons. At Mr. Craighead’s sacrament, about forty persons. At the Clay-Lick sacrament, congregation, in Logan county, in October, eight persons. At Little Muddy Creek sacrament, in November, about twelve. At Montgomery’s Meeting-house, in Cumberland, about forty. At Hopewell sacrament, in Cumberland, in November, about forty.

To mention the circumstances of more private occasions, common-days preaching and societies, would swell a letter to a volume.

The present season has been a blessed season likewise; yet not equal to last year in conversions work. I shall just give you a list of our sacraments, and the number, we believed, experienced religion at each, during the present year, 1801.

[My correspondent here mentions several different sacraments held at different places, and the numbers that he hopes obtained true religion, at these several solemnities, amounts in all to 144 persons. He then proceeds:-]

I should just remark that, among the great numbers in our country that professed to obtain religion, I scarcely know an instance of any that gave a comfortable ground of hope to the people of God, that they had religion, and have been admitted to the privileges of the church, that have, in any degree, disgraced their profession, or given us any ground to doubt their religion.

Were I to mention to you the rapid progress of this work, in vacant congregations, carried on by the means of a few

supplies and by praying societies – such as at Stone’s River, Cedar Creek, Goose Creek, the Red Banks, the Fountain Head, and many other places, - it would be more than time, or the bounds of a letter would admit of. Mr. M’G and myself administered the sacrament at the Red Banks, on the Ohio, about a month ago – a vacant congregation, nearly a hundred miles distant from any regular organized society, formerly a place famed for wickedness, and a perfect synagogue of Satan. I visited them twice at an early period; Mr. R. twice, and Mr. H. once. These supplies the Lord blessed, as a means to start his work and their praying societies were attended with the power of God, to the conversion of almost whole families. When we administered the sacrament amongst them, they appeared to be the most blessed society I ever saw. I ordained ten elders among them, all precious Christians; three of which two years ago were professed deists, now living monuments of Almighty Grace. The original is signed,

JAMES M’GREADY.¹⁸

Robert Davidson. (Presbyterian Historian).

“On the eve of the nineteenth century, notwithstanding the increase of ministers and churches, the prospect was sufficiently gloomy to appal both the Christian and the patriot, through the operation of the causes already enumerated. The population of the State advanced with incredible rapidity, and soon outstripped the supply of the means of grace. Worldly-mindedness, infidelity, and dissipation threatened to deluge the land, and sweep away all vestiges of piety and morality. The

¹⁸ Part of the Introduction to *the Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James M’Gready, Late Minister of the Gospel in Henderson, Kentucky.* pages vii to xi. Nabu Reprint.

rising generation were growing up in almost universal ignorance of religious obligation. The elder church-members were gradually dying off, and were replaced by no recruits from the ranks of the young. Except a little Goshen here and there, the shadow of night was gathering over the land. At this juncture, when hope was ready to expire, an unlooked-for and astonishing change suddenly took place. This event was the GREAT REVIVAL of 1800, so called from its wide extent and influence; and which, after all necessary allowances for the disorders which deformed it, was, beyond controversy, attended by signal benefits.

This extraordinary excitement is styled the Revival of 1800, because its most remarkable development occurred during that year. A preparatory work, however, had been going on for some time previous. The zealous labours of the Virginia missionaries, and others of the younger clergy, were not without some effect, and there was yet a remnant in the land, that had neither bowed the knee to Mammon nor Thomas Paine. Besides these scattered and limited instances, an unusual attention to religion had been awakened in the south-western section of the State, in what was known as the Green River country, and the Cumberland settlements, a year or two previous.

This excitement commenced in the Gasper River congregation, and extended thence to the congregations of Muddy and Red Rivers, in Logan County; all, at that time, under the pastoral charge of Rev. James McGready. Mr. McGready was one of the Sons of Thunder, a Boanerges both in manner and matter, and an uncompromising reprover of sin in every shape. The curses of the law lost none of their severity in falling from his lips; and, like Mirabeau, the fierceness of his invectives derived additional terror from the hideousness of his visage and the thunder of his tones. He had left a congregation in Orange country, North Carolina, but a few months previous, in consequence of the odium which his unsparing censures had

drawn upon him from the ungodly. Some of his former hearers having removed to Kentucky, and forwarded him an invitation to become their pastor, he resolved to accept the call; and accordingly arrived in the Fall of 1796, being now about thirty-three years of age, and full of fiery zeal. It was not long until the effects of his impassioned preaching were visible. Regeneration, faith, and repentance were his favourite topics; and an anxious and general concern was awakened among his hearers on the subject of experimental religion.

[This concern was followed by a period of apathy in 1798, owing to the advent and influence of another preacher who ridiculed McGready's message.]

Among the means adopted by this zealous pastor to stimulate his flock, was a written covenant, binding all who appended their signatures, to observe a *Monthly Fast*, a *Twilight concert of prayer*, and a *Sunrise concert*. The Twilight concert has been often renewed in late years in the West, and has been a very popular measure in seasons of revival.

The summer of 1799 witnessed a renewal of the excitement, which did not, however, partake of the transient character of the preceding years, but continued to grow and deepen until it reached its height, in 1800 and 1801. In the words of Mr. McGready, it exceeded everything his eyes had ever beheld upon earth, and to which all that had preceded was but an introduction, as a few drops before a mighty rain.

Its first manifestation occurred during a sacramental occasion at Red River, in July [1800], which was attended by Mr. McGready, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Hodge, and William McGee, Presbyterian ministers, and John McGee, brother of the last named gentleman, who was a Methodist preacher. The public services were animated, and tears flowed freely; but nothing special was noticed until Monday. While Mr. Hodge was preaching, a woman, at the extreme end of the house, unable to

repress the violence of her emotions, gave vent to them in loud cries. During the intermission which succeeded the services, the people showed no disposition to leave their seats, but wept in silence all over the house.

Such was the state of things when John McGee, the Methodist, rose in his turn to speak. Too much agitated to preach, he expressed his belief that there was a greater than he preaching; and exhorted the people to let the Lord God omnipotent reign in their hearts, and to submit to him, and their souls should live. Upon this, many broke silence, and the renewed vociferations of the female before mentioned were tremendous. The Methodist preacher, whose feelings were now wrought up to the highest pitch, after a brief debate in his own mind, came to the conclusion that it was his duty to disregard the usual orderly habits of the denomination, and passed along the aisle, shouting and exhorting vehemently. The clamour and confusion were increased tenfold; the flame was blown to its height, screams for mercy were mingled with shouts of ecstasy, and a universal agitation pervaded the whole multitude; who were bowed before it as a field of grain waves before the wind. Now followed prayer and exhortation; and the ministers found their strength soon taxed to the utmost to keep pace with the demands of this intense excitement.

[The most famous occasion of this kind occurred on 6th August in 1801, at another sacramental occasion held at Cane Ridge, where the church was under the pastoral control of Mr. Barton Stone. The number of those present was estimated by various people at between 8,000 and 20,000. It was an evening meeting, at a camp meeting-style gathering. One of the ministers present described the events of the meeting by saying they "were amazed and glorified God, saying, we never saw it on this fashion."]

They were taken by surprise, but, far from cavilling, they hoped that this sudden and extensive religious movement

would prove of a solid and salutary character. Even the spasmodic convulsions, the falling down, and sudden convictions, they regarded with interest. These good men had long mourned the deep declension of the Church, and had trembled at the triumphant ascendancy of Deism, rabid and intolerant, and they almost hoped that – inasmuch as the days of miracles were past, yet nothing short of a miracle could save religion, - Providence was pleased to permit these strange spectacles in lieu of miracles, to arrest attention, and thus gain access for the power of truth. In the truth alone they placed their final dependence, as the means of conversion. Nothing, in their view, could supersede evangelical truth, though other things might prepare the way for its reception.¹⁹

[Editor’s Comment.]

Robert Davidson includes in his book another complete chapter in which he discusses and describes the various physical phenomena, or bodily exercises, which were associated so closely with this revival, and makes it fairly plain that he thought these physical exercises were an aberration, or were features which spoiled the revival quite seriously. He thought the revival would have been much better if these features had not happened.

We will notice with some of the other writers that they thought the physical exercises played a major role in impacting people on a very widespread basis, and in helping to produce the transformation which was one of the main fruits of the revival. Without them, the impact would not have been so substantial.

The Kentucky Revival spread into the surrounding States, and created what we now call the Camp Meeting

¹⁹ Robert Davidson. *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky*. New York. Robert Carter. 1847. pages 131 – 140.

movement. It also created a major transformation of society and church life. International visitors around that time said Kentucky had become the most Christian country they had ever seen. It was mainly the Methodists who capitalised upon this revival, and who seemed best able to handle the emotional, hysterical and psychological extremes which appeared in the movement. It was followed by many other revivals in later years. This revival still affects us in the 21st Century.

The 1800 revival subsided by 1805, but there were many other revivals in the following years. The Camp Meeting movement was one of the main features in this period of American history in the middle states.

The Concert of Prayer attracted a lot of attention in the Southern States, as well as in the West, and produced a great many local revivals there.

Narrative of the State of the Work of God, in the churches under their care. Issued by the Presbyterian General Assembly. 1802.

The General Assembly, 1802.

The Narrative of the State of the Work of God within their Bounds – for 1802.

“The Assembly having heard from each of their members a circumstantial account of the state of religion in those places to which his observation had extended, are happy to state as a result, that there appears to be cause of mutual congratulations.

Though vice and immorality still too much abound, and though in some of our churches lukewarmness prevails; yet in general, appearances are more favourable than usual; the influence of Christianity during the last year appears to have

been progressive, and, in many places, the ordinances of the gospel have been attended with very extraordinary success. – From the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, the most pleasing intelligence has been received. With joy have the Assembly heard the glad tidings of the outpouring of the Divine Spirit, and of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Revivals, of a more or less general nature, have taken place in many of our Presbyteries. – The pious have been quickened, the daring arrested, the haughty humbled, and multitudes of once thoughtless sinners have been added to the church. In some parts of the States of Virginia and North Carolina, the Spirit of God has, we trust, been poured out in an extraordinary manner – and by accounts received from Kentucky and Tennessee, the usual work there, of which the Assembly have been heretofore informed, appears, during the last year, to have been progressive. Doubtful as the nature of the revival there first appeared, from the very singular circumstances which attended it, the Assembly do exceedingly rejoice that in its progress abundant evidence has been given that its author is God, and its effects highly desirable.

The aspect of an extensive country has been changed from levity to seriousness; scoffers have been silenced, and thousands convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. – In these things the Assembly trace the footsteps of Jehovah, and recognise the operations of his promised Spirit.

Though in some of the middle and southern Presbyteries appearances are not so favourable, yet even there, the Assembly are happy to learn, that in many churches, there is evidently an increasing respect for the institutions of religion, and in some, a hopeful attention to its important concerns.

The influence of that vain philosophy which has spread its infection through many of our cities, and even insinuated itself into the remote parts of our country, corrupting society,

and poisoning the very principles of moral action, has been greatly diminished – Infidelity, which a few years since threatened, by its artful seductions, to undermine the foundations of virtue, and by its open assaults, to break down the barriers of religion, is now seldom heard of, in many of the congregations within our bounds. – Some of its champions have been arrested by Sovereign Grace, and humbled at the foot of Emmanuel's cross – conquered by that same Jesus whom they once despised and insulted, they now hail him as their king, and shine among the living members of his church.

Many of their companions, awed by these conquests, have retired from public view, and hidden themselves in silence. Thus while the enemy was coming in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him. “The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voices, but thou art mightier than they.”

From the frontiers the Assembly have received information at once pleasing and animating – Our missionaries have been received with much respect, their ministrations have been attended with seriousness, a cordial thankfulness for their labours, and an earnest desire that further aid may be afforded, have been expressed by most of these settlements to which they have been sent. The prospect of the conversion of the Indian tribes appears to be increasing, and the Assembly cannot but hope that the time is not far distant when the wilderness on our borders, shall bud and blossom as the rose. When the cottage of the pagan shall be gladdened by the reception of the gospel, and the wandering and warlike savage shall lay the implements of their cruelty at the feet of Jesus. Delightful period! when sinners shall flock to the Saviour as clouds and as doves to their window. When an innumerable multitude, gathered from among all nations, shall sing Redeeming love, and triumph in the hope of a happy immortality; - When the church shall look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and

terrible as an army with banners:- When the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth; and when all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. – Such shall be the coming of Christ in the success of the gospel. Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.²⁰

Note on Sources.

About the end of 1802, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America published a volume of Extracts from its Minutes covering the years between 1789 and 1802. Extracts from the Minutes for 1803 and 1804 were published separately. Starting in 1805, the Assembly's Report on the state of religion in their churches was regularly published in popular religious journals, such as *The Panoplist* (from 1806 up to 1820), and the *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer*. (from 1808 up to 1815.) These were all monthly publications.

After this last title ceased publication around the end of 1815, the *Religious Intelligencer* appeared as a weekly publication, from May, 1816, until about 1837.

Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. 1803.

The Assembly heard, at more than usual length, and with more than common satisfaction, the accounts received from their members, of the state of religion, within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church. Since an inquiry of this nature has become a part of the annual business of the Assembly, it may be

²⁰ Extracts. 1802. pages 9 - 11.

confidently asserted that no result was ever presented to our body; so favourable, and so gratifying to the friends of truth and piety.

There is scarcely a Presbytery under the care of the Assembly, from which some pleasing intelligence has not been announced; and from some of them communications have been made; which so illustriously display the triumphs of evangelic truth, and the power of sovereign grace, as cannot but fill the hearts of all who love to hear of the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

In most of the northern and eastern Presbyteries, revivals of religion, of a more or less general nature have taken place. In these revivals, the work of divine grace has succeeded, with a few exceptions, in the usual way. Sinners have been convinced and converted by the *still, small voice* of the Holy Spirit, and have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *without any bodily agitations, or extraordinary affections*.

In this calm and ordinary manner many hundreds have been added to the church, in the course of the last year; and multitudes of those who had joined themselves to the Lord, have experienced times of refreshing and consolation from his presence.

In many of the southern and western Presbyteries, revivals more extensive, and of a more extraordinary nature have taken place. – While many, within the bounds of those Presbyteries, have been, as is hoped, effectually called, without any exercise other than those which have generally attended the progress of vital piety; there have been multitudes of instances, in which *great bodily agitations*, and other circumstances, out of the usual course of religious exercise, have attended the work. As these extraordinary appearances have been before announced by the Assembly, and as the knowledge of them is

generally diffused throughout the American churches, it is not judged necessary to enter into minute details on the subject. The Assembly could only observe, that although they forbear to express any opinion, as to the origin and nature of some of these circumstances, which have attended the southern and western revivals; and which have attracted some much of the attention of the religious world; yet they are constrained to acknowledge with thankfulness, that the last year, while it presented a continuance, and great extension of this extraordinary work, furnished also increased evidence, that it is indeed the work of God, for which the friends of piety are bound to praise his holy name.

The Assembly cannot believe that a dispensation, by means of which, the ignorant are enlightened, the vicious reclaimed, the erroneous made to acknowledge and obey the truth as it is in Jesus, the haughty infidel humbled and brought to bow penitent and believing before the cross of Christ, and the general aspect of society changed from dissoluteness and profanity, to sobriety, order, and comparative purity, can be any other, than a dispensation of the grace of God. And as there appears to be growing evidence that these are the happy fruits of the above-mentioned remarkable work, the Assembly cannot hesitate to recognise in it the same divine power, which has, in every age, appeared in a greater or smaller degree, to build up Zion, to confound the wisdom of this world, and to show, that when the great Head of the Church will work, none can hinder him. It would be easy for the Assembly to select some very remarkable instances of the triumph of divine grace, which were exhibited before them in the course of the very interesting narratives presented in the free conversation: - Instances of the most malignant opposers of vital piety being convinced and reconciled; - of some learned, active, and conspicuous infidels becoming the signal monuments of that grace which once they despised; - and various circumstances which display the holy

efficacy of the gospel. But forbearing to enter into minute details on this subject, they would only in general declare, that in the course of the last year, there is reason to believe, that several thousands, within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church, have been brought to embrace the gospel of Christ; and large accessions of zeal and of strength, as well as of members, given to his people.

The Assembly were gratified to be informed, that even in those parts of our church where no remarkable revivals have occurred, the word and ordinances of the gospel, have been, in many places, more generally, and more seriously attended upon in the course of the last year, than for some time before; that infidelity is less bold and active than formerly; and that, on the whole, appearances have become more encouraging since the last conversation in the Assembly on this subject.

The Assembly consider it as worthy of particular attention, that most of the accounts of revivals communicated to them, stated, that the institution of praying societies, or seasons of special prayer to God for the outpouring of the Spirit, generally preceded the remarkable displays of divine grace, with which our land has been recently favoured. In most cases, preparatory to signal effusions of the Holy Ghost, the pious have been stirred up, to cry fervently and importunately, that God would appear to vindicate his own cause. – The Assembly see in this a confirmation of the word of God, and as ample encouragement of the prayers and hopes of the pious, for future and more extensive manifestations of divine power. And they trust that the churches under their care, while they see cause of abundant thankfulness for this dispensation, will also perceive, that it presents new motives to zeal and fervour, in applications to that throne of grace, *from which every good and perfect gift cometh.*

The Assembly also observed with great pleasure, that the desire for spreading the gospel, among the destitute inhabitants

of our frontiers; among the blacks; and among the savage tribes; on our borders; has been rapidly increasing, during the last year, in various parts of our church. The Assembly take notice of this circumstance with the more satisfaction as it not only affords a pleasing presage of the spread of the gospel, but also furnishes agreeable evidence of the genuineness, and the benign tendency of that Spirit, which God has been pleased to pour out upon his people.

The Assembly consider the prospects of our church in the frontier settlements, as more favourable than they have been, at the date of any former report. They are gratified to hear, from various quarters, that new churches are rapidly forming; increasing in the number of their members, and in their punctual attendance on the means of grace: that many of these churches have been, within a short period, supplied with pastors; and that more missionary labours are called for in the above mentioned settlements, than any arrangement heretofore made can possibly supply.

Information of a very pleasing nature, was also communicated to the Assembly, by the delegates from the General Association of Connecticut, of a work of divine grace in various parts of their state – especially in Yale College; in which important institution, many of the youth, have hopefully become pious. – The probable influence of such a event, in so respectable seminary of learning, on the church of Christ generally, and particularly in the state of Connecticut, cannot but make a pleasing impression on the friends of piety.

On the whole, the Assembly cannot but declare with joy, and with the most cordial congratulations to the churches under their care, that the state and prospect of vital religion in our country, are more favourable and encouraging, than at any period within the last forty years. They see indeed much to lament, in the infidelity, the vice, the profaneness, the lukewarmness and formality, which still in many places abound:

but they believe it would be ingratitude to the gracious head of the church, as well as injustice to the friends of religion, not to announce, that the aspect of our American Zion is, in general, unusually cheering; - and that those who feel interested in the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, while they are called upon by new and additional motives to implore the continuance and extension of his mercy, have abundant reason to be encouraged, and to rejoice in the hope that God will make still more rich and glorious displays of his power and grace – “until he establish Jerusalem and make her a name and a praise in the earth – Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

The season for special prayer, and other religious exercises, appointed for last evening, was duly attended by the members of the Assembly, and a very large concourse of the citizens.²¹

E. H. Gillett. (Presbyterian Historian.)

The Rev. Dr Ezra H. Gillett was the historian of Presbyterianism in the U.S.A., whose history was first published in two volumes in 1864. This is the landmark book of Presbyterian history for the period.

In describing the situation in Kentucky around the year 1800, he spends several pages describing the talents, personalities and suitability for their work of the ministers who served the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky at the turn of the century.

He says:- Taking the whole body together, “a dull formality seems to have been their characteristic.” With two or

²¹ Extracts 1803. pages 10 – 13.

three shining exceptions, the majority were of barely respectable abilities, a few hardly above mediocrity, and not a few, though sound in principle, “deficient in the spirit of the Gospel.” At one time or other, nearly half the preachers had been under ecclesiastical censure. Several were cut off for heresy or schism, two were deposed for intemperance, and several were rebuked for wrangling of Improprieties.

With such facts as these established beyond question, we are not surprised at the statements of the historian of the Cumberland Presbyterians. “The ministry” he says, “aimed at little else than to enlighten the understanding.”²² Craighead for fifteen years was never heard to speak “in favour of the new birth, evangelical repentance, or saving faith;” and his course was scarcely exceptional. The ministers spoke of the *elect*, the *predestinated*, the *preordained*, but little of individual accountability or spiritual regeneration. A stiff technical theology or a dry speculative orthodoxy left the heart and conscience unmoved. Members were received to the churches without professing a change of heart or being aware of its necessity.

Yet it was in these circumstances that the great Kentucky Revival of 1800 – one of the memorable events in the history of the Church in this country – commenced. It was characterized, as it progressed, by great extravagances and indiscretions. Some of its results, indirectly at least, were deplorable. Yet it exerted a powerful and permanent influence, and wrought a marked change in the aspect and condition of society. The most incredulous repeatedly became its subjects.

In January, 1796, the Rev. James McGready took charge of three congregations – Red River, Gaspar River, and Muddy River – in Logan County, Ky. Among the neighbouring ministers in sympathy with him were John Rankin, William

McGee, and William Hodge, - the last was one of his own converts, from North Carolina. His field was a most unpromising one. Spiritual life seemed almost everywhere extinct. But a few members were found by the pastor ready to unite with him one day in each month, and an hour in each week, in prayer for the conversion of sinners and the revival of God’s work.

In the course of three or four months there were signs of change. A woman long connected with the church (Gaspar River) renounced her hope as false and delusive. Struck under deep conviction, she at length found peace. Immediately she visited her friends, warning them from house to house, in a most solemn manner, to attend to the interests of their souls. The congregation soon became interested, and some ten persons professed conversion.

In July, 1798, the work, which had declined toward the close of the preceding year, recommenced. There was scarcely a family in which there were not anxious souls. Within a few days, nearly all worldly business was laid aside. The work soon extended to McGready’s other congregations. “The people seemed to hear for eternity. In every house, and in almost every company, the whole conversation of people was about the state of their souls.” “The awakening work went on with power under every sermon.” Unfortunately, at this juncture, Rev. James Balch visited the region. He spoke freely, if not bitterly, against the character of the work. The churches were “involved in confusion and disputation,” and the revival ceased.

In July, 1799, again upon a sacramental occasion, it commenced anew. Several ministers, probably Rankin and the McGees) were present, and on Monday the large congregation was powerfully affected. “Many of the most bold, daring sinners in the county covered their heads and wept bitterly.” Numbers lingered after the services were closed. Every

²² See B. W. McDonnold, in Chapter Five of this present book.

countenance indicated seriousness, and not a few were bathed in tears.

They were called back, a meeting of prayer was held, and the impressions were deepened. Christians were awakened to new life. "The dreadful state of sinners out of Christ" seemed to impose upon them "a sensible heart-felt burden."

In August, a similar scene occurred among the Gaspar River congregation, now under the charge of Rankin. "The almighty power of God was displayed in the most striking manner." The next day the solemnity increased. For the first time the features afterward regarded as peculiar to this work made their appearance. "Many persons were so struck with deep, heart-piercing convictions that their bodily strength was quite overcome, so that they fell to the ground, and could not refrain from bitter groans and outcries for mercy." These effects were limited to no class. "The work was general, with old and young, black and white." Large numbers were awakened, and quite a number of hopeful conversions followed.

On the following Sabbath, a similar scene occurred at Clay Lick, - another of Mr. McGready's congregations. On the fifth Sabbath of September, the sacrament was administered at Muddy River, and the occasion was more remarkable than any that had preceded. On the last Sabbath of October, the sacrament season was observed at the Ridge, a vacant congregation in the Cumberland settlements in Tennessee, A very general revival followed, and continued with great power for several months.

In the summer of 1800, still more extraordinary scenes were witnessed. The work began at Red River on the third Sabbath of June. The following day "was indeed the great day of the feast." At the close of the sermon by the Rev. Mr. Hodge, "a dreadful striking solemnity overspread the assembly. The vast multitude were all in tears. Awakened sinners were struck with such keen, piercing convictions that many of them

fell to the ground, and roared out, in extreme anguish, 'What shall I do to be saved?'" Children "of nine, ten, and twelve years of age" might be seen "lying prostrate on the ground, weeping, praying, and crying for mercy."

On the fourth Sabbath of July, the congregation at Gaspar River was similarly visited. "A surprising multitude of people" had collected, many from a distance of thirty, and some from a distance of sixty, or even a hundred miles. After the second day of the meeting, the impression became more deep and pervading. "The greater part of the ministers and several hundreds of the people remained at the meeting house all night. The hours were spent in prayer and praise and conversation with enquiring souls."

At the close of the next day's sermon, "the power of God seemed to shake the whole assembly" "The cries of the distressed," at times, almost drowned the voice of the speaker. After the congregation was dismissed, none seemed willing to depart. Careless professors were led to more searching self-examination, and to abandonment of their former hopes. "Awakening and converting work" went forward throughout the vast multitude. Many of the children were deeply affected, and gave evidence of genuine conversion. "The good language, the good sense, the clear ideas, and the rational scriptural light in which they spoke," says Mr. McGready, "amazed me. I felt mortified and mean before them. They spoke upon these subjects beyond what I could have done."

The next day (Monday) there was "a vast concourse of people." It was "another day of the Son of man." Two powerful sermons were preached by McGee and Hodge, and "a universal solemnity" was manifested. The congregation was dismissed, but none seemed willing to leave the place. Persons of all ages and colours were found to be under conviction, some of them "crying out for mercy in the most extreme distress." The assemblage remained together until Tuesday morning after

sunrise, when “they broke up after they were dismissed by prayer.”

Encouraged by their past success in the new measures they had adopted, these men prosecuted them with increased energy. The plan of camp-meetings spread like wildfire. They were held, one after another, in rapid succession. Crowds assembled from every direction. “The labourer quitted his task; age snatched his crutch; youth forgot his pastime; the plough was left in the furrow; business of all kinds were suspended.” Young and old, the farmer and the hunter, white and black, flocked to the centre of attraction. The paths leading to the forest were alive with people, and the number reported in attendance upon these occasions is almost incredible.

The camp-meeting at Gaspar River was attended by a number of young people from Shiloh congregation, fifty miles distant. They came with “great curiosity to see the work,” yet strongly prejudiced against it. Some of them on their return felt it their duty to warn their young associates. Quite a number were brought under conviction; and by the influence thus exerted religious meetings were commenced, even while without a minister, and a powerful revival was the result. It led to the settlement of William Hodge.

At this time a company of eighteen or twenty persons, in “a very wicked, thoughtless settlement,” happened to meet together at a certain house. None had any particular errand, and they began to converse together on the concerns of their souls. At length they concluded to meet together in solemn prayer. Here again a revival of religion commenced.

Thus the work was continually extending. The camp-meetings were still kept up. A sacramental season was observed at Muddy River on the fifth Sabbath of August. Sunday night, says McGready, “was one of the most solemn nights I ever saw in the world.” A large majority of the congregation remained with the ministers at the meeting house all night. On Monday

night the scene was repeated. None seemed to feel the need of food or sleep.

The second Sabbath of September was the sacrament-season at Ridge, Cumberland county; the third, at Shiloh. In October the scene was transferred to Mr. Craighead’s congregations, in the same neighbourhood, then successively to Clay Lick, Montgomery’s meeting house, and Hopewell. At these various places large numbers of conversions are reported to have occurred. The work extended to many vacant congregations. McGready visited meanwhile the settlement of Red-banks, one hundred miles distant on the Ohio. It was, according to his report, “a Satan’s seat, a second hell.” He went there twice, Mr. Rankin once, Mr. Hodge once. A powerful revival commenced. Several professed deists were converted, and “an orderly good congregation” might have been gathered there, if there had been “a faithful minister to take charge of them.”

Many striking incidents and surprising conversions occurred in connection with these scenes. A strange gentleman from Georgia, who had come into the region to conduct the sale of lands which he possessed in Cumberland, was riding near the spot where one of the meetings were held. Attracted by the cries of the distressed, he turned aside from curiosity, but was converted, and at once changed his purpose, rather to sell his Georgia lands rather than his Kentucky lands, and thus reside on the latter. Another stranger, from a distance, was about to leave. His foot was in the stirrup; but he was asked, “How can you go without Christ?” He “sank to the ground under the most pungent conviction,” and only left the place when he had found peace in believing. Bitter opponents were strangely subdued. Scoffers and revilers were brought to cry out in agony for mercy.

During the following year (1801), the revival was still more powerful and extensive. Early in May “the flame began to

spread.” The scene at “Mr. Campbell’s meeting-house” was extraordinary and affecting. On the third Sabbath in May, at Cabin’s Creek, “about sixty persons were struck down:’ on the next Sabbath at Fleming Creek, “about one hundred.”

During June and July, similar scenes occurred at Concord, Pleasant Point, Indian Creek, and other places. But the most remarkable of all was witnessed in August, at Cane Ridge. This was a beautiful spot in the vicinity of a country church of the same name, under the pastoral care of Mr. Stone, in the county of Bourbon, and seven miles from Paris. It was finely shaded and watered, and admirably adapted to the purpose of an encampment. A great central area was cleared and levelled, two or three hundred yards in length, over which was extended a spacious tent as a shelter from heat and rain. The adjoining ground was laid off in regular streets, along which the tents were pitched. The concourse was immense. A Revolutionary officer, accustomed to estimate encampments, computed it to amount to not less than twenty thousand souls. The number of communicants is variously stated at from eight hundred to eleven hundred.

All who have left us any account of the scene agree in confessing that language is inadequate to describe it. It was sublime, grand, “awful.” The noise was “like the roar of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings was agitated as if by a storm.” The tide of emotion seemed to roll over them like tumultuous waves. Sometimes hundreds were swept down almost at once, “like the trees of the forest under the blast of the wild tornado.” Seven ministers, some in wagons, others standing on stumps, might have been counted, all addressing the multitude at the same time.

Of the people, some were singing, others praying, crying aloud for mercy, others still “shouting most vociferously;” while hardened men, who with horrid imprecations rushed furiously into the praying circles, were smitten down as if by an invisible

hand, and lay powerless, or racked by “fearful spasms, till their companions beholding them were palsied by terror.”

At times the scene was surpassingly terrible, and the boldest heart was unmanned. The infidel forgot his philosophy, and trembled till he sank to his knees or fell to the earth. “At one time,” says a spectator, “I saw at least five hundred swept down in a moment, as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them; and then immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens. My hair rose upon my head, my whole frame trembled, the blood ran cold in my veins, and I fled for the woods.” Such is the testimony of one who “would not have fallen to the ground for the whole State of Kentucky,” and who, when his feelings had become “intense and insupportable,” sought to allay them by a dram of brandy.

As darkness settled down over the scene, it lost nothing of its impressiveness. The solemnity was rather deepened. New features of sublimity or terror presented themselves to the beholder. The camp fires gleamed with a strange light. Hundreds of candles and lamps suspended from the overarching trees, with torches in every direction lighting up with strange brilliancy the motley groups beneath and the tremulous foliage above, gave to the whole panorama the aspect of wild enchantment; while chanted hymns, impassioned exhortations, and earnest prayers, interrupted by sobs and shrieks and shouts and startling cries for mercy, deepened the impression made upon the beholder.

The feeling became intense, the excitement indescribable and beyond control. No wonder that multitudes drawn together by various motives should fall under the powerful spell of such an occasion. Yet to many it was attractive for those very features of it most open to exception.

[Gillett adopted the “more sober and discreet” attitude to the various exercises and other extreme events of the camp meetings, similar to that of Robert Davidson. These people

came to be called “Anti-revival men,” by those on the other side – the “Revival men.” In many instances, however, these so-called “anti-revival” men were trying to maintain a cooler and more rational attitude to the range of events at the meetings, which would have been difficult. But, it was easy to think they were against the revivals, because they did not partake in them much more at all. – Ed.]

Gillett continues:- The time had now come when that test should be applied. Doctrinal errors, it was already evident, were making head in some quarters, and there could be no question of their lamentable result if left unchecked.

The extravagances of some of the meetings had become a stumbling block in the way of religion. Reaction of some kind would be sure to follow. Infidelity, for a while checked and abashed, would be encouraged to assume a bolder front. As early as 1801, Mr. Lyle apprehended the threatened danger. He warned the people against that enthusiasm “which like a worm, destroyed the beauty of a revival, and would ere long discredit it as the work of God.” He reproved the strolling parties, and insisted on the observance of quiet and order.

A few weeks later, “Father” Rice, at a conference on a sacramental occasion at Walnut Hill, proposed a plan for the regulation of the meetings. By several it was favoured; but the majority of the ministers present opposed it. Some of them “vehemently dissented.” At once the signs of a division became manifest. The more sober and discreet were now stigmatized as Anti-revival men. They were denounced as “hindrances to the work,” as “standing in the way,” as deists at heart and having no religion. Father Rice was singled out as the main offender: yet his views very nearly accorded with those of Lyle, Blythe, Cameron and Craighead.

The Revival men meanwhile, as the other party styled themselves, affected a kind of holy superiority. They were “forward and noisy” in their enthusiasm. The meetings became

scenes of discord rather than harmony. The stand itself was sometimes changed into the area of controversy. It was Blythe against Marshall, or Stone versus Lyle and Cameron. Harsh words were sometimes spoken, and private intercourse was sometimes marred by passion, if not rage.

In such scenes it would have been difficult for the coolest to retain the exercise of a calm judgment. Everything was carried to extremes. The more cautious ministers were charged with “coldness and deadness in religion.” Yet among those approved by their opponents were some whose conduct should be severely reprehended. Some explained the strange phenomena as “manifestations of the Spirit.” Some dropped the Spirit altogether out of account, and would not hear of His operations. Here one might be seen raving like a pythoness, there another praying with “clenched fists,” while yet another shouted “Glory to God!” with “wild and distracted eyes,” and, speaking to sinners, “looked like a fury.” Women and children exhorted. They pronounced judgment on ministers. Persons were addressed or prayed for by name. Falling, or other exercises, came to be a necessary stimulus to the interest of the meetings. It was a tame occasion when there was no such exhibition.

To add to the mischief, evil-minded persons seized the opportunity to ridicule religion, or mingle in the scene for the purpose of entertainment or even to gratify their lusts. Hucksters and traders crowded to the meetings to vend wares, or even liquors. Not a few gave practical evidence of their new belief that crept in with other errors, of falling from grace. It was, indeed, time that a check should be put to the abuses of the meetings.

[Gillett then goes on to talk about the heresies which arose amongst those who broke away from the main Presbyterian Church.]²³

Rev. JOHN LYLE.

The Rev. John Lyle was a Presbyterian minister to the Salem Presbyterian congregation, Kentucky. (The spelling mistakes and poor grammar are generally in the original.)

Cain Ridge 2nd Sabbath 8th August, 1801. Arrived yesterday evening... heard that Mr. Houston had preached on Friday and Mr. Howe was preaching when we came. I held society at Andrew Irvines that evening.

Saturday preached on Matt 4:2... Had not much liberty the people were pretty attentive but no falling or crying out that I perceived. In the afternoon McNamar preached on Romans I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ - He preached us a discourse unintelligible to myself and others with whom I conversed about it. But it contained the substance of what Mr. Stone and he call the true new gospel which they say none preach but ourselves. He spoke of the Gospel bringing a pardon with it, and talks the design of it is to bring persons to self-despair at once. The scheme is antinomian as in Marshal on Sanctification and Armenian in some degree about faith &c., &c. I know it not. But I humbly hope I understand the Gospel of Jesus...

McNamar - lively in desultory exhortation and speaks and sings with all his power and in address much like a

²³ E. H. Gillett. *History of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* Volume Two. pages 157 – 174.

Methodist. He sometimes rises to extatic joy – it smiles through his face decision has resulted in his church.

I expect the conduct of these hot-headed men and the effect of their doctrine will separate the church of Christ and quench the revival &c.

Saturday evening the people crowded the meeting house. Some fell down. I saw Mr. McNamar here praying, when the women's voices for whom he was praying appeared to be the highest and many others singing, praying and groaning all around some rejoicing and some crying for mercy. He might better have prayed silently for the person. I traversed the camp and then went to Captain Venable's tent and took a nap. I rose before day and went to where lawyer ----- had fallen and rose again and was talking to the people. He said he fell because of his coldness and deadness &c., but rose revived and happy. I traversed the camp in the morning. Went into the meeting house found Houston exhorting. After he had done I spoke on love to God and man on the Christian character as exemplified by our Saviour in his life. It rained very hard for some hours. At the tent Mr. Marshal preached the action sermon. Arise my fair one and come away &c. I heard a little of it and then went to the meeting house and found it full and then to where Mr. Burke was preaching to a large audience. Many of them appeared to be Methodists, they shouted before he was done, but afterwards they shook hands and got into a singing extacy. There was a great shaking of hands and praying and exhorting. Mr. McNamar exhorted the people not to oppose but to come and taste the love of God &c., &c. He seemed much affected. I went in among a cluster of rejoicers and shook hands with some of them, one stood staring like he saw Christ in the air, I asked him what views he had of Christ. He said he saw a fullness in him for all that come. Their looks were joyful but their appearance rather light but I cannot describe it.

I went from them to the Communion, and sat down at the first table which Mr. Blythe served. I had some reviving clearer views of divine things than I had before. In time the tables were serving Mr. Samuel Finley preached on how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation. I heard a part of that and then went to serve tables. When I spoke I felt uncommonly tender &c. There were eleven hundred communicants, according to the calculation of one of the elder others say better than eight hundred.

After the communion Mr. Blythe took me aside, we were talking about disorder, the danger of enthusiasm, etc. and Mr. Marshall came and told us ----- had fallen. We went to him, he complained that he was a great sinner, had a hard heart &c. But appeared confounded, said it was an unfortunate sight, a great mortification. He prayed and asked others to pray for him. After an hour or so heroes [he arose] and went to the woods but seemed more light on Monday than might be expected. Tuesday he seemed to have a deeper sense of the hardness of his heart.

But to return, I felt much melted when I saw the rebel down, tears flowed in abundance. Blythe and Welsh wept, but Blythe immoderately. That evening when we returned there was a shout in the Camp of Israel. Many were falling and rising and rejoicing &c., &c. Several of Mr. Houston's people were down, and one or two rejoicing. I turned into praying and exhorting among them, as did other ministers and continued I suppose near to one or two o'clock. I prayed for and talked to several that were standing and for Mrs. ---- who had fallen and got relief at that place. She had been under conviction for two or three months. After some time I went up into the stand and found five or six (who I suppose had gone there to see the work) fallen. There were -----'s daughters near Lexington, one Henderson and one Barry. If I recollect right one of them seemed to get comfort that night. How it fair'd with the rest I

don't know. Also I talked with two Miss ----'s and, Co. ---- daughter from Elkhorn, the last got comfort though at first in despair several wept around. I went around and through the meeting house, found many asleep in their seats and some down but not much stir in the house – some out of doors were praying &c. and some down. I went where a negro was preaching and after he was done exhorted and went to Mr. Venable's tent and lay down. In the course of this imperfect and very concise narrative I only mention those I knew and whose names I heard and do remember. The number of those whose names I knew not I cannot tell.

Next morning I arose about or before the break of day and retired to the woods – as I returned I saw two young men down, I think they said relations to James Crocket's family. They were incapable of conversing and seemed in great distress. I then went to ---'s tent and prayed for Mrs. ----'s sister [her husband] I understand had been down twice. After breakfast I went to the meeting house and employed Mrs. Rite to help me out with the fallen that the house might not be so crowded and sultry. But before this I went to the meeting house and Mr. Tull was preaching, I exhorted after he prayed and then he exhorted and I prayed and he exhorted again and set the people to sing Come ye sinners &c.

----- fell down and sent for me. He seemed much affected and agitated and seemed to doubt his religion he got among the Baptists. His wife came and fell on him and cry'd but he told me is yet opposed to the work. She would not even shake hands with her sister-in-law when she lay rejoicing &c. One and another fell down and the work went on briskly. Then after breakfast I went to talk with an old Mrs. Ramsey's son who was rejoicing and heard Robert Campbell come and tell one Dooly that Robert Finley was speaking – says he, He is a worthy speaker. I went down and heard him speak, but he soon concluded. I exhorted the people a while and went to the

meeting house and began to carry out the people and continued to carry out and pray and exhort till the middle of the day or about one o'clock. During this time I heard a number of those that were delivered arise and speak for their friends and the people and numbers got convicted and fell down. Their orations consist of the plain and essential truths of the gospel that they themselves have been powerfully convinced of, but they speak them with all the feeling and pathos that human nature affected with the most important objects is capable of. They speak much of the fullness of Christ, his willingness to save, &c. Among the rest we carried out a man that had been convulsed very much indeed so that you might have heard his feet strike the floor for many yards. He when carried out appeared joyful but weak. He would say, Bless the Lord, but nothing else. Sometime after I was sent for and met the Governor who said that he was gone distracted, that his head was weak before &c. I went to hear Mr. Rankin from Logan preach – he preached a plain sermon about conviction and conversion &c. After he was done Northcut, the Methodist exhorted. After he was done I gave a description of the heavenly city from Revelations.

After dinner we went down to the house again, took Fowler and McNutt and bard and came up with Campbell of Mr. Marshal's bounds we began to talk to and pray for those that were fallen down and --- a deist fell, a son to widow ----. He's now turned back Nov. 16. He had said just before he would not fall so for a thousand dollars and that he did not believe in heaven, hell or the devil. Shortly after two of his cousins fell. He lay speechless for an hour or two then spoke and said he had been ridiculing the work before he fell and said he wanted to pray and seek Christ. This evening I talked to one Standerford who keeps taverns near the blue licks, who it was said got comfort and exhorted &c.

After dusk I went into the meeting house and found ---- rejoicing and calling sinners to come to Christ. She said she had

deceived herself and had never known Christ before she went up to the tent and talked to her friends, a Miss ---- was struck down just by her and seemed much distressed. ---- talked a great deal about the hardness of her heart and how she was delivered. By the man who held her up saying give all up into the hands of Christ &c. ---- was relieved going home had like to have fallen from her horse. Broke out in upbraiding me for not praying for her at Salem and said I did not believe she was in earnest there. But now she could pray for herself and for me told me to come along with her she would go with me to heaven. She talked about her sin in going to the holy table of the Lord unprepared and that it would have been just in God to have sent her to hell for so great a sin. She said ---- got comfort, she was glad because she had got one to talk with her. At other times she rejoiced but she did not know what for, but she had not found Christ. She spoke of her unworthiness and Christ's fullness and his willingness to save beautifully &c. She talked almost all night.

In the morning when I came away she was asleep, but I understood was very much hurt because I went away without speaking to her. Her nerves were much affected, the veins of her neck much swell'd and she was much exhausted by speaking.

----'s sister-in-law fell from her horse between (Patton's) and Crocketts and appeared in deep distress. The meeting at Cain Ridge continued on to Thursday we have heard and do not know whether it be yet broke or not. It was allowed a thousand had fallen before I came away and then I recon there were 60 down and they continued to fall and be exercised. The last account on Wensday I heard they were almost all men that fell on Tuesday. Tuesday morning I viewed the camp saw a number down. Went to the meeting house found a number of boys and girls singing and shaking hands, a sort of wagging that appeared like dancing at a distance.

When I came among them they appeared verry loving and joyful almost dizzy with joy. I told them to sing the same hymn and not sing different ones so near together. Mr. Rankin came in I told the people we would have an address from the pulpit and to take their seats which they did immediately and he spoke first and I next the people were verry attentive and a good deal moved. Then word was given that Mr. Burke would preach at the tent or stand. He began to preach a sermon on having no continuing place and seeking a better &c. I left the place about half after twelve.²⁴

Walter B. POSEY's Review of Lyle's *Diary*.

Although eighteen Presbyterian ministers were reported present at the Cane Ridge meeting, it is difficult to find in Kentucky more than half a dozen leading members of that ministry who held to the revivalistic programme through its important years. At first the mature clergy took part, but, when the excesses became evident, and the theological drift was toward the Arminian viewpoint, most of them withdrew and denounced the movement.

On the other hand, the actual leaders of the movement were largely young ministers educated in the border colleges whose theology was in sharp contrast to the heavily impregnated Calvinistic theology taught at Princeton. The groups to which the young ministers preached were in the main composed of young people who came from the lower rungs of society.

The official attitude of the General Assembly toward revivals blew hot and cold. The fluctuations paralleled those of

²⁴ The Rev. John Lyle's account of the great Cain Ridge camp meeting. – from his *Diary* pages 21 -35. Reproduced by C. Cleveland. *The Great Cleveland. Great Revival in the West*. Appendix Five. Peter Smith, 1959 edition. (Spelling and grammar generally as in the original)

several individuals, David Rice and John Lyle in particular, who were in the very midst of the revival scene.

John Lyle, who has been called “The most formidable witness against the revival,” kept a diary for the years 1801, 1802 and 1803 in which he noted his observations and reactions to the revivals. In earlier entries there is evidence that Lyle, if not sympathetic, was not hostile to the new mode of conversion. He soon, however, became convinced that the revivals “were not the effects of the Divine Impulse” but rather “the evidence of human infirmity.”

Later in the turn of events, Lyle was to be the actual leader of the anti-revivalist faction that desperately tried to prevent the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.²⁵

John McMillan and Revivals.

The revivals of the early eighteenth century in the middle colonies did much to bring revivals under McMillan at Chartiers and Pigeon Creek. Colonial revivals began with those of Theodorus J. Frelinghuysen, a pietistic pastor of four Dutch Reformed churches in the Raritan Valley, New Jersey. These prepared the way for later Presbyterian revivals under the Tennents and other Log College enthusiasts. Gilbert Tennent, the eldest son of his illustrious father, became the moving force in awakening the Scotch-Irish people to their spiritual need. His revival movement in New Jersey “was essentially an original movement” and not merely an expansion of a revival among the Dutch Reformed.

Among those trained at the Log College in the revival method of evangelism were Samuel and John Blair. Samuel

²⁵ W. B. Posey. *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest*. pages 25-27.

Blair led a revival at Nottingham in the spring of 1740, and John Blair preached as a revival leader in Hanover County, Virginia, in 1743, in 1743. During the pastorates at Fagg's Manor they did not diminish their evangelistic fervour. Thomas Murphy has written of Samuel Blair at Fagg's Manor: "Almost immediately after his settlement there began one of the most wonderful revivals of that age of extraordinary religious interest." Robert Smith, the founder of Pequea Academy, had the same intensity and purpose.

With John Blair at Fagg's Manor and Smith at Pequea, MacMillan came deeply to believe that Christianity was a matter of the heart, as it was of the head. This belief was strengthened in MacMillan by the insistence of the "New Side" that a conversion experience was "a prerequisite to entrance into the ministry."

In a letter to Carnahan in March, 1832, he refers to his having received at the revival under Smith at Pequea his first deeply religious experience. If MacMillan had had no conversion experience of his own until that time, the new experience would fit him to join the Log College – Princeton group of ministers. A revival which took place under John Witherspoon in MacMillan's first year at Princeton had, too, left with him an indelible impression.

The revivals throughout the colonies and his own religious experience did much to make MacMillan "eminently a revival preacher." From the first his ministry was an endeavour not only to edify Christians but also to bring to Jesus Christ those unsaved.

The first revival under him began on a Thursday morning in December of 1781, a day which had been set by Congress as a day of thanksgiving for the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Many of MacMillan's people at Chartiers were touched when he suggested that they mingle their thanksgiving for national blessings with calling upon God

for the presence of His Holy Spirit among men. In his sermon MacMillan reminded his congregation of the many irresponsible and irreligious people who had come into their midst during the years of the Revolution. The congregation were visibly touched and were moved to action.

"They were encouraged to appoint other meetings for the same purpose; and the favourable appearances still increasing they continued to hold 'Sabbath night societies' (or prayer meetings) for nearly two years. It was then usual to spend the whole night in religious exercises. 'Nor did the time seem tedious,' says MacMillan, in his letter to Dr Carnahan, 'for the Lord was there and His work went pleasantly on.'"

There were forty-five accessions to the church at the first communion service during this revival. "This time of refreshing continued in a greater or less degree till 1794." After each sacramental occasion in those twelve years a number entered into the church through the revival efforts

During the time of the first revival MacMillan appointed a day for all the children within a reasonable distance to come to his home. After talking solemnly to them in words they could understand he asked each to come to him where he was standing. He then suggested that each give him his hand and make a solemn promise to remember his creator and to pray daily for a new heart. "Dr MacMillan, shortly before his death, said he believed a great number of those children became members of the church."

The second revival under MacMillan was in 1795. He says of it in a letter to Carnahan:

"This, however, was not very extensive nor of long continuance; yet during this year about fifty were added to the church, most of them continued by their walk and conversation

to manifest that they had experienced a real change of heart; and some of them became successful preachers of the gospel though there were some lamentable instances of apostasy.”

In the spring of 1799 came a third revival within his church. He said that the Lord again revived his congregation at Chartiers. Many of the people of the community and several of the students were awakened to a serious concern about their immortal souls and made to enquire about salvation. About sixty united with his church.

“This revival,” said McMillan, “as well as that of 1795, was carried on without much external appearance, except a solemn attention and a silent weeping under the preaching of the word.”

His way of preaching the Word was sometimes fearful and wonderful. He so denounced vice that no one could mistake his meaning and few of the guilty could do other than feel the barbs of conscience pricking them. “His descriptions of the wrath of God and the danger and doom of the impenitent were awful.” Yet at times his preaching was so mellowed by Divine Grace that he won his listeners to Christ by setting forth His love.

The great revival in McMillan’s church was the fourth. This was really part of the “Great Revival in the West,” 1797 – 1805. The “Great Revival” began in south-western Kentucky and from there spread south-eastward into North Carolina and north-eastward into the Upper Ohio Valley. James McGready, who had been a pupil under McMillan, started this revival. Of its effects he wrote to McMillan in a letter dated November 18, 1802:

“We have but few instances of apostasy since our beloved revival began. It is true there are many instances of persons being alarmed, and sometimes struck down under deep

convictions, who have grown careless again, but the instances are very rare of persons who have professed to have obtained real religion, going back again.”

During the spring and summer of 1802 there were signs of the revival fervour in the Cross Roads and Upper Buffalo Churches. Then on the last Sabbath of September Elisha Macurdy at Three Springs saw the revival begin at his communion service. The heightened spirit was so strong that, at the end of the service held the next Monday evening, those assembled were unwilling to leave the grounds. They remained together all that night and until noon the next day, in great concern and anguish of spirit.

“This was a very solemn season; the people were almost universally bowed, some deeply affected and lying prostrate, their cries for mercy enough to pierce the Heavens, while they appeared to be on the brink of despair.”

McMillan’s churches were not without a part in this Great Revival. He says that from 1799 to 1802 there was gross indifference about religion except in the few who had been brought under serious impressions in 1799; that sinners had grown bold in their sinning; that even the efforts of the pious had become weak; that few were prepared to meet the Lord and bid Him welcome; that the coming of the revival in 1802 so astonished even the pious that its coming seemed like a dream; and that this fourth revival differed from the others in that generally the body was strangely affected. He wrote to James Carnahan:-

“It was no unusual thing to see persons so entirely deprived of bodily strength that they would fall from their seats, or off their feet, and be as unable to help themselves as a new-

born child. I have seen some lying in this condition for hours who yet said they could hear everything that was spoken; and yet their minds were composed and more capable of attending to divine things, than when their bodies were not thus affected.”

No doubt McMillan remembered accounts of George Whitefield’s preaching at Fagg’s Manor, where stories of his revivals were yet fresh in memory when he was a baby. Whitefield had said of those who listened, “some were struck as pale as death, others lying on the ground, others wringing their hands, others sinking into the arms of friends.”

The Revival in Kentucky began in 1797, and the reports of “jerking,” “jumping,” “barking,” “yelling,” and the like had come to McMillan long before. He probably never expected to see at a revival in his church what he did see; yet he did not doubt the religious nature of these actions once he had seen them. If he had known more of the laws of psychology, he would have realized that the strange reports from the West and South did affect the emotion of his own people.

This “Falling Work” or “Bodily Exercises” was thought of, at the time, as issuing from the Holy Spirit. Yet in 1839 Dr Charles Hodge prints: “that such bodily affection owe their origin, not to any divine influence, but to natural causes, may be inferred from the fact that these latter were adequate to their production.”

Hodge also adds that such acts propagate themselves by a kind of infection. However this may be, McMillan accepted the actions of the people as a means to a worthy end. He knew that many opposed revivals and called them “an evil work,” “a work of enthusiasm,” “a work of delusion.” The Associate Presbytery or Seceders had come out against the revivals and had denounced them “as fanatical and of Satanic origin”; yet knowing this did not prevent McMillan from shewing respect for what was happening.

If questioned about such physical actions, he would no doubt have said that the Holy Spirit instigated them so that many should be saved from their sins. He writes that between fifty and sixty joined the church as the fruits of this revival and that for some time after on each sacramental occasion others joined his church. Among those converted were many students in Jefferson College who later became ministers of the Gospel.

“Since that time,” McMillan writes to Carnahan, “religion has been on the decline, though still we are not left without some tokens of the Divine Presence.”

The fifth and last revival under McMillan came in 1823. “Nothing very remarkable,” he writes, “when God again visited this dry and parched congregation with a shower of divine influences.” The doctor was then in his seventy-first year, but he yet preached with such power that his people were convicted of their sins and turned to God. “The preaching of Dr McMillan had the signature of divine approbation. By means of it hundreds, and probably thousands, were converted and trained for heaven.”

Through all these revivals McMillan was not stampeded into such fanaticism as was attributed to others, for example to James McGready. And McMillan and his session examined with care those who sought entrance to the Kingdom. If after the excitation subsided, these who had been moved still believed and deserved to be instructed “in the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,” they were welcomed in the fellowship of Christian believers.

While all this was happening at Chartiers and Pigeon Creek, in pulpit and in pew, and while the revivals were coming in periodic gusts of Heavenly Wind, McMillan kept steadily preparing young men for the ministry. His theology had not the originality that might have made him famous. He taught simply

but with fervour the standard Presbyterianism or Calvinism of his time.²⁶

Green River.

Extract of a letter from Rev. James Welsh, of Lexington, Kentucky, dated 15 July, 1802, to one of the Editors, containing some further account of the late revival of religion in that country.

The work began in the southern part of this state, in the country called *Green River*. The people of God became deeply sensible of the state of the church in this country, which, at that time, was indeed in a very declined situation. All the laws were made void in the most wanton manner, and little more than the forms and some outward appearance of religion among us. Under this view of things, numbers of Christians became much concerned that God would change our mournful state, and revive his cause among us.

Many earnest prayers, I believe, ascended to a throne of grace, for a considerable time previous to the commencement of the work amidst many and various discouragements. It was to be observed, however, that much greater numbers attended the ministrations of the word for some time before the work began. – But except this, nothing else could be seen, unless it might be a strengthening determination among a number of God’s people to continue in waiting on Him for a day of His power; and some increase of hope that eventually they should not be disappointed in their expectations.

²⁶ Dwight Guthrie. *John McMillan: the Apostle of Presbyterianism in the West. 1752 – 1833.* pages 66 – 70.

So far as I have been informed, the work began on Green River, from the exercises of a very pious woman as I have stated above.

It appeared that God made use of the compassionate bursts of sorrow which broke from her heart, for the multitudes around her, in the way to ruin, to awaken reflection in many of them who had always lived in total carelessness before. Many from that time began to hear the call of the *Lord of Hosts* and consider their ways; consequently to see their undone state by nature and enquire what they should do to be saved.

There the work began and thence it spread. You have inquired, sir, as to the views of those under convictions? They appear, so far as I can judge of them, generally to have very awful apprehensions of their state as sinners, of the holiness, justice, and majesty of God. Their views of the demerit of sin, and their utter inability to escape from the wrath, with which they then believed it threatened, have brought many of them apparently to the brink of *despair*, and filled them with such dire forebodings of the dreadful doom they then believed awaiting them, as to overcome nature, call them down to the ground; and from everything that can be seen, nearly to arrest and stop the functions of life. In many, however, who can neither speak nor act, the arterial power does not seem to be much altered; though in others, I have observed an intermission of *pulse* for a considerable time.

The length of time, as well as degree of agitation has been different in different persons, under this exercise. The continuance of mental darkness also has been so. Some who have been very remarkably awakened have hopefully arisen from that doleful state, have been hopefully taken from nature’s horrible pit and miry clay, their feet set upon the rock of ages, and a new song put into their mouths, even praises to Christ, their Deliverer. Others have continued for days, weeks, and some for months, though not under those great horrors, yet

without comfort. Others again have been able to shake off very considerable awakenings, and grow perhaps more hardened than ever; but of this *class*, I know but few considering the numbers that have been subjects of the work. With regard to the joys of these subjects, they seem to bear a proportion to the distresses they have been in. In some these joys are so great as to overcome them, as their distresses previously had done; though with this difference, that the features of their *despair* and *horror* are not to be seen as in the other case.

As to their views of themselves, they generally cry out aloud against the obduracy, wickedness and unbelief of their hearts, and appear deeply to mourn that now when they would attempt to do good, evil is so abundantly and prevalently present. That the law of God is holy, just and good they heartily acknowledge, how to perform that which is right they find not. The manner in which many of them appear to estimate Christ and His merit is very lively and affecting, and I think must be emblematical of the exercises of that better world where adoring myriads, with one heart and voice, and every power, cry out, saying to the Lamb, "Thou only art worthy." &c. The work still goes on, though the meetings are not so large as at first.

You inquire lastly, what classes are taken? All classes; the learned and ignorant, and numbers of the most violent opposers of the different classes, and in the very acts of daring hostility against heaven, and opposition to the work. It is no small comfort, sir, to hear from you that many prayers are daily ascending among you to the heavens on our behalf. May they enter into the ears of the Lord of *Sabaoth* with acceptance both for you and us!²⁷

²⁷ *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*. Volume 3. pages 119 – 20.

FOR and AGAINST. (Three letters.)

Lexington, Kentucky.

Extract of a letter from Colonel Robert Patterson, of Lexington, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr John King, of Pennsylvania. September 25th, 1801.²⁸

"Rev. Sir,

By the following, I intend to communicate to you as accurate and comprehensive an account of the revival of religion, at present, in the eastern parts of this State, and round about where I live, as I am able.

On the 1st of May, at a Society on the waters of Fleming Creek, on the east side of Licking, a boy, under the age of twelve years, became affected in an extraordinary manner, publicly confessing and acknowledging his sins, praying for pardon, recommending Jesus Christ to sinners, as being ready to save the vilest of the vile. Adult persons became affected in a like manner. The Sabbath following, at Mr. Camble's meeting-house, a number were affected. The third Sabbath of May, at Cabin-Creek, six miles from Limestone, the Lord's Supper was administered by Mr. Camble and Mr. McNamaar, at which time about sixty persons were struck down. Next Sabbath on Fleming Creek, under Mr. McNamaar and Mr. Camble, about one hundred persons were struck down, and deeply convinced. The first Sabbath of June, Mr. Stone administered the Lord's-Supper, in Concord congregation, on the head waters of Kingston. On the Friday night preceding the sacrament at Concord, I was present at a Society, held at Cane-Ridge, and saw the extraordinary work. Of fifty persons present, nine were struck down. I proceeded next morning to Concord, ten miles distant, where a sermon was preached, at which several became

²⁸ From the *Franklin Repository*.

affected, and struck down. The exercises continued all night. This was the first occasion that showed the necessity of performing divine service out of doors. The number being so great, the Lord's Supper was administered at a tent. A great solemnity appeared all day. A number were struck down; on the whole occasion about one hundred and fifty. The exercises continued from Saturday to Wednesday, day and night, without intermission. The appearance itself was awful and solemn. It was performed in a thick grove of beachen timber; candles were furnished by the congregation: the night still and calm. Add to these circumstances, the exhortations, praying, singing, the cries of the distressed on account of sin, the rejoicing of those who were delivered from their sin's bondage, and brought to enjoy the liberty that is in Christ Jesus, - all going on at the same time. About four thousand persons attended; two hundred and fifty communicated. Twelve wagons had brought some of the people, with their provisions, &c., from distant places. This was the first occasion that showed the necessity of encamping on the ground, the neighbourhood not being able to furnish strangers with accommodations; nor had they a wish to separate.

The Lord's Supper was appointed to be held at Point-Pleasant, on Stony-creek, ten miles above Paris, being one of Mr. Joseph Howe's congregations. There the flame spread more and more. Curiosity brought a great many strangers. I, with my family, attended. About forty wagons, four carriages: in all, about eight thousand persons. The meeting commenced on Friday, and continued till Wednesday. Three hundred and fifty communicants: two hundred and fifty were struck down.

There was an opposition both on this and the former occasions, by some who seemed to be real Christians, by nominal professors, and by deists. The first class stood astonished, not knowing, and wondering what these things meant; not willing to reprobate it, and many at last closed in with it. The next class, the most inveterate, called it enthusiasm,

hypocrisy, witchcraft, possession of the devil, sympathy; in fine, everything but what it really is. The deists confine it to sympathy, agitation, delusion, &c.

As well as I am able, I will describe it, as I have had it from the subjects, - not being able to describe it experimentally. Of all ages, from eight years and upward, - male and female, rich and poor, the blacks, and of every denomination; those in favour of it, as well as those (at the instant) in opposition, and railing against it, have instantaneously fallen motionless to the ground. Some feel the approaching symptoms by being under deep convictions; their heart swells, their nerves relax, and in an instant they become motionless and speechless, but generally retain their senses. It comes upon others like an electric shock, as if felt in the great arteries of the rams and thighs. The body relaxes, and falls motionless; the hands and feet become cold, and yet the pulse is as formerly, though sometimes rather slower. Some grow weak, so as not to be able to stand, but do not lose their speech altogether. They are all averse to any medical application; and though the weather is very warm, and people in large crowds around them, yet they are not inclined to drink water. They continue in that state from one hour to twenty-four. When they regain their speech, which comes to them gradually, they express themselves commonly in the following manner:- that they are great sinners, - the vilest of the vile, and pray earnestly for mercy through Christ. Some think there is mercy for all but not for them; that salvation through Christ is a wonderful salvation, but will not be applied to them. They often continue in this state for several days. Many have not yet recovered, so that it is not certain that they will. Others recover in an hour, and speak of possessing salvation from sin. They have great gifts in praying and exhortations, which they often perform in an incredible manner.

Indeed it is a miracle, that a wicked, thoughtless sinner, who never could address himself to an audience before, should

rise out of one of those fits, and continue for the space of two hours, recommending religion and Jesus Christ to sinners, and inviting them to come to Christ, and close in with the offer of salvation, in the most pressing and engaging manner. But I am sure, my description, and your view, if you were an eye-witness, would differ as much as day from night. Notwithstanding all that our Ministers, and a vast number of the most respectable and sensible people in the country, acknowledge that it is the wonderful work of God, and is marvellously manifested to us; yet there are people so hardened, that they either cannot or will not acknowledge the work to be of God, but represent it in an unfavourable view. Persons, in a number of instances, in opposition, have felt it coming on, and have endeavoured to fly, but could not get away. They have been affected in the woods, in the act of running away. Some have been affected at home, on the road, in the field, in bed, at the plough, asleep. Yea, whole families together, at home; and sometimes only one of a family.

On the third Sabbath of June, the sacrament was administered at Lexington, to Mr. Welsh's congregation; the same day at Indian-Creek, to Mr. Robertson's congregation. The former began on Friday, and continued till Tuesday, being the first time this strange work made its appearance here. About seventy were affected: three hundred communicants; six thousand persons in all attended. The latter commenced on Thursday, and continued till the Thursday after, day and night, - the first night excepted. About ten thousand persons; fifty wagons; eight hundred struck down; five hundred communicants.

On the first Sabbath of August was the sacrament of Cane-Ridge, the congregation of Mr. Stone. This was the largest meeting of any that I have seen: it continued from Friday till Wednesday. About twelve thousand persons; one hundred and twenty-five wagons; nine hundred communicants; three

hundred were struck down. One girl, aged ten years, after recovering her speech, continued to pray and exhort in an extraordinary and most pathetic manner, for the space of two hours. I attended at the following places; namely:- Paris, Mr. Reynolds's congregation; Walnut Hill, Mr. Crawford's; Salem, Mr. Lyle's; Beaver, Mr. Marshall's; and, last Sabbath, Blue-Spring, Mr. Marshall's; - all similar to those that I have described.

In order to give you a more just conception of this work, - Suppose a large congregation assembled in the woods; Ministers preaching day and night; the camp illuminated by lamps on the trees, wagons, and at the tents; persons falling down, and taken to some convenient place, where prayer is made for them; some psalm or hymn, suitable to the occasion, sung. If they speak, what they say is attended to, being very solemn and affecting: many are struck under such exhortations. But if they do not recover soon, praying and singing is continued alternately, and sometimes a Minister exhorts over them, - for generally a large group of people collect and stand around, paying attention to prayer, and joining in singing. Now, suppose twenty of those groups around: a Minister engaged in preaching to a large congregation in the middle: some mourning, some rejoicing, and great solemnity on every countenance, and you will form some imperfect idea of the extraordinary work. Opposers call this confusion! But in any of these parties employment for the mind may be found. The work being engaging, persons subsist with less sleep and food than at other times.

I have heard from different parts of Cumberland, Green-River, and of this State, that the work is increasing fast. At Mr. Lyle's congregation, last Sunday, - twenty-five miles from this place, - a man of about thirty years had produced a staff, with a sharp nail in the end, intending therewith to probe such as should fall down in the crowd, which, he was certain, would

soon rouse them out of their lethargy. He himself had often boasted that he would not fall down. However, he became affected, which, when he felt it coming on, he endeavoured to expel, by making use of whiskey, thinking that would allay his feelings; but to no purpose, - for in a short time he was struck down. When he was able to speak, he made a wonderful confession of his obstinacy; acknowledging himself a great sinner, and hoped for pardon through Christ.”²⁹

Against.

Letter to the Editor of the *Franklin Repository*. (Mr. G.K. Harper.)

Sir,

The Rev. Dr King’s causing such an extraordinary letter from his correspondent in Kentucky, to be published in your paper of last week, has occasioned the following remarks, viz.

From the doctor’s strength of mind, as well as from his great literary acquirements, together with the advantages which naturally flow from an accurate knowledge of the principles of the Christian religion; we cannot for a moment indulge a thought, that Dr King means to favour, or justify, the proceedings set forth in that letter. But, on the contrary, believe him to be such a friend to rational religion, as to consider those proceedings fit exercises for such only, as have set their faces against the order of nature, the happiness of mankind, and the wisdom and dignity of a *superintending Providence!*

But however confirmed we are at present in this opinion, it must be acknowledged, that the doctor has subjected himself to suspicions of a very different nature, by furnishing materials

²⁹ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Vol.3. pages 118 – 122. Also Woodward *Increase of Piety*. pages 32 – 36.

for the publication, without *comment*, and without favouring us with his *opinions* on the subject.

That it is wrong to give publicity, or currency, to that which we do not believe in, is a principle which we presume will not be controverted: it is therefore hoped that the Doctor will as soon as convenient favour us with a few remarks, which will enable us to ascertain, with precision, what his opinion really is.

This request is not made for the mere gratification of idle curiosity; but for the benefit of weak minds; many of whom are found to be in every Society.

November, 23. 1801.

A. B. C.³⁰

Reply from Doctor King.

Mr. Harper.

Please to give the following a place in your paper.

It is well known that a newspaper is expressly designed for the conveyancing of interesting facts, of whatever kind, to the knowledge of the public; but it is not conceived to be a proper medium of religious discussion. It is the property of many, who may differ widely on such subjects; and it might be accounted impertinent, to obtrude *his opinion* on the public, in such a way. This consideration might have been thought sufficient to excuse me from censure, for handing to you, as an article of news, “without comment,” the letter from Kentucky, lately published; containing a short history of what is called, “*the revival of religion* in some parts of that State.”

I would, indeed, think it wrong to give publicity, or currency to that which I do not believe to be true; but in this

³⁰ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Op cit. pages 122 – 123.

case I had no reason to discredit the relation. I know the gentleman, who wrote the letter, to be a man of information, and of good credit; who has been long in trust, as an officer in the state; and is a friend to religion, and the happiness of mankind. He writes as an eye- and ear-witness; and from such information, as he thought he could depend on; and not much of his own opinion is given, more than what is needful to connect the history.

Many of these facts had been related, and the reports of them were sounding through our country. The minds of many people were very anxiously engaged about them, and longing for more satisfaction; and I have the pleasure to add that, (though it seems, some are offended) all who I have conversed with on the subject, are well pleased with the publication. Such events are unusual, but they are not new, in the Christian church. Some are yet living among us, who have seen and heard such things, in their younger days. According to credible accounts, something similar to this is prevailing in some parts of Scotland, and in some places in the Eastern States, in this country, at this time.

The work has its enemies; and it has its friends. I am not unwilling to declare the opinion I have formed, from the general aspect of it, though for the reason already mentioned, I was averse to do so, in connection with the publication. The remarker, in your last week's paper, is not so scrupulous, when he asserts, so decisively that "Such exercises are fit only for such as have set their faces against the order of nature, the happiness of mankind, and the wisdom and dignity of a superintending Providence."

I hope the occasion will excuse a few observations, tending to show why I consider that conclusion, such as I would not choose to hazard, and what few Christians will be disposed to subscribe.

Christians believe, agreeably to the Scriptures, that the Spirit of God is the great agent in the administration of the kingdom of Christ, in the world; and the author of religion in the souls of men. They believe, also, that he can and will "**revive his work**", occasionally, as to him may seem good; and for this they daily pray. That he should do this by awakening the attention of men to the great concern of salvation, "**convincing them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,**" is perfectly conformable to his office, and the rational and Scriptural way of making a willing people.

That such convictions *may* have very strong and sensible effects on the minds, and also on the bodies of men, is agreeable to Scripture examples, and the experience of Christians.

When anything extraordinary, of this kind, appears, and engages the public attention, it is natural to expect, that many will attend, with desire of improvement; many, through curiosity; and some, through contempt. The assembly enlarged, and the work engaging and solemn, would impress an unusual earnestness on all.

When thousands are hungering and crying for instruction, it may *not* be in the discretion of ministers to dismiss the people, till they are willing to separate; and so the meetings will be continued. This seems to have been the process of the work, and some of the causes of it.

From a small beginning, it arose to such an astonishing height, as represented in the letter; and it is not easy to show what is unnatural or pernicious in all this.

To form just ideas, on such a subject, we ought duly to consider the intimate connection, and mutual influence of the soul and body; the strong energies of the passions, the sympathies and social feelings of human nature, which are the active forces of the mind, and which all under the power of Gospel motives, and in the hand of the spirit, when he exerts "**the mighty working of his power, on them that believe.**"

Whoever attends to this, and, at the same time, admits the thought that the objects of attention, on such occasions, are beyond measure, the most important and interesting of any that can possibly engage the human mind; he will not, I think, be disposed to pronounce such things contrary to the order of nature.

It is further to be observed, that neither those great assemblies; nor their continuance, nor the strong effects, which took place on the bodies of so many; were the effects of design or contrivance, in the instruments of the work. They appear to have been involuntary, as well as extraordinary, and to have arisen from special causes. They were not expected to continue; nor considered as characteristic of the ordinary state of religion; but peculiar to such an awakening season, which might be a mean of reforming, and bringing many into the church, and would soon settle in a solid and rational piety, and love of sacred order.

That this is, in reality, the case, is stated by later accounts from the same gentleman. The people confine themselves to their own churches; yet still with a peculiar engagedness in the concerns of religion.

As to the remarkable effects, which he calls being *struck down*, and which, from his description, appears to be a Leipothymia; the fact appears to be indisputable; and it is not unnatural, as is alleged. When we consider (which has frequently taken place) that strong affections, excited by far inferior objects, have induced fainting, syncope, and even death; it will not appear strange that the strong impressions of the infinitely more important and interesting discoveries of the Gospel, should, in such circumstances, have those effects on the body.

It is to be observed on this, also, that it is not considered as an infallible evidence of true religion. They know that nothing can be such, but "*the fruits of the spirit, in all*

righteousness, goodness and truth." Nor is it regarded as an evidence of true conversion, as it is an effect, only on the natural powers, and many may be the subjects of it, who are not reformed, to the obedience of the Gospel, but may continue in error, and strangers to Christ.

It is, however, an evidence of such impressions, as *may*, and often do, issue in *repentance that is unto salvation*, and therefore should not be condemned, as inconsistent with the happiness of mankind.

It was observed before, that this did not appear to be the effect of design or contrivance, and from the information obtained, I do not find that any means have been used, or purpose, to produce it. No artificial groaning, ridiculous leaping, laughing, clapping of hands, crying out, or noisy vociferations, among the people, in the time of public worship; which might deservedly bring reproach on the work.

The surprising aptness, in speaking on religious subjects, may be one of those things, which are thought to be "against the order of nature;" though it is not easy to conceive how it should be "against the happiness of mankind." However surprising this may appear, an acquaintance with human nature may satisfy us, that it is not miraculous.

Very sensible and pungent feelings will make any man an orator. To speak well on subjects which men do not feel, and have little concern in, requires genius and study; but a man, who is in great distress, or the subject of great deliverance, will, on that subject, speak sensibly, naturally, and fluently. "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*"

When the whole soul is engaged on subjects of infinite concern, most sensibly felt, neither ideas, nor forms of expression, will be wanting. Nature in such a case, as in little children, acts freely, without contrivance or embarrassment, and calls forth all the powers of language that are required.

Irregularities of different kinds are objected to the work: and this is not questioned. Candid men will consider the peculiar circumstances of the case, and not condemn it, on account of some things of that nature. It would indeed be as extraordinary as any of the extraordinary things belonging to it, if, among so many thousands, there should not be some who would occasion disorder, and some who, through ignorance, inexperience, caprice, or vanity, would say and do foolish and unreasonable things.

There may be many hypocrites, and unsound professors, whose conduct will be very dishonourable; but will anyone, who understands the Christian religion make this a ground of offence?

The evil one, also, may be expected to be peculiarly busy on such occasions, and tempt to irregularities; which enemies may lay hold of, and magnify, to depreciate the work.

To conclude. As my opinion may be collected from these observations, as brief as I could make them, and in a manner, extorted; I will only add, that, on such subjects, we ought, at this distance, to speak with tenderness, and judge with candour. “Judge nothing prematurely, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God” 1 Corinthians 4:5. Instead of being hasty to condemn it, in the language of the remarker, we ought to improve it, as a call to most serious attention of the all-important subjects of the Gospel; and to pray for its success.

As I did not intend to make any observations on the subject, at first, when I handed to you the original letter; so now I give notice that I will pay no attention to any further remarks which may be made, in this public manner.

I am, Sir, Yours, **John King**. December. 3, 1801.³¹

³¹ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Vol. 3. pages 123 – 126.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCUMENTS representing people who broke away from the Presbyterian Church, forming either new denominations, or making links with Cult-like groups.

B. W. McDonold. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was a mainline denomination which arose out of the Great Revival in Kentucky and Tennessee. Those involved in the creation of this denomination were different from the main Presbyterian body in that they rejected some of the Calvinistic doctrines, and embraced some of the more “Arminian” doctrines preached by the Methodists, which were the key doctrines preached with such success during the Revival.

Also, because of the needs which arose during the Revival, they embraced lesser standards of formal classical and theological education as required in ministerial training than the main Presbyterians were willing to tolerate.

There was also in this new Cumberland body a better defined requirement that ministers should be converted Christians themselves. They judged, whether right or wrong, that when the Revival began, probably half of the Presbyterian ministers who worked in the area were in fact NOT converted. They made this judgement on the basis of what these allegedly unconverted ministers did and said at the time, and by their attitude to the Revival. This same problem had been a major factor in the FIRST Great Awakening, in the times of George

Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards – but in that case the charge of being unconverted had applied to some of the Congregational ministers in Massachusetts, and to certain ministers in the Middle Colonies.

There are several good histories of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The one being used here is by Dr B. W. McDonnold, and is a most interesting volume, published in 1899, when this new denomination was well established.

The map shows that the Cumberland area straddled the boundary of what became Kentucky and Tennessee, when these two states came officially into existence. So, half of it was in Kentucky, and half was in Tennessee.

Chapter One explains what life was like in this area when the white settlers still had to contend with marauding Indians. The moral and spiritual life was difficult in this area because the settlers were more affected by conflict with the British during the Revolutionary War than many other parts of the country, and, when this War finished, the war against Indian tribes continued for a number of years longer. So, a condition of war existed for these settlers for about thirty years, and this contributed to a spiritual decline through the Area.

Chapter Two tells about the way people educated themselves during those years in the Cumberland area without the normal helps of education, books and schools. There were hardly any of either of these. French Infidelity was also a major problem, as in other areas, leading to the view that ninety-five percent of the Cumberland population before 1800 embraced infidel beliefs.

The list of the main Presbyterian ministers and laymen who worked or resides in the Cumberland area, and who opposed the Revival most ardently, were the Rev. Messrs. Balch, Craighead, Bowman, Templin and Donnell, and the layman, Robert King. [Ed.]

McDonnold says:- “The lives of unconverted preachers, elders, and members, make a woeful chapter in the history of this period. Of the church members in this country who, after being in the church for years, finally discovered their ruined condition, and made a profession of religion, there are several names whose prominence in our history justifies their introduction here. They are Richard King, Elder Hutchinson, Robert Guthrie, Samuel McSpeddin, Finis Ewing, together with their wives, and very many others.

The case of Richard King is interesting. He had been educated for the ministry. His father, Robert King, was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, and one of those who opposed the Revival. His brother, Samuel King, was he who made one of the three to organize our first Presbytery. Although “Rich” had been educated for the ministry, he would not preach; but poor Sam, who had no education, when he felt that he was called of God to preach the gospel, would pray, ‘O Lord, send Rich.’”

Men picked out and educated for the ministry, and thrust into the holy office without any conscious internal call to the work, made one of the troubles between Old Side and New Side in 1741. Dr Charles Hodge’s defence of Old Side views on this subject is a chapter which his reputation could easily spare from his writings.

The Rev. Samuel McSpeddin’s testimony about the kind of preaching in the Presbyterian pulpits of that day is given at length in Dr Cossitt’s *Life of Ewing*. The substance of it is that they never said anything to rouse the conscience; that they never discussed the new birth, or any conscious experience of grace; that people who by any means became uneasy about their religious state, and went to their pastors for help, were told that if they had been baptized, and believed that Jesus was the Son of God, they need not trouble themselves about any conscious experience.

McSpeddin and Ewing both are especially severe on Craighead's preaching. Nor are these strictures by Cumberland Presbyterians any more severe than some occasionally found in Davidson's history of his own church. One of Craighead's sayings, handed down by tradition, was, 'I would not give this old handkerchief for all the experimental religion in the world.'

A curious statement is made by the Rev. James McGready, who was a Presbyterian minister in what is now Logan County, Kentucky, about one of the preachers in his own Presbytery. It is that this preacher (the Rev. James Balch) in his sermons ridiculed the doctrines of faith, of repentance, and of regeneration. And although this preacher was eventually brought to trial for his heresies, it was not till he [had] spent years travelling among the churches of Cumberland, where the great revival prevailed, and doing his utmost to oppose the revival and check its progress. Nor were his efforts without success in some places.

The Rev. James McGready had entered the ministry without any religion. God led him to see his ruined condition, and he sought and found conscious salvation. He was then in Pennsylvania, but soon went to North Carolina. His preaching there was as much changed as he was himself. It aroused the conscience; it awakened unconverted church members; it was used of God to promote precious revivals of religion. These revivals in North Carolina were bitterly opposed by some church members, and McGready was fiercely persecuted, even to the extent of endangering his life. There was also there, as there was at a later day in Cumberland, a strong revival party which sympathized with him, and worked heartily in his meetings.

A large number of McGready's North Carolina neighbours moved to Cumberland. Through their solicitations, in 1796, he changed his field of labour, and took charge of these scattered sheep in the wilderness.

There were three small congregations to which he ministered, whose only preaching before his arrival had been from such men as Craighead and Balch. These churches were called Red River, Gasper River, and Muddy River, located in what is now Logan County, Kentucky. It was a strange contrast, these dead preachers and McGready. The result of his introduction into this mass of dead formalism belongs to the next chapter. His churches were located in the country then called Cumberland, but called at a later day the Cumberland and Green River Settlements.³²

THE GREAT REVIVAL.

What share other churches had in the beginning and progress of that work of grace known as the revival of 1800 is not here discussed. Our origin was in the revival in *the Presbyterian Church*. That revival had some very striking antecedents. It began in 1797. The year preceding its beginning was marked beyond all others for official calls to fasting and prayer by presbyteries, synods and the General Assembly – fasting and prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Ohio Presbytery held a monthly fast-day all through the year 1796, to pray for a revival. The Synod of the Carolinas had appointed a Synodical fast-day, in which all its congregations were to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A large number of the congregations in western Pennsylvania had drawn up written covenants to pray for a revival. Accounts of these covenants and their precious fruits were afterwards published in the *Western Missionary Magazine*. It is an item of interest to Cumberland Presbyterians that the very congregations which afterward called for our preaching were

³² B. W. McDonold. Pages 7 – 9.

among those who joined in these solemn covenants to pray for a revival.³³

The General Assembly also appointed a fast-day to be observed in all its churches – repentance, humiliation, and prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit being specially mentioned.

McGready drew up a very solemn covenant for his congregations. Every Saturday evening, every Sunday morning, and one whole Sabbath for each month, for a year, were to be observed as a special season of prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Logan County, Kentucky, and throughout the world. To this covenant he obtained the signatures of his church members.

It was not to sensational evangelists, but to God's Holy Spirit that our spiritual ancestors in the Presbyterian Church looked for deliverance from the triumphant infidelity of the times. Nor did they look in vain.

In Gasper River congregation, at McGready's regular sacramental meeting, in May, 1797, the grand work began. All through the preceding year McGready's church members had been coming to him about their spiritual condition. His preaching had opened their eyes to the fact that they were resting on a false hope.

Finally, one of these – a lady – found the sure Rock, and was so filled with God's Spirit that she could no longer sit silent at home while so many of her friends were in the prison from which she had just escaped. She immediately visited her

neighbours from house to house, and awakened among them a deep interest about their souls.

The next year a more general awakening occurred. After a solemn sacramental service in July, the profound claims of immortality followed the people to their homes. Secular business was forgotten, and men under deep conviction spent the days alone in the woods, weeping and praying.

Groups that met in the houses talked of eternity, and wept together over their ruined condition. Thus for weeks, while there was no public preaching, God's Spirit was at work in the private houses. Godless church members talked together about the startling discoveries which they had made of their unconverted state.

In September, 1798, McGready held his sacramental meeting at Muddy River. God's power was there also. All over the field to which McGready ministered the home work became general. Surpassing anything of the sort in all history was this revival without preaching, without public meetings, without any high pressure methods. The houses and the deep forests of Logan County rang with the prayers of souls in distress. While so many awakened souls were in solemn prayer, it is remarkable that deliverance was to most of them delayed. One who lived among them at that time has left his testimony, that in going from house to house all through McGready's congregation he heard only one theme talked of. If he came upon a group of old people, they were weeping and talking about their souls. If he encountered the young people, either singly or in groups, they were in tears, and spoke only of their soul's salvation.

The next year, 1799, the interest was still deeper, especially in Gasper congregation, but this year more of the burdened souls found salvation. The sacramental meeting was a time of victory for some.

At this meeting began what was considered to some so strange then, though it had often occurred in the revivals of

³³ The information to which Dr McDonnold refers in the *Western Missionary Magazine* does not appear in one place in this newspaper. It appears in tiny fragments scattered through many articles and letters, with little attention to it, much like what is reproduced here in this present book. This monthly *Magazine* was published in 1803 and 1804 only. Information about newspapers published by the Synod of Pittsburgh - see W. McKinney. *Early Pittsburgh Presbyterianism*. page 179.

former generations. Men under overwhelming convictions fell to the floor, and though they were entirely conscious, as they afterwards testified, yet they remained prostrate and motionless for hours. When they rose, it was with the shouts of victory on their tongues.

This strange exercise drew vast crowds to McGready's meetings. A family who had recently moved to Kentucky from North Carolina heard of these strange things, and heard, also, that a sacramental meeting was soon to occur. Not having friends near the place of meeting, they resolved to go in their wagons and camp beside them, as they had done in their journey from North Carolina. This they did. At the next sacramental meeting, their example was followed by several families, and most of the converts of that meeting were the campers. This meeting was at Red River in Kentucky."³⁴

[McDonnold then discusses the question of whether this meeting occurred in 1799 or in 1800. Then he says:-]

An old claim, thoroughly refuted when first published, has been recently revived. It is that the revival in McGready's churches was due to the preaching of the Rev. John McGee, a Methodist. The sole foundation for this claim is that John McGee visited McGready's churches in 1799, and preached in them. McGee himself says his first visit to McGready's churches was in 1799.

But the revival in McGready's churches began in 1797, before McGee moved away from North Carolina, and, at the meeting which McGee visited, it was in full power before he ever took any part.

No one denies that both Methodists and Baptists had grand revivals about this period; but the claim that the particular revival out of which our church sprang originated with the

Methodists has not the shadow of a foundation. Besides all this, John McGee set up no such claim.³⁵

In Chapters Three and Four, McDonnold discusses at some length the question as to whether this revival was a gracious movement of the Holy Spirit, or not. This he considered as necessary because some of the Presbyterian fathers, in General Assembly, began to say that it was not a true movement of the Holy Spirit, because their denomination had, within five years, suffered much damage, arising from what happened in the Cumberland area in particular.

The Presbyterian denomination was obviously hurt because a breakaway Presbyterian denomination got going, disagreeing with the parent body over important doctrines, as well as over the matter of the education of ministers. Also, some of their leading ministers in this revival soon broke away to start schismatic churches, and even got involved in the activities of very questionable cults.

For example, Dr Robert Davidson tried to lay the blame for this injury to the Presbyterian Church, in Kentucky and Tennessee, on the revival. This charge seems very strange because from 1797, when the movement first started, until 1803, at least, the General Assembly issued very favourable reports about the quality of the results which were flowing from the revival - in its Narrative of the State of the Work of God within their bounds.

According to McDonnold, it was another great Presbyterian leader, much more senior also, who made the correct evaluation – the Rev. David Rice. Rice said, "That we had a revival of the spirit and power of Christianity among us, I

³⁴ B. W. McDonnold. Pages 10 – 12.

³⁵ Op cit. page 16 -17.

did, do, and ever shall believe.... but we sadly mismanaged it; we have dashed it down and broken it to pieces.”³⁶

McDonnold observes that the Rev. David Rice visited McGready’s churches during the revival, and in 1803 preached a sermon before his synod in reference to this wonderful work. He then provides us with a long quotation from this sermon by Rice.

The Rev. David Rice says:-

“This revival has made its appearance in various places without any extraordinary means to produce it.... The revival seems to be granted in answer to prayer, and in confirmation of that gracious truth that God has ‘not said to the house of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain,’ when he says he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.

As far as I can see, there appears to be in the subjects of this work a deep, heart-humbling of the great unreasonableness, abominable nature, pernicious effects, and deadly consequences of sin; and the absolute unworthiness in the sinful creature of the smallest crumb of mercy from the hand of a holy God.... Jesus Christ, and him crucified, appears to be the ALL IN ALL to the subjects of this revival and the creature nothing, and less than nothing.

They seem to have a very deep and affecting sense of the worth of precious immortal souls, ardent love to them, and an agonizing concern for their conviction, conversion, and complete salvation.... Neighbours, noted for their vicious and profligate manners, are now as much noted for their piety and good order.

Drunkards, profane swearers, liars, quarrelsome persons, etc. are remarkably reformed... A number of families who had lived apparently without the fear of God, in folly and in vice, without any religious instruction or any proper government, are

³⁶ Op. cit. page 21.

now reduced to order, and are daily joining in the worship of God, reading his word, singing his praises, and offering up their supplications to a Throne of Grace.

Parents who seemed formerly to have little or no regard for the souls of their children, are now anxiously concerned for their salvation, are pleading for them, and endeavouring to lead them to Christ, and train them up in the way of piety and virtue....

The subjects of this work appear to be very sensible of the necessity of consecration, as well as justification, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; to be greatly desirous that they and all that name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity...

Now, I have given you my reasons for concluding the morning is come, and that we are blessed with a real revival of the benign and heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ, which demands our grateful acknowledgement to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”³⁷

[The quotation from David Rice - that the revival had been mismanaged, appeared five years later – in 1808. - Ed.]

Opposition to the Revival from Presbyterian Ministers, Officials, Laymen, and Agencies.

McDonnold says:- “It is hard to be impartial just in writing this chapter. There is no doubt but that the manner in which the Revival was managed gave some just grounds for complaint; neither is there any ground to doubt that most of the complaints made were undeserved. All genuine revivals are

³⁷ Ibid.

committed to human management, and stir up both just and unjust complaints.

Before McGready came to Kentucky his revivals stirred up opposition, even to the extent of threatening the preacher's life. A letter written in blood was sent to him warning him to leave the country.

When, in his Kentucky field, the revival made its appearance, the Rev. Mr. Balch, of McGready's own Presbytery, visited McGready's churches for the special purpose of preaching against the revival, and ridiculing what McGready had taught about faith, repentance, and regeneration. Balch's preaching caused a vast amount of mischief. Nor did he stop with pulpit ministrations, but also visited the converts from house to house ridiculing their experience. Nor was this preacher the only one who opposed the revival. In the same field there were four others who opposed it. They were Craighead, Bowman, Templin and Donnell. Balch made the fifth: - just HALF the Presbyterian preachers in that field. Those who favoured the Revival and worked for it were McGready, Hodge, McGee, McAdow and Rankin.

The opposition was not confined to the ministry. King, with his lancet and camphor, going to minister to a soul seeking salvation, was only a sample of what many a church member was.

Before any other question arose between the two parties this one had split the churches asunder. The Muddy River Church, in Kentucky, divided, and the revival party formed a new church called Liberty.

In 1801, the difficulty on this account in the Shiloh [Desha] congregation, Sumner County, Tennessee, was brought before the Presbytery. It had, of course, occurred before that date. The same year the revival party of the Spring Creek church, in Wilson County, Tennessee, having been for a considerable time being locked out of the meeting house,

withdrew and built them another house, which they called Bethesda. This church still exists.

The Gasper church, in Logan County, Kentucky, was closed against the revival party, and for years they held their meetings in the grove near the church. At a later date they built at Pilot Knob, in Simpson County. Their meeting place was in the grove when the Commission met at the church. This explains what Dr Davidson says about Mr. Rankin addressing the people in the grove while the Commission were at Gasper.

The Red River church, in Logan County, Kentucky, was locked against the revival party, and McGready stood on the doorsteps and preached. One day while he or another revival preacher stood there gesticulating violently, a backward stroke broke the lock, and the house was never locked against the revival party afterwards.

There were several cases in which this opposition to the revival amounted to personal violence. The Calhoun MSS give an account of one man who used a stick to enforce his views. The McAdow papers make several allusions to this personal violence. So do the Kirkpatrick MSS. In this opposition the infidels and church members made common cause.

A very wicked man saw his wife go to the mourner's bench. In a rage he rushed to the place and dragged her away, cursing the revival as he went. While he was on his way to her horse a tree fell on him and killed him. The corpse was brought back to the shelter, and then and there McGready preached the poor sinner's funeral sermon. This was at Shiloh.

Opposition to revivals *per se* is an exotic plant in Presbyterian gardens. Its importation began in the Established Church of Scotland, when State authorities thrust unconverted men into the pastorates. We have already seen that unconverted preachers were common in McGready's day, according to the judgment of their contemporaries. Such men are generally opposed to revivals *per se*.

But a far better class of Presbyterians have always opposed “revival measures.” All honest hyper-Calvinists are logically opposed to such things. A recent writer in *The Southern Presbyterian Quarterly*, in arguing against our modern revivals, puts ultra-Calvinism in its legitimate expression when he says: “In the conversion and sanctification of the elect, the Almighty appoints a bound, and there is no margin for improvement... A faithful proclamation of the glad tidings is all the machinery that is needed in the salvation of those who are ordained to eternal life.” The same writer declares his conviction that all the modern revivals have been a disadvantage to the churches.

There were in 1800 many rigid notions among the churches which seem strange to us now. Singing hymns instead of psalms was one of McGready’s offenses. The day for oppositions to fire-places and stoves in church was gone, but other things as unreasonable still hold sway among the descendants of the Covenanters. Night meetings were considered scandalous. In the catalogue of “new measures” which the “Old Side” party objected to, were protracted meetings, night meetings, calling in other ministers to aid in meetings, inquiry meetings, propositions calling for action of any kind, weeping in the pulpit, great fervour in exhortation, itinerant preachers, evangelists both lay and clerical, singing hymns, all noise – shouting, groaning, or crying out for mercy; to all of which was added another long list after camp-meetings and the mourner’s bench came into use. The Presbyterian Church was at first divided about half and half on these questions, but the Old Side party today is everywhere in the minority.

The Old Side included the best pens of the church from 1740 to 1800. Some of Dr Miller’s complaints against the revivals in which these new measures were used are very severe, but scarcely less so than Dr Hodge’s.

There were in 1800 many ministers who believed the revival was genuine, but objected to many of the methods used, and objected to such an extent that they were often classed with the anti-revival party. David Rice was one of this class. It was new measures which many good men conscientiously opposed. The revival preachers of the Presbyterian Church, all the better class of them, admitted the necessity of caution in times of great popular excitement, and acknowledged the worthlessness of man-made revivals; but they said as God uses human beings in all genuine revivals, so will there always be human imperfections accompanying them. They illustrated the constants and the variables of Christianity by the art of printing. The truth was a constant, printing a variable, and not mentioned in Scripture; yet by its use the unchangeable truth could be carried to many who would never see a copy of the Bible by the old method. There is but one way of salvation, but the agencies by which that way may be taught and impressed are multiplying and improving every year.

The mourner’s bench is one of the variables. The advocates of the new measures presented strong arguments in its favour, such as these:- It commits the sinner publicly to seeking salvation; it touches the hearts of his comrades; it enlists the prayers of Christians for him; it mortifies his stubborn pride. But the mourner’s bench has been abused. Perhaps other methods are to take its place.

As for itinerant preaching it is wilful blindness to call it a new measure. Christ and his disciples used it, and the Commission was “go” – not “stay.”

The New Side showed that the revival on the Day of Pentecost was one of excitement and noise, so much so that men said the disciples were drunk; and yet that great revival neither destroyed nor hindered the ordinary services, but souls were “daily added” to the church after the meeting. There was new life in those ordinary regular services. There was a consecration

of men and money to Jesus far beyond what the ordinary services produced.

Then they turned the tables on the objectors. They showed what a routine of stagnation and death the ordinary services had reached before every one of the great revival periods. Men were taken into the church without conversion; unconverted men were taken into the ministry; infidelity, too, crept in under this cloak of lifeless forms; and vast multitudes were sweeping away to hell under a godless ministry.

If Dr Miller's ninth letter is appalling, the answers to it are still more so. One of the writers (himself a Presbyterian) asks: "Are any of these able men who are writing against the way we are conducting our revivals themselves experts in revivals? Do any single one of them ever have a revival, either genuine or spurious, under his ministry?"

We are successful watch-makers. We have sent out thousands of good time-pieces, none of them faultless, but all serviceable. Up yonder in the College observatory is an able astronomer, and he sets himself to writing against our watches, and denouncing them for that lack of ideal perfection which, from his mathematical training, he sees in them. We ask him, Sir, did you ever make a watch?

There is a history by Dr Robert Henderson, quoted in the McMullin MS., which seems in place here. Dr Blackburn was holding a revival meeting on the New Side programme. Dr Henderson, who was Old Side, and had no patience with Dr Blackburn's meeting, was present. So he gathered a part of Dr Blackburn's congregation into another house, and held an *orderly* meeting for them. Although some of Dr Blackburn's most excitable followers were present, yet there was no noise or confusion of any sort in Dr Henderson's meeting. It also comes out, incidentally, that there were no conversions there.

In 1852 an earnest Methodist was holding a revival meeting in the church just opposite a great Catholic Church in

Philadelphia. Day and night for a hundred days the meeting swept on like a tempest. Finally the priest called upon the Methodist preacher and inquired if there was no way" to have a stop put to that nuisance." The answer was, "Nothing easier, Sir; you just come and preach in my pulpit, and all the noise will stop." No doubt Dr Henderson could produce order out of Dr Blackburn's excitable materials, but Dr Blackburn had thousands of seals to his ministry which the other person did not have."

Dr McDonnold's chapter then enlarges to speak of the attacks made upon his own denomination – the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, by members of the larger and older Presbyterian Church, from which they had broken away.³⁸

Richard McNemar.

Cane Ridge, and the Steps Leading to it.

The Rev. Richard McNemar was a talented Presbyterian minister in Kentucky in 1800. As time passed, he became involved in break-away movements from the Presbyterian Church, along with the Rev. Barton W. Stone and others. In McNemar's case, he eventually became involved with the Shakers, who were a cult-like church which had begun its history in the eastern States of America, and who reached out to include Kentucky people from the Great Revival where they could. In this quotation, we have McNemar's account of the Revival, before he met the Shakers. [Ed.]

³⁸ McDonnold. pages 39 – 44.

**Of the First Appearances of the Extraordinary Work,
in Different Parts of Kentucky, in 1800 and 1801.**

The first extraordinary appearances of the power of God, in the late revival, began about the close of the last century, in Logan and Christian counties, on the waters of the Gasper and Red rivers. And in the spring of 1801 the same extraordinary work broke out in Madison county, upper part of Kentucky; of which I was an eye-witness; and can, therefore, with greater confidence testify what I have heard, seen and felt.

It first began in individuals, who had been under deep convictions of sin, and great trouble about their souls; and had fasted and prayed, and diligently searched the Scriptures; and had undergone distresses of mind inexpressibly sore, until they had obtained a comfortable hope of salvation. And from seeing and feeling the love of Christ, and his willingness to save all that would forsake their sins, and turn to God through him; and feeling how freely his love and goodness flowed to them; it kindled their love to other souls that were lost in their sins., and an ardent love that they might come and partake of that spiritual light, life and comfort, which appeared infinite in its nature, and free to all. And under such an overpowering weight of the divine goodness as tongue could not express, they were constrained to cry out, with tears and trembling, and testify a full and free salvation in Christ for all that would come; and to warn their fellow-creatures of the danger of continuing in sin, and entreating them in the most tender and affectionate manner, to turn from it, and seek the Lord, in sure and certain hope that he will be found.

Under such exhortations the people began to be affected in a very strange manner. At first they were taken with an inward throbbing of heart; then with weeping and trembling; from that to crying out, in apparent agony of soul; falling down and swooning away, till every appearance of animal life was

suspended and the person appeared to be in a trance. From this state they would recover under different sensations, which will be more particularly noticed hereafter.

The following extract of a letter, dated Cambridge, January 30, 1801, gives a striking account of the work, as it first appeared, in the lower parts of Kentucky, and Cumberland.

“The work is still increasing in Cumberland; it has overspread the whole country. It is in Nashville, Barren, Muddy, Gasper, Redbanks, Knoxville, &c.

J. M. C. has been there two months; he says it exceeds any he ever saw or heard of. Children and all seem to be engaged; but children are the most active in the work. When they speak, it appears that the Lord sends his Spirit, to accompany it with power to the hearts of sinners. They all seem to be wrought in an extraordinary way; lie as though they were dead for some time, without pulse or breath; some longer, some shorter time. Some rise with joy and triumph; others crying for mercy. As soon as they get comfort, they cry to sinners, exhorting day and night, to turn unto the Lord.

P. H.”

It is worthy of notice, that a work by which God intended to bring down the pride and loftiness of man, should begin in small children. By this it is manifest who was the furthest lost from God, and what course must be taken in order to return.

At a sacrament, near Flemingsburgh, the last Sabbath in April, the power of God was very visible among the people through the whole of the occasion; under which there was much weeping, trembling, and convulsion of soul: But what was the most solemn and striking, was the case of two little girls, who, in the time of meeting, cried out in great distress. They both

continued for some time praying and crying for mercy, till one of them received a comfortable hope, and then turning to the other, cried out: 'Oh, you little sinner, come to Christ! Take hold of his promise! Trust in him! He is able to save to the uttermost! Oh! I have found peace to my soul! Oh! The precious Saviour! Come just as you are! He will take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh! You can't make yourself any better! – just give up your heart to Christ now! You are not a greater sinner than me! You need not wait another moment!'

Thus she continued exhorting, until her little companion received a ray from heaven that produced a sudden and sensible change; then rising with her in her arms, she cried out in a most affecting manner: 'Oh! Here is another star of light!' These children were perhaps nine or ten years old.

The Sabbath following, about twenty persons were struck in the congregation of Cabin Creek, Mason county. Among the first who cried out, in distress, was a girl about twelve years old. Their convictions of their lost estate (from a sudden opening of that pure holiness, to which sin stands directly opposed) were quick as the lightning's flash, and came with such weight, that had they not, in some way or other, opened their case, they must have sunk into the horrors of despair. It was dire necessity which at first obliged them to expose themselves to public view as objects of pity; for everything of the kind was looked upon by the generality, even of professors, as wild enthusiasm, or the fruits of a disordered brain.

There were, however, a few who understood the disorder, and were ready to fly to their relief, and proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

And here a new scene was opened. While some trembled like one in a fit of the ague, wept, or cried out,

lamenting their distance from God, and exposedness to his wrath, others were employed in praying for them, encouraging them to believe on the Son of God, to venture upon his promise, give up their wicked, rebellious heart, just as it was, for God to take it away, and give them a heart of flesh; singing hymns, and giving thanks to God for the display of his power, without any regard for former rules of order.

At this some were offended, and withdrew from the assembly, determined to oppose it as a work of the wicked one. But all their objections tended to open the way for the true nature of the work to shine out, and encourage the subjects of it to set out with warmer zeal to promote it. Accordingly, a meeting was appointed a few evenings after, to which a crowd of awakened souls flocked, and spent the whole night in singing hymns, praying, and exhorting one another, &c. At this meeting one man was struck down, and lay for about an hour in the situation above mentioned.

This put the matter beyond dispute, that the work was supernatural; and the outcry which it raised against sin, confirmed a number in the belief that it was from above.

From small beginnings it gradually spread. The news of these strange operations flew abroad, and attracted many to come and see, who were convinced, not only from seeing and hearing, but feeling; and carried home the testimony that it was the living work of God.

This stirred up others, and brought out still greater multitudes. And these strange exercises still increasing, and having no respect to any hours of worship, it was found expedient to encamp on the ground, and continue the meeting day and night.

To these encampments the people flocked, in hundreds and thousands; on foot, on horseback, and in wagons and other carriages.

At first appearance these meetings exhibited nothing to the spectator but a scene of confusion that could scarce be put into human language. They were generally opened with a sermon, near the close of which there would be an unusual outcry; some bursting forth into loud ejaculations of prayer, or thanksgiving, for the truth; others breaking out in emphatic sentences of exhortation.; others flying to their careless friends with tears of compassion, beseeching them to turn to the Lord; some struck with terror, and hastening through the crowd to make their escape, or pulling away their relations; others trembling, weeping, crying out for the Lord Jesus to have mercy upon them, fainting and swooning away, till every appearance of life was gone, and the extremities of the body assumed the coldness of a dead corpse; others surrounding them with melodious songs, or fervent prayers for their happy resurrection in the love of Christ; others collecting into circles around this variegated scene, contending with arguments for and against.

And under such appearances the work would continue for several days and nights together.

I shall now mention particularly some of the first meetings of this kind, with a few concomitant circumstances, from which the work took a general spread, in the year 1801.

The first was held at Cabin Creek. It began on the 22nd of May, and continued four days and three nights. The scene was awful beyond description; the falling, crying out, praying, exhorting, singing, shouting, &c., exhibited such new, and striking evidences of a supernatural power, that few, if any, could escape without being affected. Such as tried to run from it, were frequently struck on the way, or impelled, by some alarming signal to return; and so powerful was the evidence on all sides, that no place was found for the obstinate sinner to shelter himself, but under the protection of prejudiced and bigoted professors.

No circumstance at this meeting, appeared more striking, than the great numbers that fell on the third night: and to prevent them being trodden underfoot by the multitude, they were collected together, and laid out in order, on two squares of the meeting-house; which, like so many dead corpses, covered a considerable part of the floor. There were persons at this meeting from Caneridge, Concord, Eagle-Creek, and other neighbouring congregations, who partook of the spirit of the work, which was a particular means of its spreading.

The next general camp-meeting, was held at Concord, in the county of Bourbon, about the last of May, or beginning of June. The number of people was supposed to be about 4,000 who attended on this occasion. There were present seven Presbyterian ministers; four of whom were opposed to the work, and spoke against it until the fourth day about noon; the evidence was then so powerful that they all professed to be convinced, that it was the work of God; and one of them addressed the assembly with tears, acknowledging, that notwithstanding they had been praying to the Lord, to pour out his spirit, yet when it came they did not know it; but wickedly opposed the answer to their own prayers. On this occasion, no sex or colour, class or description, were exempted from the pervading influence of the Spirit; even from the age of eight months, to sixty years, there were evident subjects of this marvellous operation.

The meeting continued five days, and four nights; and after the people generally scattered from the ground, numbers convened in different places, and continued the exercise longer. And even where they were not collected together, these wonderful operations continued among every class of people, and in every situation; in their houses and fields, and in their daily employment, falling down and crying out, under conviction, or singing and shouting with unspeakable joy, were

so common that the whole country round about, seemed to be leavened with the spirit of the work.

The next camp-meeting was at Eagle-Creek, Adams County, Ohio. It began June 5, and continued four days and three nights. The number of people there was not so great, as the country was new; but the work was equally powerful, according to the number. At this meeting, the principal leading characters in that place, fully embraced the spirit of the work, which laid a permanent foundation, for its continuance and spread, in that quarter.

The next general meeting was at Pleasant Point, Kentucky, which equalled, if not surpassed, any that had been before. Here, the Christian minster, (so called,) the common professor, the professed deist, and debauchee, were forced to take one common lot among the wounded, and confess, with equal candour, that hitherto they had been total strangers to the religion of Jesus. From this meeting, the work was spread extensively through Bourbon, Fayette, and other neighbouring counties; and was carried by a number of its subjects, to the south side of Kentucky, where it found a permanent residence in the hearts of many.

The general meeting at Indian Creek, Harrison county, began the 24th of July, and continued about five days and nights. To this meeting, the subjects of the work were generally collected from all quarters; and abundantly strengthened each other in the promiscuous exercises of prayer, exhortation, singing, shouting, and leaping for joy; but there was very little appearance of that power which strikes conviction to the heart of the sinner, until the third day, about two o'clock in the afternoon: a boy, from appearance about twelve years old, retired from the stand in time of preaching, under a very extraordinary impression; and having mounted a log, at some distance, and raising his voice, in a very affecting manner, he attracted the main body of the people, in a few minutes. With

tears streaming from his eyes, he cried aloud to the wicked, warning them of their danger, denouncing their certain doom, if they persisted in their sins; expressing his love to their souls, and desire that they would turn to the Lord, and be saved. He was held up by two men, and spoke for about an hour, with that convincing eloquence that could be inspired only from above.

When his strength seemed quite exhausted, and language failed to describe the feelings of his soul, he raised his hand, and dropping his handkerchief, wet with sweat from his little face, cried out: 'Thus! O sinner! Shall you drop into hell, unless you forsake your sins and turn to the Lord!' At that moment some fell, like those who are shot in battle, and the work spread in a manner which human language cannot describe.

The next general meeting was at Caneridge, Bourbon county, seven miles from Paris. It began the 6th of August, and continued, day and night, about a week. The number of people collected on the ground, at once, was supposed to be about twenty thousand; but it was thought a much greater number were there in the course of the meeting. The encampment consisted of one hundred and thirty-five wheeled carriages, and tents proportioned to the people.

This immense group included almost every character that could be named; but amidst them all, the subjects of this new and strange operation were distinguished, by their flaming zeal for the destruction of sin, and the deliverance of souls from its power. The various operations and exercises on that occasion were indescribable. The falling exercise was the most noted. James Crawford, one of the oldest ministers in the State, and one of the foremost in the work, informed me that he kept as accurate account as he could of the number that fell on the occasion, and computed it to be about three thousand. The vast numbers who received light, on this occasion, and went forth in every direction to spread it, render it impossible to pursue any further the particular track of its progress. I shall only add that

it was but a few weeks after this meeting that the same work broke out in North Carolina, by the instrumentality of some who went from Caneridge to bear the testimony.

I shall now take notice of the opposition, which was raised against the work, in this first stage of it; and show some of the causes from which it sprang.

The people among whom the revival began, were generally Calvinists; and although they had been long praying in words, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and believed that God has 'fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass,' yet, when it came to pass that their prayer was answered, and the Spirit began to flow like many waters, from a cloud of witnesses; and souls were convicted of sin, and cried for mercy, and found hope and comfort in the news of a Saviour; they rose up and quarrelled with the work, because it did not come to pass that the subjects of it were willing to adopt their soul-stupefying creed. Those who had laboured and travailed, to gain some solid hope of salvation; and had ventured their souls upon the covenant of promise; and had felt the living seal of eternal love; could not, dare not preach, that salvation was restricted to a certain definite number; nor insinuate, that any being that God had made, was, by the Creator, laid under the dire necessity of being damned for ever.

The love of a Saviour constrained them to testify, that one had died for all. This truth so essential in the first ray of hope in the human breast, was like a dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary, to the Calvinist: hence all the trembling, weeping and groaning under sin, rejoicing in the hope of deliverance, and turning from the former practice of it, sent forth a disagreeable savour.

Yet these exercises would no doubt have passed for a good work of God, had they appeared as seals to their doctrine of election, imperfection, and final perseverance. But everything appeared new and to claim no relation to the old bed

of sand upon which they had been building: and rather than quit the old foundation, they chose to reject, oppose and persecute the truth, although accompanied with all that evidence, which many of them were obliged to acknowledge was Divine.

Some who were inwardly opposed, at first exercised forbearance, and professed a measure of union with the work; in hopes that it would die away like former revivals, and the people would return into their old order. But as they perceived that it increased, they laid aside the mask, and came out with a bold testimony against it, as a dangerous delusion.

In some of the churches, there were days set apart for fasting and prayer, to deprecate Divine displeasure; through which they supposed it was sent upon the land.

These public testimonies against the work, particularly by ministers, were the means of stirring up and encouraging those who were openly wicked to come forth to mock, to oppose and persecute; but even such, were often unable to withstand the power; and sometimes in the very act of persecuting and afflicting, were struck down like men in battle; and so alarming was the sight, that others, on foot or on horseback, would try to make their escape and flee away, like those who are closely pursued by an enemy in time of war, and be overtaken by the invisible power, under which they would be struck down and constrained to cry out in anguish, and confess their wickedness in persecuting the work of God, and warn others not to oppose.

Thus many who were openly profane, were taken in the very act of persecuting the work; and, like Saul of Tarsus, made the happy subjects and zealous promoters of it; while bigoted

professors, who had hissed them on, remained *like the heath in the desert, that seeth not when good cometh*.³⁹

Extract of a letter from the Rev. Mr. Richard McNamar, dated Cabin Creek, Kentucky, March 22, 1801, to his friend at Washington, Kentucky.

Dear Friend and Brother,

I send this hasty information, that you may early share in the feelings of my heart. The master is come indeed, to our almost hopeless gospel-ridden congregation; to relate the particular operations of his hand at this early stage of the business, I cannot fully.

On last Thursday, he singled out a poor youth, in whom he fixed the arrows of conviction with peculiar sharpness. – There was evidently, a breathing of the blessed spirit, and a shaking among the dry bones, with many tears. We met again at candle-light; and through the exercises of society, the same hopeful appearances continued: Yesterday we met for sermon, and the Lord was among us, of a truth; my feelings I dare not describe, for fear of the rising idol, self. O! to lose sight of everything but Jesus Christ, and him crucified! O to arrive at the full assurance of understanding of the mysteries of God, and the Father, and of Christ! of sinners brought back to the favour and love of God; made heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; not by works of righteousness, but by the renewing of the holy ghost, and the sprinkling of the blood once shed for sins.

O the blindness of men! To make that way crooked, which is strait, and the way to heaven hard; because it is easy.

³⁹ Richard McNemar. *The Kentucky Revival and Shakerism: or, a Short History of the Late Extraordinary Outpouring of the Spirit of God in the Western States of America*. Reprinted in New York. 1846.

The entire Chapter Two. Or pages 19 – 28.

Lift up your hands that hang down, let your fearful heart be strong; cry aloud and spare not, the Lord is at hand, and verily he is a God that heareth prayer.

Tell our dear friends in Washington, to arise, and trim their lamps. Behold the bridegroom cometh! My love be with you, and all that love our blessed Lord Jesus, in sincerity. Brethren, pray for us.⁴⁰

BARTON W. STONE.

“Things moved on quietly in my congregations, and in the country generally. Apathy in religious societies appeared everywhere to an alarming degree. Not only the power of religion had disappeared, but also the very form of it was waning fast away, and continued so till the beginning of the present century. Having heard of a remarkable religious excitement in the south of Kentucky, and in Tennessee, under the labours of James McGready and other Presbyterian ministers, I was very anxious to be among them, and early in the spring of 1801 went there to attend a camp-meeting.

There, on the edge of a prairie in Logan County, Kentucky, the multitudes came together, and continued a number of days and nights encamped on the ground, during which time worship was carried on in some part of the encampment. The scene to me was new and passing strange. It baffled description. Many, very many, fell down, as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparent breathless and motionless state – sometimes for a few moments reviving, and exhibiting symptoms of life by a deep groan, or piercing shriek, or by a prayer for mercy most fervently uttered.

After lying thus for hours, they obtained deliverance. The gloomy cloud, which had covered their faces, seemed

⁴⁰ Woodward. *Increase of Piety*. pages 97-98.

gradually and visibly to disappear, and hope in smiles brightened into joy – they would rise shouting deliverance, and then would address the surrounding multitude in language truly eloquent and impressive. With astonishment did I hear men, women and children declaring the wonderful works of God, and the glorious mysteries of the gospel. Their appeals were solemn, heart-penetrating, bold and free. Under such addresses many others would fall down into the same state from which the speakers had just been delivered.

Two or three of my particular acquaintances from a distance were struck down. I sat patiently by one of them, whom I knew to be a careless sinner, for hours, and observed with critical attention everything that passed from the beginning to the end. I noticed the momentary revivings as from death, the humble confession of sins, the fervent prayer, and the ultimate deliverance: then the solemn thanks and praise to God, the affectionate exhortation to companions and to the people around to repent and come to Jesus. I was astonished at the knowledge of gospel truth displayed in the address. The effect was that several sank down into the same appearance of death.

After attending to many such cases, my conviction was complete that it was a good work – the work of God; nor has my mind wavered since on that subject. Much did I then see, and much have I seen since, that I considered to be fanaticism; but this should not condemn the work. The devil has always tried to ape the works of God to bring them into disrepute. But that cannot be a Satanic work which brings men to humble confession and forsaking of sin, fervent praise and thanksgiving, and to sincere and affectionate exhortations to sinners to repent and go to Jesus the Saviour.

I am always hurt to hear people speak lightly of this work. I always think they speak of what they know nothing about. Should everything bearing the impress of imperfection

be blasphemously rejected, who amongst us at this time could stand? But more on this subject hereafter.

The meeting being closed, I returned with ardent spirits to my congregations. I reached my appointment at Cane Ridge on Lord's Day. Multitudes had collected, anxious to hear the religious news of the meeting I had attended in Logan. I ascended the pulpit, and gave a relation of what I had seen and heard; then opened my Bible and preached from these words: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." On the universality of the gospel, and faith as the condition of salvation, I principally dwelt, and urged the sinner to believe now and be saved. I laboured to remove their pleas and objections, nor was it labour in vain. The congregation was affected with awful solemnity, and many returned home weeping. Having left appointments to preach in the congregation within a few days, I hurried over to Concord to preach at night.

At our night meeting at Concord, two little girls were struck down under the preaching of the Word, and in every respect were exercised as those were in the south of Kentucky, as already described. Their addresses made deep impressions on the congregation. On the next day I returned to Cane Ridge, and attended my appointment at William Maxwell's. I soon heard of the good effects of the meeting on the Sunday before. Many were solemnly involved in seeking salvation, and some had found the Lord, and were rejoicing in Him. Among these last was my particular friend, Nathaniel Rogers, a man of first respectability and influence in the neighbourhood.

Just as I arrived at the gate, my friend Rogers and his lady came up; as soon as he saw me, he shouted aloud the praises of God. We hurried into each other's embrace, he still praising the Lord aloud. The crowd left the house and hurried to this novel scene. In less than twenty minutes scores had

fallen to the ground. Paleness, trembling, and anxiety appeared in all; some attempting to fly from the scene panic-stricken, but they either fell or returned immediately to the crowd, as unable to get away.

In the midst of this exercise, an intelligent deist in the neighbourhood stepped up to me and said: “Mr. Stone, I always thought before that you were an honest man, but now I am convinced you are deceiving the people.” I viewed him with pity, and mildly spoke a few words to him; immediately he fell as a dead man, and rose no more till he confessed the Saviour.

The meeting continued on that spot in the open air till late at night and many found peace in glorification of the Lord.

The effects of this meeting through the country were like fire in dry stubble driven by a strong wind. All felt its influence more or less. Soon after we had a protracted meeting at Concord. The whole country appeared in motion to the place, and multitudes of all denominations attended. All seemed heartily to unite in the work and in Christian love. Party spirit, abashed, shrunk away. To give a true description of this meeting cannot be done; it would border on the marvellous. It continued five days and nights without ceasing. Many, very many, will through eternity remember it with thanksgiving and praise.

On the 2d of July, 1801, I was married to Elizabeth Campbell, daughter of Col. William Campbell... We hurried up from Muhlenburg, where her mother lived, to be in readiness for a great meeting, to commence at Cane Ridge shortly after. This memorable meeting came on Thursday or Friday before the third Lord’s Day in August, 1801. The roads were literally crowded with wagons, carriages, horsemen and footmen moving to the solemn camp. The sight was affecting. It was judged, by military men on the ground, that there were between twenty and thirty thousand collected. Four or five preachers were frequently speaking at the same time, in different parts of the

encampment, without confusion. The Methodist and Baptist preachers aided in the work, and all appeared cordially united in it – of one mind and one soul, and the salvation of sinners seemed to be the great object of all. We all engaged in singing the same songs of praise – all united in prayer – all preached the same things – free salvation urged upon all by faith and repentance. A particular description of this meeting would fill a large volume, and then the half would not be told. The numbers converted will be known only in eternity.

Many things transpired there which were so much like miracles that, if they were not, they had the same effect as miracles on infidels and unbelievers; for many of them were by these convinced that Jesus was the Christ, and bowed in submission to him. This meeting continued six or seven days and nights, and would have continued longer, but provisions for such a multitude failed in the neighbourhood.

To this meeting many had come from Ohio and other distant parts, who returned home and diffused the same spirit in their neighbourhoods, and the same works followed. So low had religion sunk, and such carelessness universally had prevailed that I have thought that nothing common could have arrested the attention of the world; therefore these uncommon agitations were sent for this purpose. However, this was their effect upon the community. As I have seen no history of these bodily agitations of that day, but from the pens of enemies or scorners, and as I have been an eye and ear witness of them from the beginning, and am now over three score and ten years of age, on the brink of eternity, into which almost all of the old witnesses have entered, therefore I will endeavour to give a description of them in a distinct chapter, for your information.”⁴¹

⁴¹ “The Autobiography of Barton W. Stone.” contained in James R. Rogers. *The Cane Ridge Meeting House*. To which is appended the Autobiography

[The material in Stone's description of the exercises is available to the reader in the section from J. B. McFerrin's book on the *History of Methodism in Tennessee*, in chapter six of this present book.]

Biography of David Purviance.

The Spring of 1801, witnessed a very remarkable religious excitement, which took place in Kentucky, known by the name of the "Great Revival." Mr. Purviance had professed religion in the state of North Carolina, when about the age of twenty, and was at this time a Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church. He drank deeply into the spirit of the reformation, and received a license from the Presbytery to exhort. He was elected to the Legislature that summer, and served the next winter; but his mind and heart were very much in the reformation, and frequently, during the session, he obtained liberty of absence, on the afternoon of Saturday, and rode home the same evening, some forty miles, and met the congregation on the Lord's Day, and enjoyed himself well.

When this session had closed, he placed himself under the care of the Presbytery, and became a candidate for the ministry. And as the constitution of Kentucky will not admit a minister of the Gospel to a seat in the legislative councils, he was never after a candidate for political promotion in that state.

At the next sitting of the Presbytery, according to custom he was called on to deliver a trial sermon. He readily complied, but it was not very well received. There was a little too much liberality, and free salvation in it, to suit the sticklers for Calvinistic orthodoxy. He was then examined on the

principles and doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It was soon ascertained, that he would not fully subscribe to the faith of this creed. Consequently, he was continued on probation.

While he was thus held in suspense, a charge was brought against Richard McNamer, a very talented and influential minister, for preaching doctrines contrary to their creed. He first appeared before the Washington Presbytery of Ohio; from this his case was carried up to the Synod at Lexington, Kentucky. McNamer was willing to have all the doctrines he had preached tested by the Word of God; but this was out of the question, for they had "a law," and by this law he must be tried, and it was well known, that by it he would be condemned.

There were four other preachers present, who believed, and preached the same doctrine, that he was charged with preaching. These were Barton W. Stone, John Dunlavy, John Thompson, and Robert Marshall. They very well knew, that if he was excommunicated, they would share the same fate. These five brethren, during a short recess of the Synod, drew up a protest against the proceedings in McNamer's case, and declared their independence, and withdrew from the Synod.

This protest was immediately presented to the Synod. The Synod immediately issued its bull of excommunication against them, and declared their congregations vacant.

But the dissenters argued, that the act of Synod, in this case, could have no avail, as they had formally withdrawn. There were no charges, even preferred, against four of the brethren, before they withdrew themselves. They further insisted that if their ministerial office was vacant by this act of the Synod, that there was no authority in the Protestant Churches; for Luther was expelled by the Pope of Rome, after he had withdrawn, and there were charges preferred against him before he withdrew.

of Barton W. Stone, and a Sketch of David Purviance. Cincinnati. Standard Publishing Company. 1910. pages 153 – 158.

These five brethren immediately formed themselves into a separate organization, and called it the Springfield Presbytery.

David Purviance immediately withdrew, by letter, from the Presbytery, under whose care he had placed himself, and forthwith became a member of the newly organized Springfield Presbytery, and was, by this body, immediately set forward to the work of the ministry.

The Dissenters returned to the churches of their charge, and laid the whole circumstance of their withdrawal before them.

This caused quite an excitement among the churches, but a majority adhered to their former pastors, and united with the Dissenters

By this time, some of the Presbyterian preachers began, publicly and privately, to oppose the great revival; this, with the excitement, on the subject of the late secession, caused something of a declension in the work, especially in the Presbyterian Churches. The Dissenters went on boldly, publishing and teaching the doctrine they had been charged with teaching – viz. – “That God loved the world, and gave His well-beloved Son to die, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life, - That Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.” And “that there was no partiality with God. That the provisions of the Gospel were full and free provided for all mankind indiscriminately. That if sinners were lost, it was not because God had decreed it, but because they would not come to Him, that they might have life.”

This doctrine was almost universally received by those who were in the spirit of the reformation. It also had a glorious effect, in removing the unbelief of mankind. They were taught that they had the power and facility of acting faith, and were exhorted to believe with all their hearts, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be saved. They were also clearly shown that the doctrine they had been taught from infancy, - viz. –

That it was as impossible for man to believe, as to make a world, was not a doctrine of the Bible.

McNamer, Dunlavy and Thompson were in Ohio; Stone, Marshall and Purviance were in Kentucky. And the good work of reformation went on. But before one year had rolled away, they began to discover, that they had taken a sectarian stand, and saw clearly, that it would lead to a party spirit as well as practice. This they believed to be wrong, and calculated in its nature, to retard the progress of reformation.

They therefore, unanimously agreed, to renounce their former name, with all man-made creeds, and acknowledge no name but that given to the disciples at Antioch (Christians), and no creed but the Bible.

They then wrote and published what they called “The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.”⁴²

A Sketch of the Great Kentucky Revival.

By Levi Purviance.

Nominal State of the Church. United Efforts. The Good Effects. W. Rogers’s Testimony. Labours of Jas. McGrady. Concord Meeting. Point Pleasant.

CANE-RIDGE

The Good effects of the work. Obstructed by a Sectarian Spirit. A Description. Falling Exercises. Jerks. The Writer’s testimony and Remarks.

⁴² Levi Purviance. *The Biography of David Purviance*. Etc., etc. Written by himself: with an appendix giving biographical sketches of [nine other preachers], together with a Historical Sketch of the Great Kentucky Revival. Dayton. Published for the Author by B.F. and G.W. Ells. 1848. (1940 edition, published with additional material.) pages 39 – 41.

I have lately read the Biography of Elder Barton. W. Stone. In his *Journal*, written by himself, he has given an account of the GREAT REVIVAL of religion that took place in the beginning of the 19th century. I also find that good man's views ridiculed, and his judgment treated with contempt. I was young at that time (in my 11th year), but being an eye-witness of these things, I feel myself competent to give evidence in the case. I believe the statements made by Bro. Stone to be correct, and his opinion worthy of respect.

Since the writer prepared a few historical sketches of this great revival for publication, he has read an article on the same subject, worthy of notice, from the pen of Brother William Rogers, of Cane Ridge, which he here inserts, by way of introduction to his own remarks:-

“About the close of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, the more pious of the clergy, and members of the churches of the respective religious denominations in Kentucky, beheld with emotions of useful and unfeigned regret, the moral desolations which prevailed in their ranks generally to an alarming extent.

The nominal votaries of religion were slumbering upon their posts, nor were they aware of the fatal delusion, until aroused from their lethargy by the astounding events of the great and exciting religious revival, now about to be witnessed in the west.

Early in the year 1801, a year remarkable in the annals of Kentucky, an anxious enquiry began to be instituted by the churches generally, as by common impulse, into the causes of the great spiritual delinquencies that prevailed among them: and at the same time to ascertain if practicable, a remedy for the moral malady that so sorely afflicted them.

The causes which simultaneously, and in parts distant and remote from each other, aroused the minds of so many thousands to such momentous enquiries as suggested, have not,

and perhaps may not shortly, be so clearly ascertained and developed, as to be satisfactory to all the religious orders of the day. With many it remains a mooted question, nor would the author of these reminiscences attempt its discussion. Nay, he would not disturb it. It may not be amiss, however, to suggest that a retrospection of the eighteenth century, then but recently forever closed upon the world, may have exercised some agency, in conducting the minds of that generation of men, to such reflections as resulted in the great events that followed.

We are often solemnly affected by the contemplations incident upon the close of a single year, through an event of so frequent occurrence in the life of man, witnessed by much the smaller share of our race. The coming occurrences of the year in question were at first indicated in the manner already premised. And in a short time the people began to meet in small assemblages, for the purpose not only of inquiry, but for religious worship.

The more experienced engaged in exhortations and prayers to God for a revival of his work. Those meetings were well attended, and conducted with becoming gravity. The Bible, hitherto looked on as a sealed book, to be believed and understood only by the favoured few, divinely illuminated, was now freely – and in the spirit of much candour – read and examined. Its seeming difficulties were passed, and minds of enquirers directed to the plain and practical teachings of that blessed Book. Much good was the result.

In the meantime ministers of the gospel had become greatly awakened to the discharge of their holy functions – their discourses were more clear and practical, and of consequence, far more interesting and effectual.

The dogmas and speculations of the sects were now in but little request, even among the clergy. Themes of a much more noble character inspired their hearts, the spiritual growth of their flocks, and the salvation of souls. And in this manner

the interest for the Christian religion increased daily. These remarks apply to the denominations generally; more especially, however, to the Presbyterian Church, in the bosom of which the writer was born and raised, and for which he still retains favourable remembrance.

The interest for the Bible and the religion it teaches augmented daily, and the moral tensions of the public mind were now wound up to a high stage; when early in the month of April of the year in question, a phenomenon in the religious history of the west made its appearance in the south of Kentucky more than a hundred miles from Caneridge. It was in the language of that day styled, 'the falling exercise.' The accounts of it narrated were wondrous to our ears. And still the wonder grew until the month of May: when the strange work was witnessed in the two churches of Caneridge and Concord, the former in Bourbon, the latter in Nicholas County, and both at the time, under the pastoral care of the Reverend Barton W. Stone, a young gentleman of much purity and high respect for learning, for talent and amiability of manners, in the Presbyterian ranks.

The exercise in question soon spread in all directions and meetings for public worship were kept up with but little intermission, not only in these two churches, but throughout the great west. The Reverend Stone was a regular and distinguished actor in many of them. The interest and the exercise was truly astounding, and thousands were the converts of that summer. Many a tall son and daughter of worldly pride was made to bear submission to Prince Messiah.

In due time a great camp-meeting to be held at Cane-Ridge, in the coming month of August, was published. Such was now the general interest of the public mind, that when the meeting came, it was attended by about 25,000 souls. Persons were said to be in attendance from most of the States of the Union. Particularly were gathered together, on that memorable

occasion, the thousands of Israel, from all the religious orders of the land. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, etc., etc., were there, as one mighty spiritual host, assembled together, to fight the battle of the Lord. They had come up to the help of Zion. They preached and prayed and praised together; they mutually laboured together for the salvation of sinners. Their objects and aims were the same; there was no schism.

Nay, more. Together, in sweetest, holiest, symbolic communion, they sat down at the one table of the one Lord, and together commemorated his sufferings and death, affording to a gazing and admiring world, a monumental exhibition an answer to the memorable prayer of the incarnate Jesus, to His and their Heavenly Father for the union of His people. Such were the glories of the times that many good people thought assuredly the Millennium had begun to dawn upon the world.

During this meeting of about 8 or 10 days continuance, hundreds were the converts. Very many indeed were the subjects of the exercise in question. Numbers of them were the intimates of the writer. But forasmuch as he himself was never the subject of it – was at the time young and inexperienced, and moreover, as one far more competent has already given to the world a history of the exercise, describing its operations, effects and results, the author of this hasty sketch will not attempt to define it.

Doubtless it was a strange and wonderful work. He will say, however, because true, that at the time he first witnessed it, he was not entirely satisfied as to its cause, and tendencies. His mind wavered. He doubted. But it is equally true that for now more than forty years, he has ceased to question its genuineness. Most of its subjects known to him (and he was intimate with many) have, by their consistent and godly lives and their triumphant deaths, long since stamped the seal of heaven upon its Divine origin, and forever silenced its opposers. A few converts of that early day: some, subjects of the work in

question, some not, all now greatly advanced, still survive the ravages of time, and are still buoyant with the good hope of heaven begotten in their souls at that early stage of the Reformation.

In the beginning of the year 1801, we heard that a very extraordinary religious excitement had taken place in Tennessee and part of Kentucky, under the labours of James McGrady (sic) and other Presbyterian preachers. Bro. Stone paid a visit to those parts where this work had commence, early in the spring, and came home to the churches of his charge, Caneridge and Concord, thoroughly convinced that it was a great work of God. His preaching was more spiritual and interesting, and in a short time the work commenced under his labours.

The first I saw of it was at William Maxwell's in Caneridge. When we arrived, it was dark; we found the people in the yard, mostly standing on their feet; but when we went to the crowd we found many persons under both physical and mental excitement. Some were happy, rejoicing in the Lord. Others were lying apparently almost lifeless. While many were praying to God most fervently for the pardon of their sins. Many professed to find forgiveness and peace to their souls on that night.

The same week there was a meeting commenced at Concord meeting house. Many hundreds gathered there with wagons and provisions to camp on the ground. The work went on to the astonishment of all present. It took the name of the falling exercise from its manner of operation. It was no uncommon occurrence for persons while listening to preaching, exhortation, prayer or singing, to fall from their seat or feet to the ground, and some appeared almost in a lifeless condition: while others would cry to God in the most fervent manner, for mercy to their needy souls. Many when they felt deep and serious impressions would attempt to leave the crowd and get to themselves, but scarcely ever went far before they fell their

whole length on the ground, and their groans and cries would call a small crowd to them. By this means the Congregation was often divided into many companies. A great many professed to be converted from the error of their ways at this meeting.

Shortly afterwards there was another meeting of the same description at Pleasant-point meeting-house, on Stoner Creek, Bourbon County. This church was under the care of Joseph Howe, a Presbyterian preacher. At this meeting I recollect to have seen a young lawyer, who came there a deist, from Lexington. He had fallen to the ground, confessing his sins to God, and found relief from the awful guilt and condemnation of sin, and was now standing on his feet, not pleading law, but pleading the cause of God and inviting sinners to the Saviour.

Children not more than ten or eleven years of age were converted at this meeting. It was perfectly astonishing to hear with what judgment they spoke of the goodness of God, and the willingness and fullness there was in the Lord Jesus to save all mankind. I knew a little girl not over nine years of age, who at this meeting became a subject of the revival that lived a pious and exemplary life, and died in Ohio after she became a woman, having her faith and confidence yet in that God that blessed her in childhood.

The Great Meeting at Caneridge commenced on Friday before the third Lord's Day in August, 1801. From the commencement the roads were literally crowded with wagons, carriages, horsemen, and people on foot, all pressing to the appointed place, till by the Sabbath day the grove that was open near the Caneridge meeting-house, was filled with wagons, tents and people. It was supposed that there were between twenty and thirty thousand people there. Elder Stone in his *Journal* remarks, "a particular description of this meeting would fill a large volume, and then the half would not be told." For the sake

of the future and present generations, I will attempt a faint description.-

From the very commencement an uncommon solemnity appeared to rest on the countenance of the people. Not infrequently several preachers would be speaking within the bounds of the encampment without any interruption to each other. Wagons, stumps, and logs were used for stands. The preaching and exhortations were interesting and impressive. Salvation free to all mankind was proclaimed, and the willingness of Jesus to save all that would come was urged universally by the speakers. "The word of God was quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword;" many sinners were cut to the heart, and fell prostrate under an awful guilt and condemnation for sin. This was not confined to any one class. The moral, genteel, and well raised, the giddy and profane, the wicked, the drunkard, and the infidel, the poor and also the rich, as well as the proud and the vain, with all their gawdy attire, were brought down by the Spirit of the ALMIGHTY, and they appeared to have forgotten everything in this world in view of their soul's eternal salvation.

This was not a sectarian meeting, although it was held at a Presbyterian meeting-house. Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were simultaneously engaged. Perfect friendship, unanimity, and brotherly kindness prevailed. They had come together to the help of the Lord against the mighty, and "Zion was terrible as an army with banners." The meeting lasted six days; the last sermon that was delivered on the occasion was by a Methodist preacher, by the name of Samuel Hitt. It is known only to God how many were converted at this meeting.

There were many there from Ohio, and some from Tennessee, and the excitement spread with the people, and the young converts joined the churches of their choice, and the good work of reformation went on with irresistible force, and appeared like carrying everything before it. Many were fully

persuaded that the glorious Millennial Day had commenced, and that the world would soon become the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, alas! That enemy of God and man, sectarianism raised its hydra head, and 'made war upon the saints of the most High God and overcame them,' and the fair prospects of Zion were in some degree blasted.

A cruel jealousy began to show itself among the leaders – some concluded that the spoils were not equally divided; others, that their craft was in danger. This engendered a disposition to draw off from each other, and the mighty army became weak by division, which always had a bad effect. If the preachers had continued in the spirit of reformation, and all let fall their sectarian names, and united in one tremendous phalanx against sin and all unrighteousness, it is my humble opinion that before this time, infidelity would have been driven from the world. Notwithstanding the pride and selfishness of little-minded men, they raised a barrier in the way of the work, and in some degree obstructed it: yet, where the people continue humble and devoted to God, the good cause advanced, and sinners were converted to the Christian religion.

But the bodily exercise (as it was called) seemed to change its manner of operation. The falling exercise became not so common, and the jerks succeeded. These (if possible) were harder to account for than the former, and it is impossible for me fully to describe them.

The first I saw affected with them were very pious, exemplary persons. Their heads would jerk back suddenly, frequently causing them to give a yelp, or make some other involuntary noise. After this, nearly all classes became subject to them. The intelligent and the ignorant; the strong athletic man, and weak effeminate persons were handled alike by them. Sometimes the head would fly every way so quickly that their features could not be recognized.

I have seen their heads fly back and forward so quickly that the hair of females would be made to crack like a carriage whip, but not very loud. A stranger looking on would have supposed that they would be killed instantly. Some wicked persons have taken them, while ridiculing them, and have been powerfully operated upon by them: others have taken them while trying to mimic them, and had them in good earnest.

One thing that appeared almost (if not entirely) miraculous was that among the hundreds that I have seen have them, I never knew or heard of one being hurt or injured by them more than this: they have told me that when they strove against them, and made great exertions to keep from them, they sometimes felt sore afterwards; otherwise they never felt any subsequent inconveniences from them.”

“It was not man’s work, because it was beyond the power and control of man. It was not of the devil, because it had no bad effect. It made people no worse. It neither injured them physically, intellectually, morally, nor religiously. Second, it was of God, because it was superhuman, and beyond the power and control of man, or any evil spirit. Its effects proved it to be of God. It brought sinners of every description to “repent of their sins and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance.” The sceptic was brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked were turned from their wicked practices to the service of the living God. The drunkard was led from his cups of intoxication to the house of the Lord. Many of those characters lived Christians afterwards: “fought the good fight, finished their course, kept the faith,” and received the crown.

Bigotry, selfishness, and sectarianism gave way before the spirit that accompanied this work. A great regard was manifested for the salvation of souls, and a very extraordinary spirit of prayer was felt among Christians. So much love,

peace, unanimity, forbearance, brotherly kindness, and charity, must be from the source of ALL GOODNESS.

I have no doubt that the reason why some good men in these latter days speak and write against this work is that they were not in it, have never seen it, and know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. Some have said that none but weak-minded persons were subject to these exercises. This is not correct. Men and women of the best intellects, of undoubted character, and of exemplary lives, were subject to this good work. I am glad that Father Stone and Father Purviance have left their testimony in favour of it; and many are yet living, whose grey hairs tell the tale of a long life, and point to the bourne from whence no traveller returns, that will testify with me in this case.

There is no doubt that in this, as well as all great revivals, there were some fanaticism and some mechanical excitement which had their effect but for a short time. It was also evident that some persons with corrupt hearts, and wishing to be esteemed something while nothing, acted the hypocrite and endeavoured to counterfeit the good work of God, but this is no evidence that the work was not of God. There was a great difference between that revival and many of the excitements that I have since witnessed. In that, there was a great deal of prayer and wrestling with God, a very extraordinary travail of soul among Christians for the salvation of mankind. Sinners were invited to the Saviour in a feeling and pathetic manner, and many were pierced to the heart, confessed their sins to God, and found peace and pardon through Jesus Christ, and afterwards continued faithful, and “walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called.”

But in these late days, many who profess to be called of God to proclaim his word, do not follow the precept and example of Elijah, in waiting and looking to God till the fire comes down from heaven; something like a fire created by

thrusting a lighted match into a bunch of dry straw – soon over. I am glad to see religious excitements, but I desire to see them raised by the influence of Gospel truth, and sinners drawn to the Saviour, and fully reconciled to God through the death of His Son. The love of God exhibited in the gift of His Son has a more salutary influence on the hearts of mankind than any other thing that can be presented to their minds.

We may excite the passions by the presentation of frightful and terrible things. But it is time and labour worse than lost, because its influence is of short duration, and leaves the creature more hard and unbelieving, and more subject to run into infidelity than ever he was before.

Preachers are but men, and too liable to pride and vanity, and the name of being the instrument in the hands of God of bringing a great number into the church or of baptizing more converts than others, has led many into an intemperate zeal that has resulted in the final destruction of many souls. But in leaving one extreme we should be careful not to run to an opposite, I have no doubt that many seeing the evils resulting from fanaticism have sunk down into a “lukewarm” state and have nothing now but “a form of godliness, while they deny the power.”

We are required to have a zeal of God, according to knowledge. If we see the worth of souls and feel the cause of God at heart, as we ought, it will lead us to an extreme for the salvation of mankind. But we should always keep in mind that one soul thoroughly converted to God is worth scores of nominal professors of Christianity.⁴³

⁴³ Purviance. pages 242 – 252.

CHAPTER SIX.

METHODIST DOCUMENTS.

A letter from Rev. James M. Gready (sic.), a Presbyterian minister, in Logan county, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr Coke.

I was informed by Mr. John M’Gee, that you desired me to send you a statement of the revival of the work of God in my bounds, and in the adjacent congregations. Agreeably to your request, I shall attempt to give you a brief narrative; - for if I was to descend to every minute particular, the subject would swell a letter into a volume.

But to proceed: - In the month of May, 1797, the work made its first appearance in Guspar-river (sic) congregation, - a church that was then under my charge, in conjunction with two other infant congregations. A very solemn awakening took place during that summer, and about ten persons professed to experience the love of Jesus. In the autumn, a general coldness and stupidity took place, which continued during the winter and following spring. This gloomy change seemed to strike an alarm to the few Christians, through the several congregations, which induced them to set apart the last Saturday in each month for fasting and prayer. On the fourth Sabbath in July at the administration of the sacrament in Gusper-river congregation, the Lord appeared in majesty and power. On Monday multitudes were solemnly awakened; some in almost every family throughout the congregation. The following week, the impressions were so deep, that little or no business was attended to. On the first Sabbath in September following the sacrament was administered in the Muddy-river church, - another congregation under my charge; this was also a glorious time, the

Lord poured out his Spirit in a very remarkable manner. About this time the work spread into the many infant churches that were forming in this new country, and many souls were savingly brought to Christ.

Soon after, some prejudiced persons raised a vehement opposition, which involved our country in contentions and disputation, and put a general stop to the work. In July, 1799, at a sacrament at Red-river, (one of my congregations,) some sinners were awakened, and a few converted. On Monday, after public worship was over, before the people dispersed, the Lord graciously poured out his Spirit; many were remarkably blessed with the divine presence, others were brought to do their first works, and some sinners were awakened.

In June, 1800, the most glorious time commenced that my eyes ever beheld. At the sacrament at Red-river, on Monday after preaching, the people broke out in a general outcry over the whole assembly. About 120 persons were hopefully converted. About a month later, at Gusper-river, large multitudes attended. The work began on Saturday evening, and continued until Tuesday morning. Many persons from Summer county, in the State of Tennessee, came out of curiosity, and the Lord graciously converted some of them. They carried home the divine flame, and spread it through the greater part of the Cumberland settlements; at this meeting we suppose about forty-five persons experienced a true conversion. At Muddy-river, in August the work began on Friday, and continued until Tuesday. The number converted we believe to be almost fifty. At the Clay-lick, in October, the meeting was much interrupted by the wetness of the weather; but the Lord was present, and several persons experienced, I trust, living religion. At Little Muddy-creek, in November, the work began on Sunday evening, and continued until Tuesday morning, when about twelve persons, we believe, were brought to Christ.

The present summer is equally blest, and the power is equally great. At Drakes-creek, the first Sabbath in May, about twenty persons were converted. At Red-river, in June, about twenty persons were also converted. At Gusper-river, last Sabbath, and during the occasion, about forty persons were converted.

In my narrative, I have confined myself to the sacramental times, as these were the most remarkable seasons: but very wonderful circumstances have occurred at private meetings, and praying societies, which I must pass over. Instances have been of a whole neighbourhood meeting together, without any previous appointment, and joining in prayer, and the power of God descended among them. At one such accidental meeting, nine persons out of sixteen professed to experience religion before they parted. At one Society, the power of God came among the people and they continued from Tuesday evening until Thursday evening, when ten persons were converted. One remarkable circumstance attending the work, is the conversion of children. Great numbers of these are the subjects of the work. To see them delivered from the burden of sin, and hear them express their sweet views of Jesus, and the fullness, suitableness, and sufficiency of his blood and merits to save them, and his willingness to save the whole human race, if they would come to him; to hear them describe the beauties and excellencies they see in Christ; - and with what pity, love, and affection, they recommend him to others; and with what earnestness and importunity they plead with sinners to come to Christ; - this, I think, is one of the most convincing proofs of the reality of religion. I could give you many instances of the astonishing language and ideas I have heard drop from the lips of these little creatures, under their first delightful views of Jesus. But time permits me to mention but one, namely - a little girl. She was lying in an agony of distress, crying out for mercy. I was conversing with her when the Lord delivered her

soul. The moment Christ revealed himself to her, she started upon her feet, and cried out, 'I know he is willing! He is willing! He is come! He is come! O what a glorious Christ! What a sweet Christ! What a precious Christ he is! O what a beauty, what a glory I see in Him! O what a fullness, what an infinite fullness I see in Christ! O there is a fullness in Christ for all the world, if they would but come! O how easy it is to believe – to give my heart to Christ! What was the reason that I never came to Christ before, when Christ was willing to save me?' Then she turned and addressed poor Christless sinners, in language and ideas that God himself must have put into her mouth, and which was sufficient to have moved the hardest heart.

One observation more I would make. This glorious work has disseminated a principle of love through the hearts of all Christians. Bigotry and prejudice have received a death-wound; names, parties, and divisions seem to subside totally. Presbyterians and Methodists love one another; they preach together, and commune together, and mutually rejoice to see the work of the Lord go on. I have confined my narrative entirely to Logan county; to the congregations under my care, and those under the care of Mr. Rankin. As to the state and progress of the work in the Cumberland settlements, I expect some of our brethren of the Methodist or Presbyterian Societies will give you a more perfect account than I can do; especially those who are instrumental; in carrying on the work. I remain, your friend and brother in the Gospel of Christ”⁴⁴

The Rev. John McGee's Letter

Dear Sir,

In compliance with your request, I have endeavoured to recollect some of the most noted circumstances which occurred

⁴⁴ Robert Young. pages 211 – 215.

at the commencement of the work of God in the States of Kentucky and Tennessee, and which came under my observation in 1799 and the two following years.

I suppose I am one of the two brothers referred to in Theophilus Arminius's account of the work of God in the Western country. My brother William McGee is fallen asleep in the bosom of his beloved Master. We were much attached to each other from our infancy, but much more so when we both experienced the uniting love of Jesus Christ. I was the oldest, and, by the mercy and grace of God, sought and experienced religion first. With great anxiety of mind, he heard me preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, before he felt or enjoyed peace with God. After he obtained religion, he thought proper to receive holy orders in the Presbyterian Church; and, after preaching some time in North Carolina and in the Holston country, he came to Cumberland, (now West Tennessee,) about the year 1796 or 1797, and settled in a congregation in Sumner county, about the year 1798.

Several reasons induced me to remove, with my family, from North Carolina to the Western country, and in the year 1798 settled in Sumner (now Smith) county. The difference of doctrines professed by the Presbyterians and Methodist Churches was not sufficient to dissolve those ties of love and affection which we both felt. We loved, and prayed, and preached together; and God was pleased to own and bless us and our labours. In the year 1799, we agreed to make a tour through the Barren, toward Ohio, and concluded to attend a sacramental solemnity in the Rev. Mr. McGready's congregation, on Red River, on our way.

When we came there, I was introduced by my brother, and received an invitation to address the congregation from the pulpit, and I know not that ever God favoured me with more light and liberty than he did each day, while I endeavoured to convince the people they were sinners, and urged the necessity

of repentance, and of a change from nature to grace, and held up to their view the greatness, freeness and fullness of salvation, which was in Christ Jesus, for lost, guilty, condemned sinners.

My brother and the Rev. Mr. Hodge preached with much animation and liberty. The people felt the force of truth, and tears ran down their cheeks, but all was silent until Monday, the last day of the feast. Mr. Hodge gave a useful discourse; an intermission was given, and I was appointed to preach. While Mr. Hodge was preaching, a woman in the east end of the house got an uncommon blessing, broke through order, and shouted for some time, and then sat down in silence.

At the close of the sermon, Messrs. Hodge, McGready, and Rankin went out of the house: my brother and myself sat still. The people seemed to have no disposition to leave their seats. My brother felt such a power come upon him, that he quit his seat and sat down on the floor of the pulpit, (I suppose not knowing what he did.) A power which caused me to tremble was upon me. There was a solemn weeping all over the house. Having a wish to preach, I strove against my feelings. At length I rose up and told the people I was appointed to preach, but there was a greater than I preaching, and I exhorted them to let the Lord God omnipotent reign in their hearts, and to submit to him, and their souls should live.

Many broke silence: the woman in the east end of the house shouted tremendously. I left the pulpit to go to her, and as I went along through the people, it was suggested to me: "You know these people are much for order – they will not bear this confusion. Go back, and be quiet." I turned to go back, and was near falling. The power of God was strong upon me; I turned again, and, losing sight of the fear of man, I went through the house shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy, and the floor was soon covered with the slain. Their screams for mercy pierced the heavens, and mercy came down. Some found forgiveness, and many went away from that

meeting feeling unutterable agonies of soul for redemption in the blood of Jesus. This was the beginning of that glorious revival of religion in this country which was so great a blessing to thousands; and from this meeting camp-meetings took their rise.

One man, for the want of horses for all his family to ride and attend the meeting, fixed up his wagon, in which he took them and his provisions, and lived on the ground throughout the meeting. He had left his worldly cares behind him, and had nothing to do but attend on divine service.

The next popular meeting was on Muddy River, and this was a camp-meeting: a number of wagons loaded with people came together, and camped on the ground; and the Lord was present, and approved of their zeal by sealing a pardon to about forty souls. The next camp-meeting was on the Ridge, where there was an increase of people, and carriages of different descriptions, and a great many preachers of the Presbyterian and Methodist orders, and some of the Baptist, but the latter were generally opposed to the work.

Preaching commenced, and the people prayed, and the power of God attended. There was a great cry for mercy. The nights were truly awful: the camp-ground was well illuminated; the people were differently exercised all over the ground – some exhorting, some shouting, some praying, and some crying for mercy, while others lay as dead men on the ground. Some of the spiritually-wounded fled to the woods, and their groans could be heard all through the surrounding groves, as the groans of dying men.

From thence many came into the camp, rejoicing and praising God for having found redemption in the blood of the Lamb. At this meeting it was computed that one hundred souls were converted from nature to grace.

But perhaps the greatest meeting we ever witnessed took place shortly after, on Desha's Creek, near Cumberland River.

Many thousands of people attended. The mighty power and mercy of God was manifested. The people fell before the word, like corn before a storm of wind, and many rose from the dust with divine glory shining in their countenances, and gave glory to God in such strains as made the hearts of stubborn sinners to tremble; and, after the first gust of praise, they would break forth into volleys of exhortation. Amongst these were many small, home-bred boys, who spoke with the tongue, wisdom, and eloquence of the learned; and truly they were learned, for they were all taught of God, who had taken their feet out of the mire and clay, and put a new song in their mouths. Although there were converts of different ages under this work, it was remarkable they were generally the children of praying parents.

Here John A Granade, the Western poet, who composed the Pilgrim's Songs, - after being many months in almost entire desperation, till he was worn down, and appeared like a walking skeleton, - found pardon and mercy from God, and began to preach a risen Jesus.

Some of the Pharisees cried *disorder* and *confusion*, but in disorderly assemblies there are generally dislocated and broken bones, and bruised flesh; but here the women laid their sleeping children at the roots of the trees, while hundreds, of all ages and colours, were stretched on the ground in the agonies of conviction, and as dead men, while thousands, day and night, were crowding round them, and passing to and fro, yet there was nobody hurt; which shows that the people were perfectly in their senses. And on this chaos of apparent confusion, God said, Let there be light, and there was light! And many emerged out of darkness into it.

We have hardly ever had a camp-meeting since, without his presence and power to convert souls. Glory to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Yours respectfully,
John McGee.

NB. There is a footnote – “There was a man at the Ridge meeting who got mad, cursed the people, and said he would go home; but before he got out of sight of the camp-ground, a tree fell on him, and he was carried home dead.”⁴⁵

John B. McFerrin's Testimony.

The year 1800 was a most remarkable one in the history of religion in Tennessee and Kentucky: it was the year of the Great Revival – a revival that resulted in a general awakening, and in the conversion of thousands multiplied. This extraordinary work of grace began in a manner almost as remarkable as the work itself.

The reader has seen in the account of the Rev. John Page, that there were signs of the coming revival on the Cumberland circuit in 1799; and he has read the thrilling letter of the Rev. John McGee, which states that the work began to manifest itself, in a most extraordinary manner, the same year on Red River, in Kentucky, near the Tennessee line, and that from that meeting the work extended in various directions. The most wonderful display was at Desha's Creek, near the Cumberland River, where many thousands had collected together. This was a camp-meeting, and was perhaps the second or third ever held in the country; indeed, it was in this great revival that camp meetings originated. Families came from a distance to attend sacramental, quarterly, or other popular meetings. To carry all conveniently, a wagon was brought into requisition. Their provisions were taken along, so as to enable the parties to remain on the ground and enjoy the

⁴⁵ McGee's letter is quoted in full in McFerrin. *Methodism in Tennessee*, Vol. One, pages 291 – 297.

full benefit of the services; then the idea of a tent, where the whole family might remain on the ground during the entire meeting, and find a place of rest and shelter; and finally, the “camp-meeting,” where thousands collected together, and remained upon the ground for a week or longer, preaching, praying, singing, and labouring with penitents. Some procured cloth tents, similar to those used by soldiers in the “tented field;” others made bush arbors in connection with their covered wagons and carriages; others still put up temporary shelters of poles and board, where they were protected from the night dews and the showers of rain. At length the regular, well-appointed camp ground became an institution in the country.

The grounds were generally laid out near to some flowing spring, affording abundance of water for man and beast. The plot was usually square, with a shelter in the centre for public worship. These shelters were sometimes spacious, sufficiently large to accommodate thousands of persons. At one end a pulpit was erected, which was usually a rude platform with a book-board, and a place for a pitcher of water and candlesticks. In front of the pulpit was the altar: this was designed as a place for penitents, where they might be collected together for prayer and religious instruction. This altar was usually made of poles, or square pieces of hewn timber placed on posts at the four corners, with openings for ingress and egress. Inside the altar were seats, called by many, and sometimes in derision, the “mourners’ bench.”

At the close of the sermon or exhortation, an invitation was given for mourners, or penitents, to come to the altar – that is, such as were convinced of sin, and were enquiring “what they should do to be saved,” were invited to approach seats set apart for them, where they would be instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly, and where Christians would unite in songs, and hymns, and fervent prayer for their deliverance.

These altar exercises sometimes continued for many hours, especially after the evening sermon, and many thousands found peace in Jesus, while kneeling in prayer, and crying, “Lord, save, or we perish!” In process of time these camp grounds became very large in many localities, and were made very comfortable places of sojourn. Good log or framed houses, with fire-places and convenient furniture, were not uncommon. Under the shelter, and among the seats and around the camps, there was a profusion of straw, which made the grounds pleasant and cleanly. The services were generally conducted in the following manner - viz.:

In the morning, at daylight, a trumpet was sounded, as a signal for the people to arise and prepare for worship. At the second sound, prayer was held in each of the tents. At the third sound, all who could leave their tents collected together for public worship at the stand. Then came breakfast. At eight and at eleven o’clock a.m. and at three o’clock p.m., and early candle-lighting, there was preaching and exhortation, followed by a prayer-meeting with the penitents. The preaching was intended to be suited to the occasion, and was expected to be animated and with power. It was customary for each sermon to be followed by an exhortation, allowing the second man or exhorter to apply the subject and move the congregation to action. The singing was an important part of worship. Generally there were certain persons selected who were gifted with the power of song, to lead in this exercise; but the whole multitude would join in some chorus-hymn, until their voice, like the sound of many waters, would swell up in delightful melody and roll with sweet harmony, while the valley would become vocal with praise to God, and the hills echo with hallelujahs to Jesus.

The good accomplished at these meetings will never in time be properly estimated. They were extraordinary occasions, adapted to the times, and were, under God, a great blessing.

The manner in which this great revival began was remarkable. There seems to have been no particular or special effort on the part of the Church or the ministry for a revival. True, the preachers were faithful, self-denying and zealous in the cause of Christ. They went forth praying sinners to be reconciled to God; but there was no one great revival preacher, like George Whitefield, sweeping as a comet through the heavens; there were no protracted meetings at which, by long and united effort, a revival was the result; but a strange and unusual power came upon the preaching and upon the people in the use of the ordinary means of grace.

[A long quotation from John McGee's letter is omitted here, describing what happened on that Monday, at McGready's church on Red River. – Ed.]

Such was this strange influence that came upon the people and the preachers, in an hour and in a manner altogether unexpected by them. From this time forward, for months and for years, an unusual power rested upon the pulpit and upon the congregations. Some doubted, others scoffed, but most men said, 'This work is of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes.'

In this revival the Cumberland Presbyterian Church had its origin. As has been seen, the work was extraordinary, and the means comparatively inadequate; indeed, it was manifest that the power of God was at work among the people. Several young men, who were converted and entered the Presbyterian Church, felt called of God to the work of the ministry; but such were the rules and regulations of the Church, that candidates for the ministry must give evidence of the attainment of a certain degree of classical learning and theological training before they could be ordained. These young men had not the required qualifications, and consequently the Presbytery that gave them license fell under the censure of the Synod and General

Assembly. This produced division, and the "revival party," as they claimed to be, formed an independent Presbytery, which finally resulted in the organization of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

The organization was not fully perfected till 1810. Preliminaries had been taken, and considerable progress had been made; but not till February, 1810, was the new Cumberland Presbytery constituted. This was done at the house of the Rev. Samuel McAdow, in Dickson county, Tennessee. The first Presbytery was composed of four ordained ministers. – viz., Samuel McAdow, Finis Ewing, Samuel King, and Ephraim McLean, the last of whom they ordained themselves – with five licensed preachers – viz., James B. Porter, Hugh Kirkpatrick, Robert Bell, James Farr, David Fowler, and eight candidates for the ministry.

This Presbytery was soon enlarged into a Synod, and in 1829 a General Assembly was formed. A Confession of Faith was in due time adopted, and this young Church went forward in preaching, establishing churches, and erecting schools and colleges, until it has become a large and influential body of Christians in the West and South-west.

In creed they differ with the Old School Presbyterians. They discard the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation; they believe and teach that Christ died for every sinner, and that the benefits of the atonement extend to all; they teach the freedom of the human will, and invite all men, without limit or restriction, to come to Christ and be saved; but they hold to the doctrine of "the final unconditional perseverance of the saints."

Their form of government is presbyterial, and their mode of worship very much like that of the Methodists. Their ministers are generally men of zeal, and their churches have the spirit of piety. They have participated largely in camp-meetings, and are generally what are termed "revivalists."

They make many of their converts from among the descendants of the Scotch and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. As a body of Christians, they are orderly, and have all the marks of genuine piety, and have accomplished much good. An effort was made a short time since to bring about a reunion between this Church and the Old School Presbyterians, in the South, but the attempt did not succeed.

In reviewing the history of the great revival of 1800, the impartial reader is forced to the conclusion that gross injustice has been done [to] many of the most conspicuous and successful ministers engaged in that glorious work. Several writers, who profess to be very particular and minute in the details, have almost entirely ignored the Methodist element. The idea is made prominent, that the revival originated among the Presbyterians, and was carried forward by Presbyterians; that in the Presbyterian Church there were two parties, the revival party and the anti-revivalists; and that in the final issue the revival party went into the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and those opposed to the revival remained with the old Presbyterians. Nothing could be further from the truth. The facts in the case are briefly these:

1. The doctrines that were preached in the revival were Methodist doctrines, distinctly so. Free salvation, full salvation, present salvation, justification by faith, the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Ghost, the knowledge of sins forgiven, or the witness of the Holy Spirit that the believer is born of God, the joy of religion which is the fruit of the Spirit, and that now (today) is the day of salvation: these doctrines, for more than ten years, had been kept before the people. Ogden and Haw, Poythress and Lee, Massie and McHenry, Brooks and Burke, Wilkerson and Page, McGee and others, all through the settled portions of Tennessee and Southern Kentucky, had proclaimed

these doctrines, by night and by day, and under their ministry already had thousands been converted.

2. When the revival began to exhibit its extraordinary manifestations, the Methodists were among the most active and successful reapers in the glorious harvest. It is true that Presbyterians were in the work, and that they worked as faithful servants of Christ. They and the Methodists laboured together in harmony, and rejoiced together in their success; but the revival was not confined to the Presbyterians or to the Methodists, but both worked together in the Master's vineyard, and each ascribed the glory to God.

Accompanying this revival, were those strange bodily exercises called the "jerks," which have never been satisfactorily explained upon philosophical principles.

Men and women, the aged and the young, the intelligent and the ignorant, the pious and the wicked, at home and at church, in public and in private, of all religions, were alike seized with a power that was irresistible. The author himself, at a later day, witnessed many of these strange things. The subjects would be tossed to and fro, sometimes thrown upon the ground or floor with violence, where they could lie, apparently in a state of unconsciousness, for hours, then, rising suddenly, they would leap and jump, shout and dance, until they completely exhausted themselves.

The Rev. Barton W. Stone, long a minister in Kentucky, thus describes the "jerks" and kindred exercises:

"The bodily agitations or exercises attending the excitement in the beginning of this century were various, and called by various names, as the falling exercise, the jerks, the dancing exercise, the barking exercise, the laughing and singing exercises, and so on.

The falling exercise was very common among all classes, the saints and sinners of every age and grade, from the philosopher to the clown. The subject of this exercise would generally, with a piercing scream, fall like a log on the floor or earth, and appear as dead. Of thousands of similar cases, I will mention one: At a meeting, two gay young ladies, sisters, were standing together, attending the exercises and preaching at the same time, when instantly they both fell with a shriek of distress, and lay for more than an hour apparently in a lifeless state. Their mother, a pious Baptist, was in great distress, fearing they would not revive. At length they began to exhibit signs of life, by crying fervently for mercy, and then relapsed into the same death-like state, with an awful gloom on their countenances; after awhile, the gloom on the face of one was succeeded by a heavenly smile, and she cried out, "Precious Jesus!" and spoke of the glory of the Gospel to the surrounding crowd in language almost superhuman, and exhorted all to repentance. In a little while after, the other sister was similarly exercised. From that time they became remarkably pious members of the Church.

I have seen very many pious persons fall in the same way, from a sense of the danger of their unconverted children, brothers or sisters, or from a sense of the danger of their neighbours in a sinful world. I have heard them agonizing in tears, and strongly crying for mercy to be shown to sinners, and speaking like angels all around.

The jerks cannot be so easily described. Sometimes the subject of the jerks would be affected in some one member of the body, and sometimes in the whole system. When the head alone was affected, it would be jerked backward and forward, or from side to side, so quickly that the features of the face could not be distinguished. When the whole system was affected, I have seen the person stand in one place, and jerk backward and forward in quick succession, the head nearly touching the floor

behind and before. All classes – saints and sinners, the strong as well as the weak – were thus affected. I have inquired of those thus affected if they could not account for it, but some have told me that those were among the happiest seasons of their lives. I have seen some wicked persons thus affected, and all the time cursing the jerks, while they were thrown to the earth with violence. Though so awful to behold, I do not remember that any one of the thousands I have seen thus affected ever sustained any injury in body. This was as strange as the exercise itself.

The dancing exercise generally began with the jerks, and was peculiar to professors of religion. The subject, after jerking awhile, began to dance, and then the jerks would cease. Such dancing was indeed heavenly to the spectators. There was nothing in it like levity, nor calculated to excite levity in the beholders. The smile of Heaven shone on the countenance of the subject, and assimilated to angels appeared the whole person. Sometimes the motion was quick, and sometimes slow. Thus they continued to move forward and backward, in the same track or alley, till nature seemed exhausted; and they would fall prostrate on the floor or earth, unless caught by those standing by. While thus exercised, I have heard their solemn praises and prayers ascend to God.

The barking exercise, as opposers contemptuously called it, was nothing but the jerks. A person affected with the jerks, especially in his head, would often make a grunt or a bark from the suddenness of the jerk. This name of barking seems to have had its origin from an old Presbyterian preacher of East Tennessee. He had gone into the woods for private devotion, and was seized with the jerks. Standing near a sapling, he caught hold of it, to prevent his falling; and as his head jerked back he uttered a grunt, or a kind of a noise similar to a bark, his face being turned upward. Some wag discovered him in this

position, and reported that he had found the old preacher barking up a tree.

The laughing exercise was frequent – confined solely to the religious. It was a loud, hearty laughter, but it excited laughter in none that saw it. The subject appeared rapturously solemn, and his laughter excited solemnity in saints and sinners: it was truly indescribable!

The running exercise was nothing more than that person feeling something of these bodily agitations, through fear, attempted to run away, and thus escape from them; but it commonly happened that they ran not far before they fell, where they became so agitated that they could not proceed any farther.

I knew a young physician, of a celebrated family, who came some distance to a big meeting to see the strange things he had heard of. He and a young lady had sportively agreed to watch over and take care of each other if either should fall. At length the physician felt something very uncommon, and started from the congregation to run into the woods. He was discovered running as for life, but did not proceed far until he fell down, and there lay until he submitted to the Lord, and afterwards became a zealous member of the Church. Such cases were common.

The singing exercise is more unaccountable than anything else I ever saw. The subject, in a very happy state of mind, would sing most melodiously, not from the mouth or nose, but entirely in the breast, the sound issuing thence. Such noise silenced everything, and attracted the attention of all. It was most heavenly; none could ever be tired of hearing it.

Thus have I, says Mr. Stone, given a brief account of the wonderful things that appeared in the great excitement in the beginning of this century. That there were many eccentricities and much fanaticism in this excitement, was acknowledged by its warmest advocates; indeed, it would have been a wonder if such things had not appeared in the circumstances of that time.

Yet the good effects were seen and acknowledged in every neighbourhood, and amongst the different sects. It silenced contention, and promoted unity for a while.⁴⁶

Why these unusual visitations were permitted to come upon the Church and upon the country at this particular time, is a question which perhaps cannot be easily answered. So it was, and so solemn were the scenes connected with those exercises, that none but the most hardened treated them with levity.

This great revival was remarkable in another respect: it seemed to bind the hearts of all Christians in unity. Methodists and Presbyterians, especially, laboured together with harmony and sweet concord, and, as brethren in Christ, had one end and one aim, - God's glory and man's salvation.

The Rev. Lewis Garrett leaves the following record, which will be read with interest: The year 1800 was an eventful era in the religious history of the Western country – some of the events of which we have noticed, particularly in relation to Kentucky. This year the West, which was all comprised in one District, was without a Presiding Elder, and the circuits, which were generally large, had but one travelling preacher – local preachers were scarce. Nathaniel Harris, Philip Taylor, and a few others in Kentucky, were talented, zealous, and useful men. John McGee in Cumberland was a host. William Burke, who then travelled in Kentucky, was popular, active and useful. About the same time that the remarkable revival commenced in Bourbon county, Kentucky, a considerable religious excitement took place in Gaspar River, under the zealous labours of Mr. McGready, a Presbyterian minister. About this time John and William McGee, who were brothers, - the former a Methodist and the latter a Presbyterian preacher – attended a sacramental

⁴⁶ McFerrin is quoting from Barton Stone's book *Early Times in Middle Tennessee*. pages 70 – 75. But what appears in his *Autobiography* is almost identical.

meeting on Red River. We learn from a correct source, that on Sabbath afternoon, the session went out to consult whether they should invite John McGee to preach. The McGees were in the pulpit, and the congregation waiting. John McGee became uncommonly impressed, and began to exhort the people. The power of God was present: many fell prostrate; some shouted: the McGees commenced labouring with the convicted. The session came, saw, and acknowledged that it was the work of God, and joined in to forward it. Thus commenced that glorious revival of vital religion which spread so widely, extending its reforming influence in every direction, and gladdened the hearts of thousands.

In the fall of the year 1800, Bishop Asbury sent the Rev. William McKendree from Virginia, to take charge of the Kentucky District, which then, and during the year 1801, embraced the whole country west of the Alleghany Mountains, from New River in Virginia to the extreme settlements in what was called Cumberland South-west, and what was then called the North-western Territory to Miami and Scioto; and almost throughout this whole region a religious excitement was spreading and prevailing – that divine Spirit whose office it was and is to reprove and enlighten the world, was shedding his heavenly influence, while the angel of mercy seemed to hover his benign wings over this newly-settled region.

Such was the state of excited feeling; and so anxious were multitudes inquiring the way of salvation, that when sacramental or quarterly meetings were appointed, many would go with their wagons and carts, and some carry provisions on horseback, and remain on the ground for several days, engaged day and night in religious exercises. This was the origin of

camp-meetings, which have been, and still are, so extensively useful in carrying on the work of God.⁴⁷

Mr. Garrett, in the same record, makes the following statement, which cannot be read but with pain and sorrow. Surely the enemy sowed evil seed, which sprang up and produced bad fruit. He says:

“In the year 1800, an astonishing religious excitement commenced in Kentucky, which spread through all ranks of society, with almost unparalleled rapidity. It took effect with different denominations of Christians, but the Methodists and Presbyterians shared most largely of its fruits. A Methodist local preacher, by the name of Benjamin Northcutt, we have learned, was a considerable instrument in producing this mighty revival of religion. The great meeting at Cane ridge, detailed accounts of which have been published, was an extraordinary scene and an astonishing display of Almighty power and saving grace.

It is not our purpose to go into the details of this meeting, or of this revival. There were numerous meetings in different parts of Kentucky. There seemed to be a simultaneous effort. The barriers which had kept different sectaries apart, seemed to have given way; non-essential peculiarities were measurably forgotten; the Presbyterians and Methodists particularly preached and prayed and rejoiced together. The love of Christ and souls seemed to be the governing principle. These were halcyon days – pleasant to behold, glorious in their results, and blessed in their enjoyments!

But human nature was too imperfect, human affairs too complex, and the views and interests of men too apt to clash for such a pleasant state of things to be permanent. This thing of falling down and shouting was a little alarming to some who

⁴⁷ McFerrin is here quoting from Garrett's book *Recollections of the West*. pages 31 – 33.

were tenacious of order. There was, to be sure, nothing strange in all this to the Methodists; they had been accustomed to such a work, in other revivals, in days gone by. The doctrine of a *limited atonement*, which had long obtruded itself upon a considerable portion of the community, began to wax old and unpopular, and was ready to vanish away – multitudes, whose hearts God touched, listened with delight to a free gospel, which exhibited an ample atonement for every soul of man, proposed terms of reconciliation to all, and proclaimed to a perishing throng, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Jealousies now began to arise. Those who had long cherished a strong attachment to certain theories, and a certain order of things, took the alarm, drew off, and laboured to rally the multitude, and to restore that order of which they were tenacious, and that system of doctrines which they had been accustomed to hold sacred. But some of the clergy, and many of the people, had become weary of dull forms, and disgusted with the soul-freezing doctrines of absolute, unconditional election and reprobation. The consequences were a collision in matters of opinion, and a disagreement in modes of worship. Some of those who had let go their former creeds, were now out at sea – not settled in any regular system of theology, and consequently the ready prey of extravagant and designing theorists.

At this unhappy moment, and in this unsettled state of things, when religious feelings run high that extravagant and (we think) deluded race – the Shakers – made their appearance in Kentucky, and by a sanctimonious show of piety and zeal, drew off several valuable Presbyterian preachers, and a number of unwary members, doubtless to the great injury of the cause of rational Christianity. About this time, another portion seceded from the Presbyterians, who were called by different names. – such as Marshallites, Stoneites, Schismatics, etc. These affected uncommon zeal – denounced Confessions of Faith, Church-

discipline, etc., and were thought to imbibe sentiments derogatory to the character of an Almighty Redeemer, and to hold tenets which affected the essentials of Christianity.

But amidst this revival, and these convulsions, in the religious community, the Methodists kept on the even tenor of their way – adhering to their excellent discipline, and teaching that system of doctrine which they had long since learned, and which was not only the popular but the useful doctrine of the revival.”⁴⁸

The Autobiography of William Burke.

The conference year of 1789 closed the labours of James Haw in Kentucky. The superintendence of the work was now altogether under the direction of F. Poythress, both in Kentucky and Cumberland. The circuits were well supplied in 1790: Danville, Thomas Wilkinson and Stephen Brooks; Cumberland, William Lee; James Haw; Peter Massey; Madison, Barnabas McHenry, Benjamin Snelling; Limestone, Samuel Tucker, Joseph Lillard; Lexington, Henry Burchet, David Haggard.

Methodism still found favour in the eyes of the people, and the good work progressed, and numbers were added to the societies; and the circuits were enlarged in proportion as the immigration increased and new settlements were formed. In the course of three years the increase was rising one thousand. In 1794, the year of Wayne’s campaign, the work declined very much, and many turned aside from the right way. Discipline

⁴⁸ McFerrin is here quoting from Garrett. *Recollections of the West.* pages 28 - 32. The entire passage is from John B. McFerrin. *A History of Methodism in Tennessee.* Volume One (of three volumes). pages 335 – 357.

was strictly adhered to, and many expelled from the societies. The Indian war having terminated the people began to scatter in every direction. New settlements were formed, and Ohio and Indiana began to settle rapidly, and the societies many of them were broken up, and we had not preachers sufficient enough to follow the tide of emigration to their new settlements; consequently, we had a considerable decrease of members in the year 1795 and till 1801, when the great revival commenced and spread throughout all the western country; so that at the end of the conference year 1802, we had doubled our numbers from that of 1795. The revival also produced a great increase of local and travelling preachers.

The Conference year of 1801 commenced a new era in the west. Mr. Asbury changed the name of the conference from that of Kentucky to that of the Western Conference, which embraced all the western country then occupied by the Methodists; and William McKendree was appointed Presiding Elder. The circuits that composed the conference, and the preachers stationed this year, were as follows:

Scioto and Miami, Henry Smith;
Limestone, Benjamin Lakin;
Hinkston and Lexington, William Burke, Thomas Wilkerson and Lewis Hunt;
Danville, Hezekiah Harraman;
Salt River and Shelby, John Sale and William Marsh;
Cumberland, John Page and Benjamin Young;
Green, Samuel Douthel and Ezekiel Burdine;
Holston and Russell, James Hunter;
New River, John Watson.

In the commencement of this year the appearance was rather gloomy in different sections of the work. The district was

very large, and the presiding elder could not perform his round in less than six months.

The spring of 1801 the quarterly meetings in Kentucky were held without the Presiding Elder. The quarterly meeting for Hinkston circuit was held early in June, at Owens's meeting-house, Four-mile Creek, commencing on Friday and breaking up on Monday morning. At this meeting was the first appearance of that astonishing revival to which we have alluded. Several professed to get religion, and many were under deep conviction for sin, and the meeting continued from Sunday morning till Monday morning, with but little intermission.

From thence brother Lakin and myself proceeded in company, on Monday morning, to a Presbyterian sacrament, at Salem meeting-house, in the neighbourhood of Col. John Martin's. The Rev. Mr. Lyle was pastor of that Church. There had been during the occasion more than ordinary attention and seriousness manifested. I arrived on the ground before the first sermon was concluded, and during the interval they insisted on my preaching the next sermon; and, notwithstanding I was much fatigued from the labours of the quarterly meeting, I at length consented, and commenced about 2 o'clock, P.M. I took for my text, "To you is the word of salvation sent;" and before I concluded there was a great trembling among the dry bones.

Great numbers fell to the ground and cried for mercy, old and young. Brother Lakin followed with one of his, then powerful exhortations, and the work increased. The Presbyterian ministers stood astonished, not knowing what to make of such a tumult. Brother Lakin and myself proceeded to exhort and pray with them. Some obtained peace with God before the meeting broke up. This was the first appearance of the revival in the Presbyterian Church. From these two meetings the heavenly flame spread in every direction.

Preachers and people, when they assembled for meeting, always expected the Lord to meet with them.

Our next quarterly meeting was for Lexington circuit, at Jessie Griffith's, Scott county. On Saturday we had some indications of a good work. On Saturday night we had preaching in different parts of the neighbourhood, which at that time was the custom; so that every local preacher and exhorter was employed in the work. Success attended the meetings, and on Sunday morning they came in companies singing and shouting on the road. Love-feast was opened on Sunday morning at eight o'clock, and such was the power and presence of God that the doors were thrown open, and the work became general, and continued till Monday afternoon, during which time numbers experienced justification by faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

The work spread now into the several circuits. Salt River and Shelby were visited, and Danville shared in the blessing; also the Presbyterian Church caught the fire. Congregations were universally wakened up: McNamer's congregation on Cabin creek; Barton Stone's at Cain Ridge; Reynolds's near Ruddell's station and in Paris; Rev. Mr. Lyle's at Salem; Mr. Rankin, Walnut Hills; Mr. Blythe at Lexington and Woodford; and Mr. Walsh at Cane run; likewise in Madison county, under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Houston. The work extended into Ohio at Lower Springfield, Hamilton county; the Rev. Mr. Thompson's congregation and Eagle creek; Rev. Mr. Dunlavey's congregation, Adams county.

The Methodist local preachers and exhorters, and the members generally, united with them in carrying on the work, for they were at home wherever God was pleased to manifest his power; and having had some experience in such a school, were able to teach others.

The Presbyterian ministers saw the advantages of such auxiliaries, and were pressing in their invitations, both for the

travelling and local preachers, to attend their sacraments through the months of July and August.

The Rev. Barton Stone was pastor of the church at Cane Ridge. I had been formerly acquainted with him when he travelled as a missionary in the Holston and Cumberland country, previous to his settling at Cane Ridge; and we agreed to have a united sacrament of the Presbyterians and Methodists at Cane Ridge meeting-house, in August. The meeting was published throughout the length and breadth of the country, to commence on Friday.

On the first day I arrived in the neighbourhood; but it was a rainy day, and I did not attend on the ground. On Saturday morning I attended. On Friday and Friday night they held meetings in the meeting-house; and such was the power and presence of God on Friday night that the meeting continued all night; and next morning, Saturday, they repaired to a stand erected in the woods, the work still going on in the house, which continued there till Wednesday, without intermission.

On Saturday the congregation was very numerous. The Presbyterians continued to occupy the stand during Saturday and Saturday night, whenever they could get a chance to be heard; but never invited any Methodist preacher to preach. On Sunday morning Mr. Stone, with some of the elders of the session, waited upon me to have a conference on the subject of the approaching sacrament, which was to be administered in the afternoon.

The object in calling upon me was, that I should make from the stand a public declaration how the Methodists held certain doctrines, etc. I told them we preached every day, and that our doctrines were published to the world through the press. Come and hear, go and read; and if that was the condition on which we were to unite in the sacrament, "Every man to his tent, O Israel;" for I should require of him to make a public declaration of their belief in certain doctrines. He then replied

that we had better drop the subject; that he was perfectly satisfied, but that some of his elders were not. I observed that they might do as they thought best; but the subject got out among the Methodists, and a number did not partake of the sacrament, as none of our preachers were invited to assist in administering.

There is a mistaken opinion with regard to this meeting. Some writers of late represent it as having been a camp meeting. It is true there were a number of wagons and carriages which remained on the ground night and day; but not a single tent was to be found, neither was any such thing as a camp meeting heard of at that time. Preaching in the woods was a common thing at popular meetings, as meeting-houses in the West were not sufficient to hold the large numbers of people that attended on such occasions. This was the case at Cain Ridge.

On Sunday morning, when I came to the ground, I was met by my friends, to know whether I was going to preach for them that day. I told them I had not been invited; if I was, I should certainly do so. The morning passed off, but no invitation. Between ten and eleven I found a convenient place on the body of a fallen tree, about fifteen feet from the ground, where I fixed my stand in the open sun, with an umbrella affixed to a long pole and held over my head by brother Hugh Barnes. I commenced reading a hymn with an audible voice, and by the time we concluded singing and praying we had around us, standing on their feet, by fair calculation ten thousand people. I gave out my text in the following words: "For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ;" and before I concluded my voice was not to be heard for the groans of the distressed and the shouts of triumph. Hundreds fell prostrate to the ground, and the work continued on that spot till Wednesday afternoon. It was estimated by some that not less than five hundred were at one time lying on the ground in the deepest agonies of distress, and every few minutes rising in

shouts of triumph. Toward the evening I pitched the only tent on the ground. Having been accustomed to travel the wilderness, I soon had a tent constructed out of poles and papaw bushes. Here I remained Sunday night, and Monday and Monday night; and during that time there was not a moment's cessation, but the work went on, and old and young, men, women, and children were converted to God.

It was estimated that on Sunday and Sunday night there were twenty thousand people on the ground. They had come far and near from all parts of Kentucky; some from Tennessee, and from north of the Ohio River; so that tidings of Cane Ridge meeting was carried to almost every corner of the country, and the holy fire spread in all directions.

Immediately after this meeting the last round of quarterly meetings commenced for that conference year, and they were appointed for four days, to commence on Friday. The work continued, and quarterly meetings were attended by thousands, and generally continued night and day with but little intermission; and during the week, at appointments at different parts of the country, we had to preach in the groves to thousands of people.

We gave invitations to all the Presbyterian ministers to unite with us at our quarterly meetings; but they generally pleaded as an excuse that they had appointments to attend, and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday would pass off without any aid from them; but on Monday we generally saw some of their ministers in the congregation, but having our plans filled up for that day we consequently paid no attention to them; for we were fully satisfied that they only wanted the Methodists to shake the bush, and they would catch the birds.

My advice to our official members in quarterly meeting conference was, to quietly withdraw from their meetings, and mind our own business. They did so, and no difficulty occurred

in any of our societies. This conference year ended with the greatest prospects that had ever visited the far west.

In the year 1801 the Presbyterians had some gracious revivals in Sumner county, Tennessee, and Logan county, Kentucky. The two McGees, John – an old travelling preacher, who had located and settled on the Cumberland River – and his brother William, a Presbyterian minister, with two other Presbyterians, Messrs. Rankin and Hodges, in connection with brothers Page and Wilkerson, were united in carrying on the work both among the Methodists and Presbyterians; but the Conference of 1802 opened with greater prospects, and the work became universal in Tennessee.

The Presbyterians appeared to have forgotten that they had any Confession of Faith or Discipline, and the Methodists had laid aside their Discipline, and seemed to forget that they were bound to observe the rules contained therein, and as established from time to time by the General Conference.

I visited the old stamping-ground, Sumner and Davidson counties, where I had laboured in 1795, and again in 1798, and found a great change. The class meetings were free to all; the love-feasts open to all; and they were mixed up in such confusion that it was impossible to tell to what Church or denomination they belonged.

The Western annual conference for the year sat at Strauther's, in Sumner county, Tennessee. Bishop Asbury presided. There was a general attendance of the preachers, and the conference sat in the house of brother Strauther, and the public exercises were in the woods at a stand in hearing of the house. The conference and the public exercises were of the same mixed character.

To my astonishment, on the first day of the conference several of the Presbyterian clergymen were introduced into the conference, and remained during that day. When the conference adjourned I took brother McKendree aside, and stated to him

my views of the impropriety of the course pursued in breaking down all our rules and regulations as Methodists; but especially in our annual conference, I observed to him, that many of our local brethren, and some who had been travelling preachers for years, were excluded a seat among us, while those ministers of another denomination were admitted and not objected to. I insisted on him, as the presiding elder, to enter his objection when we met the next morning.

He admitted it was wrong, but said he could not broach the subject, as Mr. Asbury appeared to have such favourable notions of the union that then prevailed.

I observed that I was no enemy to union and communion with any denomination upon proper principles, and if he declined I would bring the subject before the conference, and accordingly did so on the sitting of the conference next morning. I stated my objections at length, and cited our Discipline, and insisted that our rules established class meetings and love feasts as wise and prudential means, and that they were peculiar to the Methodist Church. Other denominations did not consider them either wise or prudential, or they would introduce them into their Churches; and why should they wish to intrude on our privileges, while they, by their own showing, considered them no privilege? And in regard to the annual conference, the Discipline clearly pointed out who had the right to a place in their sittings, etc.

Mr. Asbury decidedly opposed my views, and stated to the conference that I was but a young man, and referred the conference to some of Mr. Wesley's views and conduct on such occasions. No member of the conference took sides with me, but all remained silent; and when Mr. Asbury concluded his remarks, I made my rejoinder, and acknowledged that I was but a junior, but thought I understood Methodist Discipline, and that as a Church we were not to be governed by Mr. Wesley's views or the views of any other man, however aged, but by the rules

laid down by the General Conference; and if the Presbyterians, or any other denomination, had a desire to enjoy what we esteemed privileges, let them adopt them in their Churches, and then we would reciprocate, and not till then.

When I concluded my observations I requested Mr. Asbury to give me my appointment in this country, and I assured him I would soon put a stop to the present mode of doing business. He observed that I was too cold for that climate; that I should go further north.

And here our controversy ended; but we had no more Presbyterian ministers during the sitting of conference.

Mr. Asbury was at that time not able to walk alone, from a rheumatic affection in his feet, and brother McKendree had to accompany him to the Holston country; and after they arrived in the settlement in the neighbourhood of Knoxville, the subject of what I had said at conference was brought up, and Mr. Asbury acknowledged that I had taken the proper ground, and wrote me on the subject, stating that reciprocity was the true doctrine. He also wrote to Mr. Rankin and Mr. Hodges his views, and at the next conference at Mount Gerizim, 1803, he preached that doctrine to the conference.

From the conference at Strauther's, October, 1802, I received my appointment on Limestone circuit alone. I was appointed at the conference to attend the Legislature of Kentucky, and obtain an act of incorporation for Bethel Academy. I performed that duty and arrived on my circuit late in November. I took with me Adjet McGuire, a young man that had been lately licensed to preach, and employed him as a helper, which was afterward sanctioned by the residing elder.

When I entered upon my circuit, I found that, to a very great extent, the people were prejudiced against a married preacher, and I could find no house open at which I could board my wife, either for love or money. In that state of affairs I was brought to a stand. I had some little money, and found a few

friends; and in those days I considered myself equal to any emergency, and immediately set about cutting logs for a cabin, and a few friends assisted me in getting them together, and I purchased some plank and brick, and in the course of a few weeks had a snug little room fitted up adjoining brother L. Fitch's, about three miles from Flemingsburg. During the time I was building my cabin I attended my Sunday appointments, and through the week attended to my work and collecting materials to fit out my cabin; and having accomplished that business, I entered regularly upon my work.

The circuit had been much neglected the past year, and religion was at a low ebb, and we commenced in good earnest. The winter was severe and the congregations but small. On the opening of spring I commenced two-day's meetings, and called together the local preachers to my aid.

Early in June we had a two-day's meeting at Union meeting-house, not far from Germantown; and on that occasion it pleased God to manifest His power in a very singular manner on Sunday, and the first-fruits was the conversion of brother Petticord's oldest daughter. Brother Petticord was one of the first race of Methodists from Frederick county, Maryland, and a relative of Caleb B. Petticord, who was admitted on trial as a travelling preacher in 1777. This meeting continued on Sunday night and part of Monday, and numbers were seriously affected. From this meeting the holy flame spread in every direction, and the work became general throughout the circuit, at Bracken meeting-house, and Shannon, and Flemingsburg, and Locust meeting-house, and at private houses, and our congregations became crowded night and day.

In August we had a four-day's meeting at Shannon meeting-house. This was a time that numbers still living well remember. This meeting continued night and day without intermission. I was employed night and day without sleeping for three nights. Brother McKendree preached on Monday

morning, and while he was preaching the power of God rested on the congregation; and about the middle of his sermon it came down upon him in such a manner that he sank down into my arms while sitting behind him in the pulpit. His silence called every eye to the pulpit. I instantly raised him up to his feet, and the congregation said his face beamed with glory. He shouted out the praise of God, and it appeared like an electric shock in the congregation. Many fell to the floor like men slain in the field of battle. The meeting continued till late in the afternoon, and witnesses were raised up to declare that God had power on earth to forgive sin, and many did say that he could cleanse from all unrighteousness.

From this meeting the work went on with astonishing power; hundreds were converted to God; and one of the most pleasing features of this revival was, that almost all the children of the old, faithful Methodists were the subjects of the work.

Our last quarterly meeting was at Flemingsburg at which brother Nicholas Snethen and brother McKendree attended, and preached in the power and demonstration of the Spirit. It was a time long to be remembered. There was one peculiar circumstance which I will relate. Old father Duzan, who had raised a numerous family of sons and daughters, and then had a son in the travelling connection, was surrounded by his family and engaged in prayer on the ground. Presently he was seen supporting his youngest son, and proclaiming aloud to those around, "Glory to God, he has converted my last child. Now let me, thy servant, depart in peace; for my eyes have seen thy salvation."

This conference year closed with an increase for Limestone circuit of about five hundred. The people were anxious for my return for the next year. There were now houses enough open to receive me to live in and cost me nothing. The preachers who united in carrying on this work, were Benjamin Northcott, James O'Cull, Jarvis Taylor, Joshua Sargent,

Jeremiah Lawson, Hugh Barnes, and Richard Tilton, together with many exhorters and leaders, who entered heartily into the work. This year ended the happiest days of my itinerant life; for the happiest days of a Methodist preacher is to be on a circuit where he can pursue a regular course and preach every day. I had the honour of lodging the Bishop one night, in the log-cabin I had built, while on his way to conference.

The conference this year was at Mount Gerizim, October 2, 1803. At this conference Mr. Asbury insisted that I should cross the Ohio and take upon me the formation of a new district in that new and wilderness country, and act as presiding elder.

I took several days to think on the subject, and gave him for answer, that I considered myself not sufficiently qualified for such a responsible undertaking; but he would not take no for an answer, but appointed me presiding elder of Ohio District, which included all the settlements from the Big Miami up to the neighbourhood of Steubenville, which was then called West Wheeling circuit, running down the Ohio, including Little Kanawha and Guyandotte circuits, in Virginia, and some settlements on Licking, in the State of Kentucky.⁴⁹

James B FINLEY. Autobiography.

In the spring of 1800 one of the most astonishing and powerful revivals occurred that has ever been known in the western country. This was also the most extensive revival that perhaps ever was witnessed in this country. It was marked by some peculiarities which had not been known to characterize

⁴⁹ From "The Autobiography of William Burke." which is included in James B. Finley, *Sketches of Western Methodism: Biographical, Historical and Miscellaneous, Illustrative of Pioneer Life.* Cincinnati. Methodist Book Concern. 1855. Pages 73 – 85.

any revival in former times. The nearest approximation to it, of which I can form any conception, was the revival on the day of Pentecost, when thousands were awakened and converted to God under the most exciting circumstances.

The commencement of the revival is traceable to the joint labours of two brothers in Cumberland county, Kentucky, one of whom was a Presbyterian, and the other a Methodist preacher. They commenced labouring together, every Sabbath preaching, exhorting, and praying alternately. This union was regarded as quite singular, and excited the curiosity of vast multitudes, who came to the places of meeting to hear two men preach who held views in theology supposed to be entirely antagonistic. Nothing was discoverable in their preaching of a doctrinal character, except the doctrine of man's total depravity and ruin by sin, and his recovery therefrom by faith in Christ. All were exhorted to flee the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins. The word which they preached was attended with the power of God to the hearts of listening thousands. The multitudes who flocked from all parts of the country to hear them became so vast that no church would hold them, and they were obliged to resort to the fields and woods. Every vehicle was put in requisition; carriages, wagons, carts and sleds. Many came on horseback, and larger crowds still came on foot.⁵⁰

As the excitement increased, and the work of conviction and conversion continued, several brought tents, which they pitched on the ground, and remained day and night for many days. The reader will here find the origin of camp meetings.

In the Spring of 1801 Bishop McKendree was appointed presiding elder of the Kentucky district; and being thus brought in contact with the wonderful work, he was prepared to form a

⁵⁰ [Ed] This argument implies that the main reason why the great crowds flocked was to hear the McGee brothers preach. This was certainly NOT the reason why the crowds came together.

correct judgment of its character. That there were extravagances that constituted no part of religion, he was prepared to admit, but that it was all a wild fanatical delusion, he was far from conceding. Nay, he believed that it was the work of God's Spirit on the hearts of the people, and that thousands were genuinely converted to God.

These meetings began to follow one another in quick succession, and the numbers which attended were almost incredible. While the meetings lasted, crowds were to be seen in all directions, passing and repassing the roads and paths, while the woods seemed to be alive with people. Whole settlements appeared to be vacated, and only here and there could be found a house having an inhabitant. All ages, sexes, and conditions, pressed their way to the camp meetings. At these meetings the Presbyterians and Methodists united. They were held at different places.

On the 22nd of May, 1801, one was held at Cabin Creek; the next was held at Concord, in one of my father's old congregations; the next was at Point Pleasant, and the succeeding one at Indian Creek, in Harrison county. At these meetings thousands fell under the power of God, and cried for mercy. The scenes which successively occurred at these meetings were awfully sublime, and a general terror seemed to have pervaded the minds of all people within the reach of their influences

The great general camp meeting was held at Cain Ridge meeting-house. This house was built for my father, and here was my old home. I have elsewhere described this meeting, or attempted to do so. Language is utterly impuissant to convey anything like an adequate idea of the sublimity and grandeur of the scene. Twenty thousand persons tossed to and fro, like the tumultuous waves of the sea in a storm, or swept down like the trees of the forest under the blast of the wild tornado, was a

sight which my eyes witnessed, but which neither my pen nor tongue can describe.

During the religious exercises within the encampment, all manner of wickedness was going on without. So deep and awful is man's depravity that he will sport while the very fires of perdition are kindling around him. Men, furious with the effects of the maddening bowl, would outrage all decency by their conduct; and some, mounted on horses, would ride at full speed among the people. I saw one, who seemed to be a leader and champion of the party, on a large, white horse, ride furiously into the praying circle, uttering the most horrid imprecations. Suddenly, as if smitten by lightning, he fell from his horse. At this a shout went up from the religious multitude, as if Lucifer himself had fallen. I trembled, for I feared that God has killed the bold and daring blasphemer. He exhibited no signs whatever of life; his limbs were rigid, his wrists pulseless, and his breath gone.

Several of his comrades came to see him, but they did not gaze long till the power of God came upon them, and they fell like men slain in battle. I was much alarmed, but I had a great desire to see the issue. I watched him closely, while for thirty hours he lay, to all human appearance, dead. During this time the people kept up singing and praying. At last he exhibited signs of life, but they were fearful spasms, which seemed as if he were in a convulsive fit, attended by frightful groans, as if he were passing through the intensest agony. It was not long, however, till his convulsions ceased, and springing to his feet, his groans were converted into loud and joyous shouts of praise. The dark, fiend-like scowl which overspread his features, gave way to a happy smile, which lighted up his countenance.

A certain Dr P., accompanied by a lady from Lexington, was induced out of mere curiosity, to attend the meeting. As they had heard much about the involuntary jerkings and falling

which attended the exercises, they entered into an agreement between themselves that, should either of them be thus strangely attacked or fall, the other was to stand by to the last. It was not long before the lady was brought down in all her pride, a poor sinner in the dust, before her God. The Doctor, agitated, came up and felt for her pulse; but, alas! her pulse was gone. At this he turned pale, and, staggering a few paces, he fell beneath the power of the same invisible hand. After remaining for some time in this state, they both obtained pardon and peace and went rejoicing home. They both lived and died happy Christians. Thousands were affected in the same way.

These camp meetings continued for some time, the Presbyterians and Methodists uniting together as one in the army of the Lord. Some ministers had serious doubts concerning the character of the work; but its genuineness was demonstrated by its fruits. Men of the most depraved hearts and vicious habits were made new creatures, and a whole life of virtue subsequently confirmed the conversion. To all but Methodists the work was entirely strange. Some of the peculiarities had been witnessed before by the preachers, and they were enabled to carry it on.

There meetings exhibited nothing to the spectator unacquainted with them but a scene of confusion, such as could scarcely be put into human language. They were generally opened with a sermon or exhortation, at the close of which there would be a universal cry for mercy, some bursting forth in loud ejaculations of prayer or thanksgiving for the truth; some breaking forth in strong and powerful exhortations, others flying to their careless friends with tears of compassion, entreating them to fly to Christ for mercy; some, struck with terror and conviction, hastening through the crowd to escape, or pulling away from their relations, others trembling, weeping, crying for mercy; some falling and swooning away, till every appearance of life was gone and the extremities of the body assumed the

coldness of death. These were surrounded with a company of the pious, singing melodious songs, adapted to the time, and praying for their conversion. But there were others collected in circles round this variegated scene, contending for or against the work.

Many circumstances transpired that are worthy of note in reference to this work. Children were often made the instruments through which the Lord wrought. At one of these powerful displays of Divine power, a boy about ten years old broke from the stand in time of preaching under very strong impressions, and having mounted a log at some distance, and raising his voice in a most affecting manner, cried out, "On the last day of the feast Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He attracted the main body of the congregation, and with streaming eyes, he warned the sinner of their danger, denouncing their doom, if they persevered in sin, and strongly expressed his love for the salvation of their soul, and the desire that they would turn to God and live. By this time the press was so great that he was taken up by two men and held above the crowd. He spoke for near an hour with that convincing eloquence that could be inspired only from heaven, and when exhausted, and language failed to describe the feelings of his soul, he raised his handkerchief, and dropping it, cried, "Thus, O sinner, will you drop into hell unless you forsake your sins and turn to God." At this moment the power of God fell upon the assembly, and sinners fell as men slain in mighty battle, and the cries of mercy seemed as though they would rend the heavens, and the work spread in a manner which human language cannot describe.

We will now try to give something in reference to the manner and the exercise of mind of those who were the subjects of this work. Immediately before they became totally powerless they were sometimes seized with a general tremor, and often uttered several piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Men

and women never fell when under this jerking exercise, till they became exhausted. Some were unable to stand, and yet had the use of their hands and could converse with companions. Others were unable to speak. The pulse became weak, and they drew a difficult breath about once a minute. In many instances they became cold. Breathing, pulsation, and all signs of life forsook them for hours; yet I never heard of one who dies in this condition, and I have conversed with persons who have laid in this situation for many hours, and that have uniformly testified that they had no bodily pain, and that they had the entire use of their reason and powers of mind.

From this it appears that their falling was neither common fainting nor a nervous affection. Indeed, this strange work appears to have taken every possible turn to baffle the conjectures and philosophising of those who were unwilling to acknowledge it was the work of God. Persons have fallen on their way home from meeting, some after they had arrived home, others pursuing their common business on their farms, and others when they were attending to family or secret devotions.

Numbers of thoughtless, careless sinners have fallen as suddenly as if struck by lightning. Professed infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering their blasphemies against God and the work, and have, like Saul, declared that to be God's work which they so vehemently persecuted.

I trust I have said enough on this subject to enable my readers to judge how far the charge of enthusiasm and delusion is applicable to this work, unequalled for power and for the entire change of the hearts and lives of so many thousands of men and women. Lord Lyttleton, in his letter on the conversion of Saint Paul, observes, and I think justly, that enthusiasm is a vain, self-righteous spirit, swelled with self-sufficiency and disposed to glory in its religious attainments. If this be a good

definition, there was as little enthusiasm in this work as any other. Never were there more genuine marks of that humility that disclaims the merit of its own works, and looks to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of acceptance with God.

Christ was all and in all in their exercises and religion, and their Gospel. And all believers in their highest attainments seemed most sensible of their entire dependence upon Divine grace; and it was truly affecting to hear with what anxiety awakened sinners inquired for Christ as the only Physician who could give them help. Those who call this enthusiasm ought to tell us what they understand by the spirit of Christianity.

Upon the whole, this revival in the west was the most extraordinary that ever visited the Church of Christ, and was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature was necessary to arrest the attention of a wicked and sceptical people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream. This grand work of God did do it. It confounded infidelity and vice into silence, and brought numbers beyond calculation under the influence of experimental religion and practical piety.

It is generally known that in the early settlements of Kentucky, the regular Baptists were by far the most numerous body of Christians. It is also known that they adhered most rigidly to the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation, together with the final and unconditional perseverance of the saints. The same may be said of the Presbyterians, who firmly maintained and preached those doctrines till the commencement of this revival.

Indeed, the doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation was so generally taught by these denominations, that there was rarely found anyone fearless enough and independent to call them in question. They had taken deep root,

and it might be said the doctrines of Calvin had filled the country. During the prevalence of these doctrines, supported as they were on all sides by polemical divines, whose religion seemed to consist almost entirely of a dogged and pertinacious adherence to the creeds and confessions of faith, which had been handed down from orthodox Puritan fathers, it was not a matter of surprise that professors of religion, losing sight of the weightier matters of the Gospel, while they attended to its "anise and mint and cummin," would fall insensibly into antinomianism. The inconsistency of the doctrines of Calvin became the subject of the sarcastic sneers of infidels, and the inability of these Churches to reconcile their doctrines with the justice of God and the present order of things, made fearful inroads on the cause of Christianity, and strengthened the hands of the wicked. The friends of the truth were few. They were without influence, and much persecuted; but, notwithstanding, they lifted up their voice.

It was at this juncture, and under these circumstances, that it pleased the Lord to look down upon the western country. Man's extremity was God's opportunity, and the wonderful manifestation of Divine power swept away antinomianism, and infidelity, and every refuge of lies.

There were some in the Presbyterian Church who did not preach a partial Gospel, but who lifted up their voices like a trumpet, and invited all to come to Jesus for salvation, assuring them that he died for all. Of this number was that man of God, Carey Allen. As a missionary he was a "flame of fire," and thousands were awakened under his fervent, soul-stirring preaching.

Not long after the revival commenced, several of the Presbyterian ministers renounced Calvinism, and being persecuted by their brethren, they left the Church, and organized a new Presbytery, which was called the Springfield Presbytery. As is often the case with those who separate from the Church

because they judge it needs reformation in doctrine or discipline, so these brethren, unfortunately, did not stop *in media res*, but rushed to another extreme. They ran into gross errors and heresies, as was seen in their apology for renouncing the jurisdiction of the Synod, the tract on the atonement by Mr. Stone, in 1804, and their sermons.

Methodists and Presbyterians both saw that an enemy had come in, and was sowing tears broadcast over the field, and they retired to their own stands, and defended their own doctrines.

The party which had separated were styled *Newlights*, but they have subsequently taken the name of *Christian*. In June, 1804, these preachers dissolved their Presbytery, and drew up a very curious paper, which they signed, titled "The last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." Of the six ministers who signed this paper, two went back to the Presbyterian Church, three joined the Shakers, and one the Campbellites. They published to the world, in the paper above alluded to, their non-belief, for they renounced all creeds, confessions of faith, and standards of doctrine and started out on a crusade against all the Churches.

Several of these ministers were my school-mates in older days, and I felt a lively interest in them; so much so, as the reader will find, in the relation of my religious life, given in the preceding pages, I went to their camp meeting on Eagle Creek to join them. By a personal and confidential interview with one of the preachers, a former old class-mate at my father's academy, I learned that they did not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, nor in total depravity, nor in the atonement, as held by orthodox Churches. Honest David Purviance, in his life, comes out boldly, and proclaims the doctrines of the Newlight Church.

This heresy spread and prevailed. The early settlers of Kentucky were most sceptical on the subject of religion. The

more influential classes of citizens were infidel in sentiment, and they labored to bring all to their views. To accomplish their wishes more fully, they employed an Englishman to take charge of their seminary of learning at Lexington. He had an extensive library, and from his position, exerted a great influence in society. Subsequently, the principal of the seminary was elected Secretary of State. The Governor, Mr. Garrard, was a celebrated Baptist preacher, and a gentleman of much respectability and influence. It was not long till the Secretary succeeded in converting the Governor to his faith; and, having accomplished a result so desirable to the infidel party, the next thing was to get the Governor to publish a tract on the doctrine of the Trinity.

This made considerable noise. In 1802 the Rev. Augustin Easton and Governor Garrard commenced a meeting on Cooper's Run, in Bourbon County. Here they proclaimed publicly the Arian and Socinian doctrines. The wavering separatists were excited and encouraged wonderfully by this movement, as is evident from their own confession and subsequent course. These unfortunate people – Newlights – from the time they first began to preach their doctrines, were beset in their meetings with those wild exercises that have been alluded to.⁵¹

These strange exercises that had excited so much wonder in the western country came in toward the last of the revival, and were, in the estimation of some of the more pious, the chaff of the work.

Now it was that the humiliating and often disgusting exercises of dancing, laughing, jerking, barking like dogs, of howling like wolves, and rolling on the ground, manifesting themselves. To add to their misfortune, being ripe for a catastrophe, a company of Shakers from New York found their

⁵¹ See also Benedict. Volume Two. page 252.

way among them, and proselytised their most talented and useful preacher and not a few of their members. These fanatics for a season went on with a tremendous influence, threatening to sweep all before them. But they, like all other wild and visionary people, had their day. (see Barton Stone's pamphlets.)

The wild vagaries adopted by the Newlight preachers of Kentucky prepared them to gulp down all the ridiculous tenets of Shakerism, and this produced a general scepticism in that state, that, I fear, will not be done away for generations. It may seem strange that all grades of Arians and Socinians have adopted immersion as the only mode of baptism, and regard it as constituting a title to heaven.

The new ISMS that followed this great revival were many, and it seemed as if Satan had taken advantage of the excitement to drive the bewildered into darkness and the sanguine into error and folly. The Shakers drew off hundreds with them. Elder Holmes rose up with his pilgrims, and started out in quest of the Holy Land. He had many followers, and after wandering about for some time, died on an island in the Mississippi River, and his band dissolved.

Elder Farnum, also another fanatic, pretended to have received the spirit of immediate inspiration, and raised a party called the "screaming children." After flourishing for a season, this association dwindled away. Next came A. Sargent and his twelve disciples – all women. It was spread over the country that he was inspired and conversed with angels daily, from whom he received revelations. Then Elias Hicks, the Quaker, espoused Arianism, and split the Quaker church, spreading confusion and schism every-where among the Friends.

Last, but not least in the train of evils, came Kidwell with the latest edition of Universalism. He taught that there was no hell, no devil, no future judgment; that it was impossible for anyone to commit any crime in this life that would possibly shut him out of heaven; that all souls at death enter at once into the

heavenly state, and are happy with God for ever, no matter how they have lived in the world.⁵²

Nathan Bangs. History of the M. E. Church. From the close of the General Conference of 1800, to the end of the year 1803.

Having, in the preceding chapter, detailed the doings of the General Conference of 1800, we will return to the annual conferences, and endeavour to give an account of the work of God in the various parts of their extensive fields of labour. This year and the two following were eminently distinguished for the outpouring of the Spirit of God, and the enlargement of his work in various directions. The heavens and the earth, indeed, appeared to be shaken by the mighty power of God, and very many sinners were brought to feel their need of Christ, to seek and to find him as their only Saviour.

It seems that during the session of the General Conference much good had been done by the public and private labours of the preachers; and as they separated with much harmony of feeling, the Spirit of God wrought by their means in many of the places where they were stationed the present year.

During the Conference, a work of God commenced in that section of Baltimore called Old Town. Meetings were held here in private houses, which were attended by some of the preachers when not engaged in the business of the Conference, by which means several souls were brought to the knowledge of the truth. From the beginning, the work spread in different directions through the city, in the churches as well as in private

⁵² James B. FINLEY. *The Autobiography of James B. Finley: Pioneer Life in the West.* (ed. W.P. Strickland. Cincinnati. Cranston and Curts. 1853. Pages 362 to 373.

houses. Such a glorious work had not been seen in Baltimore for several years, and the old professors were much excited and encouraged at beholding their children and neighbours coming into the fold of Christ.

About two weeks after the adjournment of the General Conference, an annual conference was held at Duck Creek Cross Roads, where many of the young converts, and some of the more experienced Christians from Baltimore, came for the purpose of attending the meetings. Here the Lord wrought powerfully. While the members of the conference were transacting their business in a private house, some of the younger travelling, and some local preachers were almost constantly engaged in preaching to the people, exhorting and praying with them; and such was the intenseness with which they pursued their work, that at the church, the meeting was held without intermission for forty-five hours. Often during these meetings, the voice of the preacher was drowned either by the cries of the distressed or the shouts of the redeemed.

As these effects were new to many, they at first were looked upon with silent astonishment, until, before they were fully aware of it, both saints and sinners would be seized with a shaking and trembling, and finally prostrated helpless upon the floor. The result of these exercises was, that not less than one hundred and fifty souls were converted to God during the season of the conference. Such a time of 'refreshing from the presence of the Lord' had never before been witnessed in that part of the country.

From this the work spread with great rapidity through the eastern shore of Maryland, and into the lower counties of the state of Delaware, bowing, to its course, the hearts of many stubborn sinners, who were brought to God by faith in Jesus Christ. Both preachers and people, in whose hearts the fire of Divine love had been kindled in these meetings, carried the sacred flame with them wherever they went, and thousands have

doubtless praised God and are now praising him for the consolations of that blessed revival of godliness. It continued, indeed, to extend the hallowing influence on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and in some other places, through the remainder of the summer.

As the result of this glorious work in the little village of Duck Creek, no less than one hundred and seventeen joined the Church.

Nor was the revival confined to this part of the country. In Philadelphia, in various circuits in the vicinity of Baltimore, in the state of Vermont, in some portions of Canada, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out, and many, very many sinners were brought to the knowledge of the truth. It seems, indeed, that most of the preachers had received a new baptism of the Holy Spirit – like that which had been showered upon Calvin Wooster, and others in Canada, the preceding year; and wherever they went they carried the holy fire with them, and God wrought wonders by their instrumentality. But the most remarkable work was going on in the western country.

Last year, 1799, was distinguished by the commencement of those great revivals of religion in the western country, which introduced the practice of holding "**camp meetings.**" And as these revivals were characterized by signal displays of the power and grace of God, and eventuated in the conversions of thousands of souls, it will naturally be expected that a particular account should be given of their rise and progress.

This work commenced under the united labours of two brothers by the name of **M'Gee**, one a Presbyterian, and the other a Methodist preacher. The former, who had preached for some time in North Carolina and in the Holston country, moved into West Tennessee in the year 1796 or 1797, and in 1798 was settled over a congregation in Sumner County. In the year

1798, the latter, **John M’Gee**, moved into West Tennessee, and settled in Smith County. Though belonging to different denominations, those doctrines and usages by which each was distinguished from the other by no means interrupted the harmony of brotherly love. Hence they cordially united in their meetings, and strengthened each other’s hands in the work of the Lord.

In the year 1799 they set off on a tour through what was called the “Barrens,” towards the state of Ohio, and on their way they stopped at a settlement on the Red River, to attend a sacramental occasion in the congregation under the charge of the Rev. Mr. M’Gready, a Presbyterian minister. On being introduced to him, Mr. John M’Gee was invited to preach, with which he complied; and he preached with great liberty and power. He was followed by his brother, the Presbyterian minister, and the Rev. Mr. Hoge, whose preaching produced such a powerful effect that tears in abundance attested that the people felt the force of the truths delivered. While Mr. Hoge was preaching, a woman in the congregation was so powerfully wrought upon that she broke through all restraint, and shouted forth the praises of God aloud. Such was the movement among the people, evidently under the impulses of the Divine Spirit, that, though Messrs. M’Gready, Hoge and Rankin, Presbyterian ministers, left the house, the two yoke-fellows, the M’Gees, continued in their places watching the ‘movement of the waters.’ William M’Gee soon felt such a power come over him that he, not seeming to know what he did, left his seat and sat down on the floor, while John sat trembling under a consciousness of the power of God. In the meantime, there were great solemnity and weeping all over the house. He was expected to preach, but instead of that he rose and told the people that the overpowering nature of his feelings would not allow of his preaching, but as the Lord was evidently among them, he earnestly exhorted the people to surrender their hearts

to him. Sobs and cries bespoke the deep felling which pervaded the hearts of the people.

This great and unusual work so excited the attention of the people that they came in crowds from the surrounding country, to enquire what these things meant; and this was the beginning of that great revival of religion in the western country which introduced “*camp meetings*.” The people came with horses and wagons, bringing provisions and bedding, and others built temporary huts or tents, while all, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists, united together in prayer, exhortation, and preaching, exerting all their energies to forward the good work.

The good effects resulting from this meeting, thus casually, or rather providentially convened, induced them to appoint another on Muddy River, and then another on what was called ‘the Ridge.’ Here a vast concourse of people assembled under the foliage of the trees, and continued their religious exercises day and night. This novel way of worshipping God attracted great attention. In the night the grove was illuminated with lighted candles, lamps, or torches. This, together with the stillness of the night, the solemnity which rested on every countenance, the pointed and earnest manner with which the preachers exhorted the people to repentance, prayer, and faith, produced the most awful sensations in the minds of all present. While some were exhorting, others crying for mercy, and some shouting the praises of God in the assembly, numbers were retired in secluded places in the grove, pouring out the desire of their wounded spirits in earnest prayer. It often happened that these were liberated from their sins, and their hearts filled with joy and gladness while they engaged in their solitary devotions; and then they would come into the encampment and declare what God had done for their souls. This information, communicated to their brethren in the artless simplicity of “new-born souls,” would produce a thrill of joy which could hardly be suppressed: and thus they reciprocated with each other

in their sorrows and joys, and excited one another to the exercise of faith in the promises of God, and to perseverance in the good work.

The results of this last meeting was, according to the best estimate which could be made, the conversion of not less than one hundred souls.

A still greater meeting of the same character was held soon after on Desha's Creek, near the Cumberland River. Among the many thousands of people who attended this extraordinary meeting, many, very many, were made partakers of the grace of life. It is said by an eye-witness (Rev. John M'Gee), who himself largely participated in these solemn exercises, that at these meetings the people fell under the power of the word, 'like corn before a strong wind,' and that many who were thus slain, 'arose from the dust with divine glory beaming upon their countenances,' and then praised God in such strains of heartfelt gratitude as caused the hearts of sinners to tremble within them. But no sooner did this feeling of ecstasy subside than those young converts began to exhort their relatives and neighbours to turn to God and live. And truly it was difficult to resist the power of their words, for they spoke of what they felt, and their words were sharper than a 'two-edged sword,' piercing the heart, and extorting the cry, 'What shall we do to be saved?'

Many of these were children of praying parents, and though uneducated, they spoke with a power and eloquence which 'confounded the wisdom of the learned,' and extorted the confessions from many an un-humbled Pharisee, that 'God was with them of a truth.'

Among others who were brought to a knowledge of the truth at this meeting was *John Alexander Granade*, who after an exercise of mind for a considerable time bordering on despair, came forth a 'burning and a shining light,' as a public advocate for the cause of Christ. He soon became distinguished

among his brethren as the 'western poet,' and the 'Pilgrims' Songs' were among the most popular hymns which were sung at those camp meetings, and perhaps became the fruitful source whence sprung the numerous ditties with which the Church was, for some time, almost deluged. These songs, though they possessed but little of the spirit of poetry, and therefore added nothing to true intellectual taste, served to excite the feelings of devotion, and keep alive that spirit of excitement which characterized the worshippers in those assemblies. Both Granade and Caleb Jarvis Taylor contributed much by their energetic labours to fan the flame of piety which had been kindled up in the hearts of the people in that country.

It is not to be supposed that these meetings went on without opposition. This would be calculating too favourably of human nature in its present state of moral perversity.

The openly profane reacted by displaying the natural enmity of the carnal mind. The non-professor of godliness mingled their pride of philosophy with their prejudices. Some people of unquestioned piety also reacted, displaying also their religious knowledge and their prejudices in the pity and abhorrence they showed to the events at the meetings.

Some would scoff, others would philosophize, while many would dogmatize in no stinted terms of religious intolerance, while they beheld exercises which others believed to be the power and grace of God.

But there was one argument which silenced them all. Once those very persons who were most violent in their opposition, most vociferous in their hard speeches against what they denominated 'wild fire,' would become so warmed by its heat, that their hearts were melted within them, and 'falling down on their faces, they would worship God, and report that God was in them of a truth.' This argument was irresistible. It was demonstration. And many such were presented during the progress of these meetings. In such cases, those who before had

been blasphemers, and mockers, persecutors, and bigoted dogmatizers, were not only struck dumb, but the 'tongue of the dumb was made to sing,' and those very opposers of the work became the living witnesses for its divine and genuine character, and stood as its bold and fearless defenders.

In the meantime the numbers attending these meetings were continually increasing, - some from a sincere desire to be benefited; others were attracted by curiosity, and not a few from motives of speculation, to arm themselves with arms of resistance to their progress. What tended not a little to give them notoriety, and to excite the public attention towards them, was, the newspapers of the day were teeming with accounts of these camp meetings, some in favour and some against them - and all, whether friends or foes, were eager to gratify their curiosities, or benefit their souls, by becoming eye and ear witnesses of the manner in which they were conducted.

Accordingly, in 1801 the numbers who attended those which were held in Kentucky were immense, some as occasional visitors, and others as residents on the ground through the progress of the meetings. The numbers varied, of course, according to the density or sparsity of the population in their immediate neighbourhoods; and they have been estimated from three to twenty thousand. At one held in Cabin Creek, a Presbyterian minister who was present, and zealously engaged in promoting its objects, estimated the number at not less than twenty thousand.

Though at this meeting the Methodists appeared to be the most actively engaged in the work, yet some of the Presbyterian brethren engaged heartily with them, while others stood aloof, not knowing what judgement to form of it. Being, however, encouraged by the example of others, many of them united with zealous hearts in the cause, and at this great meeting the Methodists and Presbyterians joined their forces to push forward the work, and they seemed to bear down all opposition.

The scene is represented as being indescribably awful! An eye-witness thus writes concerning it:-

'Few, if any, escaped without being affected. Such as tried to run from it, were frequently struck on the way, or impelled by some alarming signal to return. No circumstance in this meeting appeared more striking than the great numbers that fell on the third night; and to prevent their being trodden underfoot by the multitude, they were collected together and laid out in order, on two squares of the meeting house, till a considerable part of the floor was covered. But the great meeting at **Caneridge** exceeded all. The number that fell at this meeting was reckoned at about three thousand, among whom were several Presbyterian ministers, who, according to their own confession, had hitherto possessed only a speculative knowledge of religion. Here the formal professor, the deist, and the intemperate, met with one common lot, and confessed, with equal candour, that they were destitute of the true knowledge of God, and strangers to the religion of Jesus Christ.'

In consequence of such a vast assemblage of people, it is impossible for any one voice to reach the whole of them with intelligible language: hence they were divided into several groups, and addressed by as many different speakers, while the whole group, at times, became vocal with the praises of God, and at other times pierced with the cries of distressed penitent sinners. As before said, the scene was particularly awful at night. The range of the tents - the fires reflecting lights through the branches of the trees - the candles and lamps illuminating the entire encampment - hundreds of immortal beings moving to and fro - some preaching - some praying for mercy - all these things presented a scene indescribably awful and affecting.

As an instance of the manner in which some of those who attended these meetings from a sportive disposition were arrested and brought to a better state of mind, the following is related:- A gentleman and a lady, of some standing in the gay circles of life, attended the above meeting with a view to divert and amuse themselves at the expense of those whom they considered as deluded with a strange infatuation. With these thoughts they agreed that if any of them should fall the other should not desert him or her. They had not been long on the ground before the woman fell! The merry gentleman, instead of keeping his promise, frightened by the sight of his female friend on the ground, fled with great precipitancy. He did not, however, proceed more than about two hundred yards, before he also was prostrate on the ground, and was soon surrounded by a praying multitude.

In 1801 the work was greatly aided by the energetic labours of the Rev. William M'Kendree (afterward bishop) who was this year appointed to the Kentucky district. Having been in the midst of the revivals in the lower part of the state, and having his soul fired with the sacred flame which was burning with such intensity among the people, he went up into the centre of the settlements and carried the tidings among them of what God was doing by means of those extraordinary meetings. His congregations, composed chiefly of Methodists and Presbyterians, were powerfully affected when he gave them, at the conclusion of his sermon, an animated account of the commencement and progress of this work. It is said that while he held up before them the truths of the gospel, intermixed with narrations of the work of God at these meetings, his whole soul seemed to be filled with 'glory and with God,' and that his countenance beamed with brightness. While he related with artless simplicity, and with glowing warmth, the manner in which God wrought upon the souls of the people, the many happy conversions that he had witnessed, and the astonishing

effects which attended the preaching of God's word, the hearts of God's people began to beat in unison with his own, while sinners were weeping in every directions under the melting influence of the Spirit of God.

By this means these same meetings were introduced into the centre of the state, and spread through all the settlements of the western country; and such was the eagerness of the people to attend, that the roads were literally crowded with those that were pressing their way to the groves; so much so that entire neighbourhoods would be forsaken, for a season, of their inhabitants. And as the Methodists and Presbyterians were generally united together in those meetings, they took the name of 'General Camp Meetings.' By these means they spread all through Tennessee, Kentucky, and some parts of Ohio, carrying with them fire and destruction into the enemy's territories, and bowing the hearts of God's people as the heart of one man to the yoke of Jesus Christ. Of their subsequent progress, and the influence they have exerted on society, I need not here speak, as these things are known to all.

On McKendree's itinerants.

It will be seen by the preceding remarks that these camp meetings were not the result of a previously digested plan, but like every other peculiarity of Methodism, were introduced by providential occurrences, and were embraced and followed up by God's servants because they found them subservient to the grand design they had in view, namely, the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ.

Indeed, they did not originate with the Methodists, but upon a sacramental occasion among the Presbyterians, at which there was such a remarkable outpouring of the Divine Spirit in the people as inclined them to protract their exercises to an unusual period; and then this being noised abroad brought others to the place, and finally so many that no house could hold

them; this induced them to go into the field, and erect temporary shelters for themselves, and to bring provisions for their sustenance; and finding that God so abundantly blessed them in these meetings, they were led to continue them, until they at length became very general among the Methodists throughout the country.

In order to give a connected view of the rise of camp meetings in the west, I have a little anticipated the regular date of the history, and shall therefore conclude what I have to say on this subject for the present with a few reflections.

I have simply related the facts in respect to that extraordinary work as I find them recorded in the historical sketches of those times. No doubt many now, as then, will be sceptically inclined in regard to the genuineness of the work. To remove this scepticism from the minds of candid inquirers after truth (for such only will be convinced,) let it be remarked,

1. That as to the facts themselves, they are indubitable – that is, there can be no room for doubt that such meetings were held as above narrated, and that sinners were prostrated to the earth under the preaching of God’s word – that they cried out for mercy – were delivered in answer to prayer – and that such, as well as old professors of religion, often shouted aloud the praises of God – and that many of these, perhaps most of them, afterwards led ‘peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.’ These facts are as well attested as any we have upon the pages of history.

2. It is admitted that in such vast multitudes, assembled in the open air, under circumstances of such peculiar excitement, and many of them not well instructed in science or morals, there must have been some disorder, some mingling of human passions not sanctified by grace, and some words and gesticulations not in accordance with strict religious decorum.

Every action, therefore, and everything which was said and done, I am by no means willing to defend or pledged to justify.

3. When we look into the book of God, we find some instances on record of persons having been affected in a similar way, who were manifestly under the divine influence. Thus Daniel says of himself, that when he saw the vision, ‘There remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.’ – and when the Lord had spoken to him he ‘stood trembling,’ see Daniel x: 8 – 11. So Saul of Tarsus, when saluted by the voice from heaven, fell helpless upon the ground, was struck blind, and remained so for three days. And may not the strong cries and tears of those persons who were struck under conviction at those camp meetings, have been produced from a cause similar to that which is recorded in Mark ix: 26, where it is said, ‘that the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him.’

4. In examining the history of the work of God in his church at different periods, we find similar instances of mental and bodily exercises on record. Read, for example, President Edwards’s account of the revival in New England, and Mr. Wesley’s Journal, particularly from 1739 to 1742, and his correspondence with the Rev. Ralph Erskine of Scotland, in relation to this subject.

In reference to the work in New England, in the early part of the eighteenth century, we have the following testimony of a convention of Congregational ministers, who assembled in Boston, July 7, 1743, for the express purpose of considering and reporting on the nature of this work. The following is an extract from that report.

“We never before saw so many brought under soul concern, and with distress making the inquiry, ‘What must we

do to be saved?’ and these persons of all characters and ages. With regard to the suddenness and quick progress of it, many persons and places were surprized with the gracious visit together, or near about the same time; and the heavenly influence diffused itself far and wide, like the light of the morning. Also in respect to the degree of operation, both in a way of terror and in a way of consolation, attended in many with unusual bodily effects. Not that all who were accounted the subjects of the present work have had these extraordinary degrees of previous distress and subsequent joy: but many, and we suppose the greater number have been wrought on in a more gentle and silent way, and without any other appearances than are common and usual at other times, when persons have been awakened to a solemn concern about salvation, and have been thought to have passed out of a state of nature into a state of grace. As to those whose inward concern has occasioned extraordinary outward distresses, the most of them when we came to converse with them, were able to give what appeared to us a rational account of what so affected their minds, viz., a quick sense of their guilt, misery, and danger; and they would often mention the passages in the sermons they heard, or particular texts of Scripture, which were sent home upon them with such a powerful impression. And as to such whose joys have carried them into transports and ecstasies, they in like manner have accounted for them, from a lively sense of the danger they hoped they were freed from, and the happiness they were now possessed of; such clear views of divine and heavenly things, and particularly of the excellences and holiness of Jesus Christ, and such sweet tastes of redeeming love as they never had before. The instances were very few in which we have reason to think these affections were produced by visionary or sensible representations, or by any other images than such as the Scriptures itself present to us.

And here we think it not amiss, to declare, that in dealing with these persons, we have been careful to inform them that the nature of conversion does not consist in these passionate feelings; and to warn them not to look upon their state as safe, because they have passed out of deep distress into high joys, unless they experienced a renovation of nature, followed with a change of life, and a course of vital holiness. Nor have we gone into such an opinion of the bodily effects with which this work has been attended in some of the subjects, as to judge them any signs that persons who have been so affected were then under a saving work of the Spirit of God. No: we never so much as called these bodily seizures convictions, or spoke of them as the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. Yet we do not think them inconsistent with a work of God upon the soul at that very time; but judge that those inward impressions which come from the Spirit of God, those terrors and consolations of which he is the author, may, according to the natural frame and constitution which some people are of, occasion such bodily effects; - and therefore that those extraordinary outward symptoms are not an argument that the work is delusive, or from the influence and agency of an evil spirit.”

This document is said to have been signed by no less than sixty-eight ministers, all of them concurred in the views therein expressed, while only fifteen refused their assent to an article in the same report which accorded to the practice, at that time a novelty in New England, of itinerating from place to place to preach the gospel – a practice introduced by Mr. Whitefield, and followed by a few others who had been awakened to activity by his zealous labours.

5. With these facts and examples before us, are we not justified in believing, that persons under the powerful operations of the Spirit of God, either convicting them suddenly and strongly of

sin, or filling their souls with his own pure love, may have their animal functions suspended for a season, so that there shall 'remain no strength in them.' Is there anything either unscriptural or incredible in all this?

6. Will it be deemed by any believer in divine revelation, or even by a deist, that God can, and often does, so work upon the mind of man, as to make that mind fully conscious of his presence? He who affects to doubt this might as well throw off all disguise at once, and turn an open atheist, and deny that there is a God who presides over the destinies of men, or exercises any control over their understandings and affections.

7. As the mind and body are so intimately connected that the one acts upon the other, is there, after all, anything so very extraordinary in the supposition that under the strong excitement produced upon the one by the sudden flashes of truth, the other should be equally and suddenly affected in the manner already described? How common are the instances in which persons have been known to swoon away by receiving sudden news either of a joyful or of an alarming character? Either great anguish or excessive joy has often been the means of depriving individuals of their physical strength. And what sorrow is equal to that which an awakened sinner feels when he is suddenly brought to see himself as he in reality is, a rebel against his God, and consequently exposed to wrath and hell! And must not the joy of such a person be proportionately great when he finds himself instantaneously delivered from that load of guilt, and filled with a 'peace unknown to sensual minds?'

8. It is frequently objected to exercises of this sort, that the passions are chiefly worked upon. This indeed may be the case in many instances. And I would by no means plead for a religion which does not enter into the judgment, and influence

the understanding as well as the affections. But yet, man is a creature of passions, as well as of intellect. And as Christianity is not intended to *destroy*, but only to *regulate* the passions, as well as to enlighten the understanding and sanctify the heart, we must expect the passions to be moved, and the emotions of fear, hope, love, and joy to be excited in religious as well as in all other exercises. To these passions Christianity certainly addresses itself, as well as to the judgment, and moves man to action from fear, from hope, and from the promises of pardon, comfort and protection, as well as from that eternal reward hereafter, which makes the Christian joyfully anticipate the pleasures of the future life. Those therefore who address themselves to the understanding only, as if men were merely intellectual beings, avail themselves of not one half of the motives with which the gospel furnishes its servants, to induce sinners to repent and believe in Christ, and to encourage believers to persevere in the path of duty.

9. These things being so, is it any matter of wonder that, when the awfully sublime and truly affecting subjects of Christianity are presented to the mind, corresponding effects should be produced upon the passions, and that these, when violently agitated with either religious fear or joy, should also affect the body?

10. But we do not place dependence upon these external signs as evidence in themselves of either penitence, conversion, or sanctification. As there may be a fear, a hope, and a love, which is not well founded, so there may be much bodily exercise without any spiritual profit. These things may or may not be. If a person who has had these exercises profess, in the meantime, to have experienced a change of heart, if he bring forth the fruit of righteousness in his subsequent life, we may then safely conclude that the work was affected by the Spirit of

God; but if otherwise, if he still manifest the un-humbled spirit of the Pharisee, or bring forth the ‘works of the flesh,’ his profession cannot save him from the condemnation of the hypocrite, or the misery of the self-deluded.

These remarks are submitted to the candid reader, with the hope that they may assist him in making up an unbiased judgment in respect to these things; and although, in the course of our history, we shall be compelled to admit the humiliating fact, that some of the subjects of the above revivals brought forth fruit unto death, yet it will be equally plain that the influence of others on society generally was of a very hallowed character.⁵³

Mason County, Kentucky.

Extract of a communication from the Rev. John Evans Findley, of Mason-county, Kentucky.

“The present revival of religion in Kentucky and Cumberland, exceeds everything of the kind I have ever heard of in point of numbers, and differs materially as to the means whereby it has been effected. Almost two years ago, in the neighbourhood of Nashville, a lad of eight or nine years of age, accompanied his sister to a sacrament, some distance from his father’s house, at which it pleased the Lord to visit him in mercy. When he returned home, and was taking the horses to the field, a lad of his own age, being at the house, accompanied him. He then told his companion what he had experienced, and that he was resolved henceforth to live the life of a Christian. ‘Hitherto,’ said he, ‘you and I have been companions; but,

unless you alter your course, we must break off our acquaintance; for I am determined to serve the Lord.’ This conversation so greatly affected the lad that he ran home to his father’s house, and threw himself on the bed. The father, seeing his son come home affrighted, was greatly concerned, and stripped him to see if he had received any hurt; but finding none, the whole family was alarmed. After the lad became able to speak, he asked for Davis M’Conkle, and said he wanted to see him. A message was instantly despatched for Mr. M’Conkle and his son. The old man, supposing the lancet would be necessary, carefully put that instrument into his pocket, and walked over; but Davis M’Conkle was the physician who understood the disease, and it was not long before the whole company were surprised with the two lads talking in rapturous language of redeeming love. Their zeal and crying greatly affected all present.

The first expedient that presented itself to their minds, was to collect the neighbours together for religious worship. This was done; and, to prevent any disorder in devotion, by the crying of the boys, they put them in a back room, and posted a person at the door to keep them there. After the friends and neighbours had sung and prayed together, Mr. M’Conkle related the story to the company, who unanimously desired to see the boys, and to hear it from themselves. The request was granted, and the boys simply related to them, with tears of joy, what God had done for their souls. Before they had half done, the whole company was in tears. Thus began the extraordinary work which has spread all over the country; and thousands are now rejoicing and praising redeeming love, who, a little while ago, appeared to be in the gall of bitterness. In Cumberland they meet in large companies, frequently to the amount of ten or twelve thousand, and spend, it may be, one or two weeks in religious worship, before they disperse.

⁵³ Nathan Bangs. *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, in Two volumes. 1782 – 1816. Volume Two. Pages 89 – 118.

Last summer and autumn, there was a considerable awakening in the Baptist churches in Woodford, Fayette, and Jefferson counties in Kentucky. And this spring, in our humble opinion, it hath pleased the Lord to pour out his Spirit on some of our Presbyterian congregations. At first our Ministers were shy, not knowing what opinion to form of it. The falling down of multitudes, and their crying out, (which happened under the singing of Watts's Psalms and Hymns, more frequently than under the preaching of the word,) was to us so new a scene, that we thought it prudent not to be over-hasty in forming any opinion of it. However, a little conversation with the affected persons, induced us to believe, that in the judgment of charity, it was the work of God.

I attended at Point Pleasant congregation, about fifty miles from me: there were about five or six thousand people; hundreds deeply affected; all serious; many saying, 'What is this?' and most spending their time in some religious exercise, chiefly singing hymns, night and day, without intermission, from Friday to Friday. Lawyer F-----, who came to find fault and ridicule, was, we hope, effectually brought to Christ, and is now a zealous exhorter. This was in the month of June. In July, at the administration of the Lord's Supper, at Cynthiana, every body was amazed. Hundreds fell to the ground at once, among whom was Doctor C-----, a professed deist. The news was spread, and ten or twelve of his companions ran to see; but in less than half an hour, they were all lying on the ground near the doctor; and I humbly hope that most of them have experienced a saving change.

In August last I attended at Cane-ridge Meeting-house: there were present, besides eighteen Presbyterian Ministers, the Governor of the State, each of whom was personally and busily engaged, either in preaching, praying, or exhorting. Some suppose the number of people seventeen, and others twenty-one thousand. There were one hundred and forty-eight wagons and

coaches present. The number of convicted persons was great; - some crying for mercy; some shouting redeeming grace; and others collecting in numberless small circles, or twelve or twenty, singing hymns; all serious; many walking to and fro, with anxiety pictured upon their countenances; and the whole conversation was either of religion, or something related thereto. The number of communicants was eight hundred and twenty-eight. Many young persons have set to their seal that God is true.

Some perhaps will censure us for associating with the Baptists and Methodists; but, my dear Sir, we are all friendly; there appears to be good doing; all are encouraging it; and is not this better than to be devouring one another? Is it not more agreeable with the command of Christ, whose every precept is love? We all preach the truth, as we think, carefully observing decorum, as far as conscience will admit, that one Society may not hurt the feelings of another.

On the 10th of August, at a sacramental occasion at Paris, thousands attended, and hundreds fell to the ground at once. This is about thirty miles from me. The work of the Lord appears to be progressing, though attended with some enthusiasm. - But this is generally confined to the grossly ignorant; for whom we must make every apology, as they are just emerging out of heathenish darkness."⁵⁴

A Letter from Kentucky.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Kentucky to a friend in Philadelphia, June 3rd, 1801:-

"You perhaps have heard of a remarkable revival of religion on the Cumberland River and settlements, which began about two years ago, and has continued and spread gradually

⁵⁴ Robert Young. Pages 201 - 205.

from there, until it has reached Green-town, on Green-river, &c. This has been principally among the Presbyterians last summer: and last winter there was a considerable addition to the Baptist church in the interior part of this State: and this spring it has commenced among the Presbyterians and Methodists, in several congregations to the north and east of this, and some of them not far distant.

I was, last Saturday, Sunday, and Monday witness to the most extraordinary scene of this kind that I ever saw, perhaps ever heard of. On a sacramental occasion, about fifteen miles from this, where I went with Mr. Todd and our two eldest children, having, from previous information, expected something of the kind to take place, which I will now give you a very imperfect sketch of; - for where the whole of the paper allowed for this letter, filled with nothing else, and I adequate to the task, it could contain but an imperfect account.

The happy subjects of this work are variously affected in some respects, from first to last: some fall instantaneously to the ground, as if shot; in others it appears to come on more gradually; all appear more or less distressed; all crying out for mercy. Some in the most pitiful and distressing manner; others with more tremendous shrieks and cries, as if they were that instant sinking down to eternal ruin. Some, for most of the time, - and all, at times, - appear to be in deep and profound thought: all have distress and anguish painted in their countenances, some to a great degree. The length of time they continue in this situation is various, - generally not very long before they get relief in some degree. The relief they obtain is as various as their distresses. Some are affected in this manner, several times in a few days, or a few weeks: generally with new views of their own wickedness, and exceeding sinfulness; the holiness of God - of his law; the love, compassion, ample sufficiency, and willingness of the Redeemer to save, &c. The scriptural and rational accounts which many give of their views

of sin, of themselves, of God, of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation in and through him, leaves not a doubt in our minds that it is a work of God; who, in these latter days, appears to accomplish that change in a few hours or days, which generally, in former revivals, has been accomplished in weeks or months only. On the Cumberland River, where a considerable time has elapsed, their lives and conversation have generally proved the work or change to be a gracious and genuine work. The characters affected, were as various as we have among us. Many real Christians, and in one day, and at one time, two of the Clergy sunk down to the ground, under the astonishing views with which they were favoured, praising God and praying for sinners.

Some professors were brought to lament their cold-heartedness and deadness in religion: others were divested of all their false hopes and refuge in lies, falling down as before described.

Many who believed it all delusive, and some who came with a design of opposing the work, (for it had taken place in a similar manner in their praying societies, in a few instances similar to this,) were struck down instantly, in the midst of their opposition, by the mighty hand of God. I am inclined to believe that this work will spread, and that these individuals were providentially there, to be a means of preparing the way for the Lord when he may please to visit their neighbourhoods. The people never left the preaching-house, or place of preaching, night or day, except to get something to eat; and from the time the work began, which was on Friday, until Tuesday there was no intermission in the work, or in the prayers or praises of God: how many were awakened in this period I cannot even guess.

The Clergy and the pious people were kept busy night and day, praying for, and talking with the distressed: even during the time of preaching numbers were thus employed,

though at so great a distance from the place of preaching as not to interrupt each other.

Upon looking over what I have written, I find it very imperfect; partly occasioned by interruptions while writing, but principally from its being impossible to give a just description.”⁵⁵

Washington, Kentucky.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Washington, Kentucky, to his son in Philadelphia, July 15th, 1801.

At Stoner, and at Point Pleasant, in Bourbon County, the work is remarkable. It is said that twenty stout-hearted sinners, who called themselves the band, and came to the meeting on purpose to ridicule, were every one of them, under awful convictions, struck to the ground. The doctrines chiefly insisted on are, immediate closure with Christ by faith; at the same time showing the imminent danger a sinner is in while out of Christ. There are some who oppose the doctrine of coming immediately to Christ, saying, or seeming to say, too much stress on the natural ability of the creature; however, it is apparent that the Lord is at work, and that many are changed from the ferocity of the lion, to a lamb-like temper; others, from an opposing disposition, to a friendly inclination. Social-meetings are frequent, and much crowded; often a powerful effusion of the Holy Spirit attends them. Those meetings, and the administration of the Lord’s Supper, have been the means most remarkably blessed in this glorious work. What encouragement for all persons of every denominations, who profess faith in Jesus Christ, to assemble together in a social and Christian-like manner, and implore the God of all grace to

⁵⁵ Robert Young. pages 201 – 207.

extend the heavenly shower through this guilty land! A remarkable story is related of a man travelling from this State to Georgia, who, as he was going through a wood, heard a noise a little off the road. Curiosity led him to turn aside to see what it proceeded from: he soon found a large assembly of people, and a Minister preaching to them. He rode up to them, and sat on his horse, to attend a little while, but soon proceeded on his journey: what he heard had no effect at the time; but, as he rode, musing on what he had heard in the wood, the power of divine grace accompanied his meditation in so forcible a manner, that he fell from his horse. How long he lay he could not tell. When he arose, he found a great change in his mind. When he looked for his horse, and finding him gone, with his money and all that he was laden with, he returned on his track. After a while he found his horse, with the bridle entangled in a cane-brake, and all his property safe. He then proceeded on his way rejoicing. When he arrived at Nashville, (a town situated on the Cumberland-river, in the State of Tennessee, a place notorious for wickedness,) the gentleman began to proclaim what the Lord had done for his soul. The inhabitants thought him insane, and were about to confine him. He told them that he never was in the exercise of his reason until within a few days; but he now hoped that he had the full exercise of it, and that they need not give themselves any uneasiness about him. He admonished and exhorted them; in consequence of which, it is said, that the work of the Lord is greatly prevailing through the town.

Many such remarkable instances have taken place in that part of the country.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Robert Young. pages 207 – 209.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

Baptist documents. (Kentucky.)

Extract of a letter from a gentleman to his friend at the city of Washington, dated Lexington, March 8, 1801.

I am glad to inform you there is a great revival of religion near this place; 51 have been added to our church since you left us; 62 to Bryant's Station, since the 8th of February, exclusive of today, at which place 46 were received yesterday and a number more expected to join. I suppose upwards of 220 have been added to that church. – 53 were baptised at Clear Creek in one day. There is also a great reformation at Boon's Creek, Marble Creek, Shawne Run, etc. In short all the churches near this that I have heard from, who adhere to primitive Christianity, are in a prosperous state.

In some it appears like a fire that has been long confined – bursting all its barriers, and spreading with a rapidity that is indescribable – attended only with a still small voice. –

This, my brother, is a harvest indeed, and we may, on this occasion, use the language of sacred inspiration, - “the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.” It may be truly said, the Lord is doing great things for us, and I will add, whereof we are glad. – O that the great Husbandman would still carry on his work, and separate the precious grains from the tares.

From the same author to the same, March 9, 1801.

I am sorry to hear of your destitute situation, in not hearing the Gospel preached – but I will tell you one thing, not because you are ignorant of it, the Lord can communicate spiritual health, strength, growth, and vigour, without it, when he sees cause to place any of his dear children in such a situation as you are.

It is with pleasure that I inform you 58 were baptized at Bryant's yesterday – from 8 February to 8 March, 120 have been added to that church, among whom were a number of our acquaintances, and several poor black people, some of whose experiences have astonished me.

This is the work of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes. – But, alas, poor L-----n, yet in measure stands out, though I trust even in this Sodom there are a few brought to a saving knowledge of a precious Christ. I was told yesterday, that wicked son of E--- D---- has been brought in the Gospel fold. My dear brother, when I think on the pleasant seasons we have enjoyed in conversing about our blessed Redeemer, my heart burns to see you again.

Your friend and brother
In the Gospel of Christ.
“S. G.”⁵⁷

Extract from a letter from a gentleman (in Bourbon county, Ky.) to his friend in Baltimore. August 7, 1801.

My Dear Friend,

I am on my way to one of the greatest meetings of the kind perhaps ever known; it is on a sacramental occasion. Religion has got to such a height here, that people attend from a

⁵⁷ Woodward. *Increase of Piety*. pages 50 – 51.

great distance; on this occasion I doubt not but there will be ten thousand people, and perhaps 500 wagons. The people encamp on the ground, and continue praising God, day and night, for one whole week before they break up.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman, to his sister in Philadelphia, dated Lexington, (Ken.) August 10, 1801.

Dear Sister,

I hasten to give you an account of the revival of religion, and some of the remarkable circumstances thereof. I am sure the most discerning and observant pensman or the nicest pencil, could not portray to your imagination, the full idea of the meeting that took place at Cainridge, in Bourbon county:- I shall confine myself only to a few particulars.

This meeting was published about one month generally, throughout the Presbyterian connexion, as one of their annual sacraments: thither assembled the religious of every denomination, some from one hundred miles distant, but more particularly the Presbyterians and Methodists, who are in full communion with each other: - lastly the Baptists, who preach with each other, but do not commune. To this general assembly I set off last Friday, and arrived there on Saturday about 10 o'clock: I then began to note some of the most extraordinary particulars:

I first proceeded to count the wagons containing families, with their provisions, camp equipage, etc. to the number of 147: at 11 o'clock the quantity of ground occupied by the horses, wagons, etc., was about the same size as the square between Market, Chesnut, Second and Third-streets, Philadelphia – There was at this place a stage erected in the woods, about 100 yards from the meeting-house, where were a number of Presbyterian and Methodist ministers; one of the former preaching to as many as could get near enough to hear –

in the house also, was another of the same denomination, preaching to a crowded audience – at the same time a large concourse of people collected about 100 yards in the east direction from the meeting-house, hearing a Methodist speaker – and about 150 yards in a south course from the house was an assembly of black people, hearting the exhortations of the blacks, some of whom appeared deeply convicted, and others converted.

The number of communicants who received tokens were 750, nor was there a sufficiency of them – these tokens are small pieces of lead, the size of a five-penny bit, with a letter A or B impressed thereon, and distributed by the ministers to the members of the several churches, not excluding any Baptist who apply for them.

I believe there was at one time as many as three hundred who exhorted on this occasion. I noted a remarkable influence of a little girl, by the name of Barbara, about 7 years old, who was set upon a man's shoulder, agreeably to her desire, to speak to the multitude, which she did, until she appeared almost exhausted, and leaned back her head on her bearer. A tender-hearted old man, standing close behind her, observed, "Poop thing, she had better be laid down;" at which she quickly turned round her head and said, "Don't call me poor, for Christ is my brother, God my father, and I have a kingdom to inherit, therefore don't call me poor, for I am rich in the blood of the Lamb."

["And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things he did, and the children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, hearest thou what they say? And Jesus saith unto them, yea: have ye not read, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise!"]

Permit me to ask, are we, like those new converts, constantly in season, and out of season beseeching our friends

and fellow sinners to surrender to the demand of “My son, give me thine heart!” So far as relate to myself, I am not only a fruitless but a leafless tree, encumbering the ground of gospel light.

Last Sunday the Association was held at Highby’s, 6 miles from here, where it is said, there were from eight to ten thousand persons; and on the same day in the two counties adjoining, there were at two congregations, from 18,000 to 25,000 souls.⁵⁸

Henry C. Vedder.

A History of the Baptists in the Middle States.

After the Great Awakening of 1740 and the years immediately following, there was a long period in the history of American Christianity in which special seasons of religious interest were almost unknown. Doubtless the troublesome period of the Revolution, with its military operations and social disorder, had much to do with producing this state of comparative religious lifelessness.

The influence of English and French Deism was also quite marked toward the close of the eighteenth century, and the cause of religion languished in all parts of the country and among all Christians.

About the year 1800 revivals occurred almost simultaneously in various localities, and a marked increase of religious interest was manifested from this time forward. No one denomination experienced this influence in special measure, and no part of the country was entirely exempt from its power. The revivals were, however, most marked in their depth and fervour in the frontier regions. Among the new settlements the

religious feeling was very strong, and beyond the Alleghanies revivals of extraordinary extent and power were frequent.

It was in these regions and during these revivals that the camp-meeting originated, and from this time periodic religious gatherings were more frequently held.

The reflex influence of this revival interest was perhaps felt more strongly at first in Western Pennsylvania than it was in New York. The churches in the western counties were powerfully awakened, and the work continued with little abatement for several years.

In 1802 there were numerous revivals in New Jersey, especially about the city of Newark. The church now known as Pebble Memorial Church, of that city, had been constituted the previous year and participated largely in the results of that revival. The general period from 1800 to 1830 was marked by continuous, or, at least, frequent revivals among Baptist churches.

In those thirty years, the Baptists of the United States are said to have increased from one hundred thousand to three hundred and thirteen thousand one hundred and thirty-eight. In this increase the Baptists of the Middle States certainly had their full share. They cannot be estimated for the year 1800 at more than twenty thousand. In 1834 they numbered, according to “Allen’s Register,” over seventy-six thousand.

From 1830 a period of some twenty-five years elapsed in which there was no such general revival interest, either in the United States as a whole, or among the Baptists of the Middle States, as have marked some other periods of their history. There were, however, numerous cases in the State of New York of very powerful revivals at this time. Most of these were connected with the labours of the Rev. Charles G. Finney, the celebrated evangelist and theologian. Mr. Finney was a Presbyterian who had been bred as a lawyer, and who entered upon his work as an evangelist soon after his conversion, with

⁵⁸ Woodward. *Increase of Piety*. pages 52 – 54.

very little special preparation. From the first he was remarkably successful. Many of his meetings were held in connection with Baptist churches, or in towns where these participated in the benefits of the general religious awakening.

One of the most remarkable series of meetings that he conducted at this period were those held in Rochester in the year 1830. The great majority of the leading citizens of the place were converted, and a great change was made in the moral state and after history of the city. Twice subsequently, in 1842 and in 1855, Mr. Finney held meetings in Rochester with equally marked results. These three revivals left traces that have never been eradicated. They permanently changed the character of the city and gave to it a Christian tone that even the large influx of foreign population in recent years has not sufficed wholly to overcome. Revivals of similar power under Mr. Finney's preaching occurred at Utica, Auburn, Troy, New York, Philadelphia, and Buffalo.

It was in connection with these meetings that great opposition was developed to what were called Mr. Finney's "New Measures." In one of his early meetings, when he had been preaching about three hours, Mr. Finney attempted to bring people to a decision in the matter of their salvation, by requesting them to rise if they desired to accept Christ; and a few years later, in 1825, on a single occasion he asked those who desired to be saved to come forward to the front seat while the rest of the congregation prayer for and with them.

It was not until his first series of meetings at Rochester, that he made much use of either device, but from this time onward the practice of inviting enquirers forward became usual with him. This was known as "coming to the anxious seat," and Mr. Finney's use of this method was severely criticised.

The objection to it really rested on a theological ground. The old-school, extreme, Calvinists were not willing to allow that the human will had any self-determining power. In their

belief conversion followed regeneration, a mysterious process wrought immediately by the Holy Spirit on the hearts of the elect. They were accustomed merely to urge their hearers to use the means of grace and wait on the Lord until it was His good pleasure to renew them. Mr. Finney, on the other hand, assumed that the sinner had sufficient power of self-determination to accept the divine promise of salvation at any time, and that nothing but his own wicked perversity stood in the way of his immediate salvation. Consequently, in all his preaching he attempted above all things to sweep away every excuse that men had for their inaction, and strove by every means in his power to bring them to an immediate decision for Christ.

The "anxious seat," the rising for prayer, and the attendance at enquiry meetings were simply devices to make one whose conscience was roused and who felt a desire for salvation commit himself by taking some public stand. He rightly judged that this was more than half the battle, and that when people were induced to take this step, if they were really sincere, they were not far from the kingdom of God.

Other new measures of Mr. Finney that were severely criticised were the prolonging of meetings to unseasonable hours, sometimes throughout the night. It was also objected that he was occasionally harsh and rude in the pulpit, saying unkind and censorious things; that he himself prayed for people by name in public assemblies, without their consent, and encouraged others to do the same; that he permitted, if he did not encourage, the practice of women speaking and praying in promiscuous assemblies. Some of these charges were not justified by facts. Others of them were true, however, and a difference of opinion regarding the advisability of such measures existed for years among the evangelical churches. It was generally thought, after due trial, that the methods in the main vindicated themselves. Nearly every evangelist has since

adopted these or similar methods, and as the people have become wonted to them the criticisms have diminished and finally disappeared.

Two other contemporary evangelists are noteworthy for their labours among Baptists of the Middle States: Jacob Knapp and Jabez S. Swan. The former was especially active in New York, though his labours extended over the Northern States, as far west as California. Mr. Knapp had few educational advantages, and his language was often ungrammatical, especially in moments of excitement, but he had a mind as robust as his body (which was notably sturdy and muscular), and his knowledge of the English Scriptures was immense. Like Finney, his preaching was strongly doctrinal, and he appealed habitually to the conscience of his hearers rather than to emotion. His preaching would be considered severe, and even coarse, at the present day, but in his own time it was marvellously effective. Powerful revivals attended his labours, in the course of which he is said to have preached sixteen thousand sermons, baptised four thousand persons, and led two hundred young men to become preachers of the gospel. Probably one fourth of these labours were performed in New York State.

Mr. Swan was a man of rather more culture, having had a partial course of study at the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution. In knowledge of the Scriptures, in directness and power as a revival preacher, he was a worthy peer of Jacob Knapp. The greater part of his work was done in the State of Connecticut, of which he was a native, and where he spent the larger part of his life. He had, however, several periods of service in New York, both as pastor and as evangelist. The most marked of these was the decade between 1830 and 1840, when he was nominally pastor of the churches at Oxford and Preston, but was preaching far and near among the Baptist churches of the State, with marked results in the

conversion of hearers of all sorts and conditions. It is said that over ten thousand conversions occurred during his ministry, but how large a part of these were in New York we can only guess.

The influence of this period of revivalism on the life and growth of the churches was profound, and manifested itself in many ways. It had a great effect on the preaching. To a large extent it banished the written sermon from the pulpit, and made the preaching of all – even of those who continued to read their sermons – more personal and pungent. A certain type of doctrinal sermon disappeared by degrees. Mr. Finney's own preaching was strongly doctrinal, and evangelists in later years who have been most successful have been precisely those who have been most doctrinal in their preaching; but there is doctrinal preaching and doctrinal preaching. Mr. Finney's aim in all his preaching of doctrinal was to influence the will. He never taught theology *per se* in the pulpit, he never discussed philosophy for its own sake. His sermons were not essays on theological themes, but he used doctrines to give weight and point to his appeals to the conscience, to produce conviction, and to stimulate men to action.

The influence of evangelism during this period was also to simplify pulpit style. Preachers no longer indulged in florid rhetoric and stilted language, but talked to men in the language of ordinary life. It used to be objected to Mr. Finney that he brought his illustrations from the streets and men's workshops and other humble sources, but nowadays instead of being considered a blemish this is reckoned a merit in a preacher.

The effect of revivalism on church life was also marked. Prayer meetings were increased in frequency and attendance. Participation in them was no longer confined to the ministers and deacons but became general among the members. The vital piety of the churches was confessedly greater. Religion became a more real thing to men, a thing affecting their everyday life, and not something reserved for one sacred day of the week.

This was especially manifest in the Middle States, where from the beginning a more active and robust type of piety prevailed than was found in New England. As the people of New York moved westward into the newer regions, which they have done by hundreds of thousands during this century, they naturally determined to a great degree the type of piety in the newer States. The Baptists of the Middle States have had a far greater effect upon the religious life of the West than have those of New England, partly because of their larger numbers, and partly because of their more active and demonstrative piety.

In 1857 there was a very marked wave of revival interest extending throughout the country. The first manifestation was in the city of New York, one of its first-fruits being the establishment of the Fulton Street daily prayer meeting. Similar meetings were established in other large cities. It is said that three hundred thousand were added during this revival to the membership of the evangelical churches of the country. The Civil War which soon followed was a great interruption to the religious life and progress of the whole land, but with the return of peace new spiritual life was manifest in many parts of the country.

After 1870 this interest was seen to be rapidly increasing, and from 1874 to 1877 the great Moody and Sankey meetings caused larger masses of people to attend religious meetings than had ever been brought together at one time. These revivals were not confined to any one denomination, but the Baptist churches of the Middle States fully shared in their blessing.

It will be an interesting study to note the effect of this evangelism upon the growth of the Baptist denomination in the Middle States. In New York the effect is distinctly traceable in the rise of new churches and Associations.

In 1800 there were ninety-four churches; by 1810, eighty-three more had been organized; in the next decade

ninety-six were formed; by 1830, one hundred and eleven had been added to the number; and in the next two decades the number of new churches is one hundred and twenty-seven and one hundred and three respectively.

When we look at the growth of Associations the fact are even more striking. Four were in existence in 1800; and the increase by successive decades is as follows: five by 1810; seven by 1820; ten by 1840; five by 1850; and since that date but six more in all have been constituted, and these by division or reunion of existing bodies.

The conclusion from this data is irresistible: the period of most rapid growth among New York Baptists, in all their history, as between 1800 and 1840, in which time considerably more than one third of all the existing churches, and almost two-thirds of the Associations of the State, came into existence. But this was precisely the period of evangelism and revival, in its most active manifestation. The coincidence cannot be accidental. Though there were other causes of growth, the most important cause of all must have been the prevalence of revivals and the prominence given among all the churches to the immediate work of soul-saving.

Similar results, though perhaps less striking, are reached when we study the progress of Baptist churches in New Jersey. Twenty-two churches had been formed in that State by the year 1800. By the year 1825 there had been eighteen added to the number, and in the next twenty-five years the increase of churches was forty-three. The associational growth of New Jersey mainly belongs to this period also. Up to 1811 the Baptist churches of this State had been, with few exceptions, attached either to the Philadelphia or the New York Association.

The first organisation of churches within State lines was that known at first as the New Jersey Association. – which has now for years borne the name of the West Jersey Association. – which was formed in 1811 by delegates from fourteen churches.

The Central Association was formed next, in 1828, and was followed by the North (1833, the East (1841).

The Sussex, which was organised in 1833, is now extinct, and the Camden and Trenton are of later origin. The inference is proper from these facts that if the influence of evangelism in New Jersey is less impressive than in New York during the corresponding period, it is still somewhat noteworthy.⁵⁹

RILEY. B. F., A History of the Baptists in the Southern States – East of the Mississippi.

Denominational Expansion.

In 1770 the Baptists of the South were, in point of numbers, quite a weak folk. At that period there were but few church organizations in the States now covered by the territory of the South. While a few of these were strong, relatively speaking, the most of them were feeble. Of the seventy Baptist churches reported for 1770, according to a recent author, only seven were accounted as existing in the South. There were, however, known to be more than that. Still there were perhaps not so many as ten thousand Baptists in the United States when the Revolution began. The effect of that great struggle was to disperse the Baptist churches of the Southern provinces. Baptists were intensely enlisted in the cause of freedom, and almost none of the churches stated season of worship. For the most part, the pastors were enlisted as chaplains, or as soldiers in the ranks.

⁵⁹ Henry C. Vedder. *A History of the Baptists in the Middle States*. Philadelphia. American Baptist. 1898. pages 149 – 160.

After the close of the war, however, there was a speedy reaction. Differences were forgotten in the single aim to unify the denomination in order to give a lasting effect to the achievements wrought. The sufferings and struggles which all had undergone in common, served to weld them the more easily after the gigantic contest had closed. This was illustrated by the easy fusion of the “Separate” and “Regular” Baptists of Virginia in 1787.

Virginia.

This was the signal for union throughout the provinces, so that within a few years after the fusion in Virginia the denomination presented a united front. This spirit of unity which, in turn, was the result of that singleness of aim for the principle for which the Baptists of the South, in common suffered and contended, was the fountain source of the denominational expansion with which the period following the Revolution was signalized.

A grateful sentiment everywhere prevailed because of the achievement of liberty. Places of worship which had long been desecrated by the vile uses to which they were subjected by the enemy, were venerated more than ever before. Meeting-houses were rebuilt where they had been demolished, repaired where they had been damaged; and congregations gathered again with alacrity and gratitude, and resumed without fear of interruption, the worship of God. Only the sufferers from persecution could realize how precious was the boon of freedom, and it is but natural that these people should be frequently found at their places of worship.

The beneficent reaction from the turbulent period of the Revolution was favourable to the production of the grateful feelings which prevailed universally among the Baptists of the South. This spontaneous spirit which dictated an equally spontaneous worship, was the starting point of the phenomenal

growth which characterized the denomination during the subsequent periods throughout the Southern States.

From this prevalent condition of the Baptist churches sprang a revival which not only greatly augmented the membership of the churches already existing, but rapidly multiplied the number of churches themselves. It seems that as early as 1784 there were in Virginia alone one hundred and fifty one churches and fourteen thousand, nine hundred and sixty members.

Eight years later the number of churches had increased by two hundred and eighteen, with a membership of twenty thousand four hundred and forty-three.

The revival wave swept into the opening years of the nineteenth century, so that in 1810 – 1812 we find Virginia with two hundred and ninety-two churches, and thirty-five thousand six hundred and sixty-five members.

These numbers are furnished as to the resident membership of Virginia Baptist churches, although Semple estimates that between 1791 and 1810 fully one fourth of the Baptists in Virginia removed to Kentucky.

Notwithstanding that the Revolutionary period found the Baptists of the North far outnumbered those of the South, in 1814 there were nearly twice as many members in the Baptist churches in Virginia as in those of New York, and there were many more in Virginia than there were in all the New England States together.

North Carolina.

The same spirit of revivalism extended into North Carolina; but it was not until 1800 that the most memorable revival in the annals of that State occurred. James McGready, a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian preacher, began a revival in North Carolina in the first years of the nineteenth century, which shook the State to its centre, and which was soon felt in

Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio. The return of peace had brought to most of the Carolina churches many demoralising practices which required sturdy heroism to attack and expose. From the labours of this wonderful man, the Baptists derived immense increase to the membership of their churches throughout North Carolina.

Attention has already been called to the organization of the earliest churches in North Carolina, among which there were many struggling interests. In 1784 we find in the State forty-two churches, with a membership of three thousand two hundred and thirty-six; eight years later, in 1792, the number of churches had increased to ninety-four, and the membership to seven thousand five hundred and three.

The results of the McGready revival are manifest in the figures furnished for 1812, for then we find two hundred and four churches in the State, with a membership of twelve thousand five hundred and sixty-seven. As the churches of Kentucky were recruited from those of Virginia, so the churches of Tennessee derived their strength from those of North Carolina.

South Carolina.

Some of the churches of South Carolina were almost extinguished by the Revolution. The part borne in the great struggle by the leader of the South Carolina Baptists, Oliver Hart, in arousing the patriotism of the colonists and in inciting them against the royal forces, so aroused the wrath of the British commanders that on the approach of their armies to Charleston, Pastor Hart was advised by his friends to seek a safe retreat. He made his way northward to Hopewell, New Jersey, and never again returned South.

His church, which had so long been a centre of evangelistic influence in southern South Carolina, was almost destroyed. With the restoration of peace, Mr. Hart was recalled

to the pastorate of the church, but declined. Dr Richard Furman was then called from the high hills of the Santee to Charleston, where he entered upon a career of marvellous usefulness on October 18, 1787. The membership was easily rallied and Charleston again became a controlling centre of influence to the Baptist denomination in the South.

The churches throughout South Carolina shared in the revival spirit which was now prevailing throughout all the Southern settlements. McGready, the noted revivalist, visited the State in 1802 and followed up the work which had been accomplished in North Carolina.

Immense audiences thronged upon his preaching, variously estimated from four to eight thousand, drawn together from a group of districts, and even from many counties in Georgia.

As was true in the West, here were the remarkable physical demonstrations attendant upon the revival meetings of the period. Sudden loss of strength, swoons, outcries, groans, involuntary though violent spasmodic jerkings of the body – all these manifestations were witnessed during these remarkable meetings in the Carolinas.

The growth of the denomination in South Carolina is indicated by the fact that in 1784 there were in the State twenty-seven churches, with a membership of one thousand six hundred and twenty. By 1792, or within a period of eight years, the number of churches was almost trebled, there being then seventy churches, with a membership of four thousand one hundred and sixty-seven. In 1812, the churches numbered one hundred and fifty-four, and the total membership was eleven thousand three hundred and twenty-five.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ B. F. Riley. *A History of the Baptists in the Southern States – East of the Mississippi*. Philadelphia. American Baptist. 1898. pages 110 – 115.

Kentucky.

The first churches constituted in Kentucky were, for a considerable period, in a sluggish condition. Though the population had increased to twenty or thirty thousand, and though eight Baptist churches had been in existence for year, still up to 1784 no one had been baptised in Kentucky. Assiduous missionary labours and earnest preaching seem to have availed nothing in the way of quickening spirituality in the churches or of arousing anxiety among the masses.

But a revival was experienced in 1785 which drew the Baptist churches of that State into closer union, for no community of interest had had up to this time bound them together.

Two years later John Gano removed from New York to Kentucky, and contributed greatly to the efficient organization of the Baptists of the State. He was readily accorded the position of leadership in the denomination and was profoundly venerated to the close of his life.

Again, in 1789, a revival of profound and widespread power prevailed throughout Kentucky. This revival was not restricted, however, to that State, but was prevalent throughout the upper States of the South, especially in Virginia. In some portions of Kentucky it lasted through a period of three years, and had the happy effect of blending the denomination into grater unity and of giving it greater efficiency. During the period of this remarkable spiritual demonstration thousands were baptised and many new churches were constituted.

This revival was followed by what is known as “The Great Revival” of 1800, in which nearly all the States of the South and West largely shared. This was the revival which began under James McGready in North Carolina, and which swept over the Southern and Western States and Territories and shortly changed the aspect of religious society. All opposition seemed to yield to the advancing tide of spirituality. Haunts of

evil were closed, and the obscenity and profanity so characteristic then of the wayside inns and other places of popular resort gave place to prayer and praise.

The multitudes of a give region would concentrate at the same point, spread their tents, and establish a "camp meeting." Persons rode on horseback and in wagons a distance of a hundred miles sometimes to attend those extraordinary gatherings. At a point near Paris it was believed that there were concentrated at one time as many as twenty thousand people. One of the occasions of worship is thus described by an eye-witness:

"Here were collected all elements calculated to affect the imagination. The spectacle presented at night was one of the wildest grandeur. The glare of the blazing camp fires falling on a dense assemblage of heads simultaneously bowed in adoration and reflected back from long ranges of tents upon every side; hundreds of candles and lamps suspended among the trees, together with numerous torches flashing to and fro, throwing an uncertain light upon the tremulous foliage and giving an appearance of dim and indefinite extent to the depth of the forest; the solemn chanting of hymns swelling and falling on the night wind; the impassioned exhortations; the earnest prayers, the sobs, shrieks, or shouts, bursting upon persons under intense agitation of mind; the sudden spasms which seized upon scores and unexpectedly dashed them to the ground, all conspired to invest the scene with terrific interest and to work up the feelings to the highest pitch of excitement."

Here were the most marvellous manifestations of physical excitement connected with that great movement. It is said that during a given service three thousand persons were known to have been prostrated at one time upon the ground in an apparently lifeless condition. Others were thrown into

violent convulsions which were popularly called "the jerks," while others rolled upon the ground or ran frantically here and there; others still, danced and sang; while still others barked like so many dogs. While the revival was largely directed by the Presbyterian ministry during its early stages, the Baptists were equally the recipients of its advantages.

In 1790 we find in Kentucky forty-two churches, with an aggregate membership of three thousand one hundred and five. In 1800, at the beginning of "The Great Revival," there were one hundred and six churches, with a membership of five thousand, one hundred and nineteen.

In 1803 there were two hundred and nineteen churches, with a membership of fifteen thousand four hundred and ninety-five.

One of the most salutary results of the series of revivals in Kentucky was the obliteration of the trifling differences which existed between the Separate and Regular Baptists. Several attempts had been made to bring about this fusion in Kentucky, but it was not consummated until 1801.⁶¹

Tennessee.

In 1874 there were in the Territory of Tennessee six churches, with a membership of less than four hundred. In 1792 there were twenty-one churches, with a membership of nine hundred. In 1812 the churches had increased to one hundred and fifty-six, with a total membership of eleven thousand three hundred and twenty-five.

Alabama.

About 1807 Baptists had extended southwards into the Alabama Territory. The denomination did not begin to grow rapidly until after the battle of New Orleans and the consequent

⁶¹ Op cit. pages 116 – 119.

peace with Great Britain. With the close of that struggle and the attendant cessation of Indian hostilities in the South, immigration flowed rapidly into Alabama from the older States toward the east as well as from Tennessee.⁶²

CHAPTER EIGHT.

TENNESSEE.

Extract of a letter to the Publisher, from Tennessee, dated October 10, 1801.

I expected, dear sir, to see in your Magazine before this, an account of the revival of religion in Cumberland, from persons who have been eye-witnesses of the work. It is undoubtedly a work very worthy of notice, and although some things in it may be thought by some to be the effect of a heated imagination; yet it must be acknowledged that the fruits, so far, have been good and such as becomes the gospel.

The infidel has grounded his arms, and, ceasing to hope has commenced the disciple of the cross. The prayer-less, licentious, and profane have become sober, regular and prayerful. The ignorant have become acquainted with the gospel plan of salvation, and babes have spoken feelingly the praises of the Lord; even those of nine or ten years have been able to put to silence persons of twenty years standing in the church, who opposed the work: Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists unite in the common cause; their assemblies are frequent and extremely large; from one to ten thousand frequently assemble at one place; and are exercised in the most remarkable manner; ministers and people continuing together for four, five, or six days and nights, without intermission; some hundreds during these seasons have been brought to cry out in the most affecting manner for mercy, often falling down and lying to all appearances dead for hours; then rising, exhort all around them in a manner the most moving. Their sense of the horrid nature of sin, and of the glory of Christ is very clear and

⁶² Op. cit. page 121.

affecting; under the influence of the former, they are sunk into the deepest distress and of the latter raised to the highest ecstasies. A very considerable part of Cumberland has been thus visited; it has spread into Kentucky and up the Ohio considerably towards Fort-Pitt; I expected to have had it in my power to give you a very particular account of this work before now, as I intended to see it, but I was prevented by sickness in my family.⁶³

A Letter From Tennessee.

The Editor⁶⁴ has taken the liberty to add to this collection the following copy of a letter received from the western country, State of Tennessee, written by a Rev. gentleman well known, and on whose knowledge and strict veracity great reliance may be placed. - Marysville, January 20, 1804.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

The wonderful appearances attendant on the revival in the state of Tennessee has arrested the attention of both friends and enemies of religion. The bodily exercise has assumed such a variety of shapes as to render it a truly herculean task to give an intelligent statement of it to any person who has never seen it. However, I do not hesitate to say that it is evidently the Lord's work though marvellous in our eyes.

Since my return to the state of Tennessee I have attended eight sacraments, and these in different parts of the country. From 1,000 to 3,500 have been assembled together – of course, collected from considerable distances. I have conversed particularly with upwards of 800 persons on their exercises,

⁶³ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Volume 3. Pages 38-39.

⁶⁴ This "Editor" produced the *Extracts from the Presbyterian G.A. Minutes for 1804 – 1807*. The letter was written by the Rev. Gideon Blackburn.

views feelings, etc., and I am constrained to say, that I have discovered far less extravagance, disorder, and irregularity, than possibly could have been expected in so extraordinary an awakening, especially when parts of it took place among persons settled in the back parts and entirely destitute of the means of grace. If crowded audiences, earnest praying, - practical preaching – and animated singing, may be considered irregular, there is a great deal of irregularity. If crying out for mercy; if shouting glory to God for salvation, are disorderly? Then there is some disorder, but I presume not more than there was on the day of Pentecost.

The only thing with us, which can be construed into disorder or extravagance, is the motions of the body under the exercise. These I will attempt to describe. In a number of instances, the first symptom – fit, is a violent trembling throughout the system – a difficulty of breathing and a pressure about the heart as if the dissolution of nature was fast approaching; and often the person (in fact) believes that it is just at hand. Sometimes they fall and lie motionless for some time – the length of the time is very irregular. Some do not fall, but a jerking takes place in the nerves, which has every symptom of the strongest convulsion and produces motions precisely of the same kind. – The head will be sometimes jerked forward and sometimes backwards, with such violence you would suppose it would fly off the shoulders. At other times the arms will be projected, the fists clinched and the sinews so strong, that it is impossible to bend them and so of every part of the body, on which the influence lights. The muscles, about the brain and jaws sometimes become affected – then the person will laugh in the most extraordinary manner, though it is altogether involuntary, as indeed all the bodily exercises are; I have frequently seen persons who would sorely lament, after it was over, saying they felt more disposed to cry, than laugh, but they could not avoid it. In a few minutes the same person will break

into a flood of tears and be in the utmost distress, but it is only when affected in this way, they can shed tears while in the bodily exercise, which appears evidently to take the place of and supersede them altogether. If at any time tears break forth in an assembly, the bodily exercise ceases, at times, almost entirely. Sometimes the tongue will be so affected that though the person is walking about in perfect health and quite sensible, yet he cannot speak a word for hours. The eyes will also be frequently affected in the same way. The whole system is often so influenced, that in whatever the posture the person is, whether standing or sitting, when taken, he will remain motionless and as stiff as if dead for several hours; during which period you can scarcely discern the motions of the pulse, and the extremities will grow extremely cold. In this state they are usually insensible to anything passing around them, but the mind is in full employ, and they can clearly recollect their meditations. – Frequently the effect falls on the nerves of the thighs and legs, and then the person will be disposed to run, that if you told them (which has been attempted) it nearly takes their life. If let alone, they will run from 20 to 100 yards through the thickest woods, with their eyes shut, with a most astonishing velocity, and then drop motionless as if shot; and what is very remarkable, few cases have ever happened, where the subject of any exercise has done themselves any injury. In most of the cases, when the paroxysm begins to go off, the subject feels the strongest desire for prayer, and frequently expressed himself in the most pathetic, fluent and pertinent manner I ever heard. Children of 5 or 6 and persons who before appeared grossly ignorant express themselves in such a manner – form their petitions so judiciously and introduce Scripture so pertinently, that I question, if the greatest Doctor of Divinity in America would not blush in the view of his own inferiority.

A number of the bodily exercises imitate pieces of conduct, which are known by common names, and from that

circumstance are denominated; and thus, with those who are not eyewitnesses, has all the odium of the practice in common use, attached to it – but a person who candidly views the whole affair, will see such a difference, that though, from hearsay, he has imbibed prejudices, he will change his opinion, and admire the power of God. Of this kind, are those motions call *dancing, pointing, fighting, &c.* Under the exercise, sometimes the feet and hands will move something like dancing and if they are so confined that they cannot rise, the motions will continue; and if you hold the particular part, such convulsions will seize the whole frame as you would suppose would tear it in pieces – yet in all the convulsions and exercises, there is no pain, but the most pleasing sensations, except when first seized, or what rises from the distress of mind.

The dancing (as it is called) is one of the most solemn appearances I have ever seen. The eyes are shut. The countenance brightened with joy and the motions of the body, a kind of leaping or dancing very expressive of their feelings. This exercise is usually attended with a tune, which is uniformly the same, in those who sing at all, and is very melodious. Some use words which are descriptive of their train of thought – such as “come Lord Jesus – O come lovely Jesus” – or Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Hosts! &c., &c. I have seen children, who I am sure never danced a step in their lives, nor ever saw anybody dancing, rise and have the same motions with those, who might be supposed to have done it from practice, or from imitation! Old men of 60, who have supported an unblemished character for religion for 30 years, and who held dancing in the most perfect abhorrence, have notwithstanding been brought to the exercise (so called) though the most against their inclination. It has served as an effectual check to carnal dancing in this part of the world – such a thing can scarcely be heard of in the circle of an acquaintance. When the arm is strung, and raised horizontally with the forefinger projected, it is called pointing;

this often takes place, though the eyes are shut, and they have no design in the case – also when the fist is clinched in one of those convulsions, the person will strike anything indiscriminately, as well as tree or a stump, as a man; this however is called *fighting*. And the same observations, are applicable to all the bodily exercises which appear. The subjects of those exercises are found in all classes, ranks and degrees. The person of 80 and the child of 4 – the master in affluence and the slave in bondage. The clergy in the pulpit and the laity in the pews. The man of long religious standing, those of a recent date, and many who have no religion at all. It is universally agreed that there is no religion in the bodily exercise; yet it is thought to be a very solemn external call – is well calculated to impress the mind, and ought to be improved. It never can be accounted for – from *sympathy*, nor is it always increased by thinking – number have taken it, when asleep, or at their work, or in thoughtless mirth; though having never attended to any means of grace for years past., and after they felt it, they fought against for several days, and attempted to banish it by drinking or diversions, till at last conquered, they were forced to acknowledge it was the hand of God.

Should the solution be attempted on the ground of sympathy, we must not only suppose a first *pretender* to bring it into motion, but also such to be regularly acting in concert in very worshipping assembly to carry on the farce; and how we should account for the individual in the woods taking of it, I know not, seeing that they have it in private devotion, than in company.

In short, I have not only heard of it, and seen it, *but have felt it*, and am persuaded that it is only to be effected by the immediate finger of God. There are some imposters – there are some extravagancies, but these make no characteristic feature of the work, and are held in absolute abhorrence by the simple and pious.

The best evidence of a revival is the fruit produced. – To this we shall attend – a full enumeration of which would sell my long letter to a volume. The infidel of many years standing, is often seen laying down his weapons at the foot of the cross; and heard crying out, “There is a Jesus – I enjoy more sweetness in a moment than I have done for years, etc.” *These things I have seen and heard*. They are also declared, that men and books could never have so effectually convinced them of the truth, as the bodily exercise has done. Those of the same class, who are not convinced, are completely silenced, and have obtained their *ne plus ultra*.

The Ball Room, tipling shops, and taverns, have, in a number of instances, been thrown open to the pious, and converted into places of prayer and praise in social exercise. The most loose and profane, where religion was not known, or the name of God mentioned, only in blasphemy, are regularly formed into societies, and meet weekly for social prayer. The very caves of the mountains where a few of the more indifferent had crowded, are now found with praise to God. Praying societies may be attended every day or every night in the week, by a ride of a few miles. – In these, boys of 12 or 15 will cheerfully take their part, when called upon. In all these societies, there is one appointed to preside, who reads the Scriptures – chooses and pints out the hymns, and calls on persons to pray as he chooses, and thus all is conducted with decency and order. – It is not uncommon on Sabbath evenings and frequently in the week, to find 20 or more children associated in a silent grove, none of them more than 12 years old, and engaged in the most solemn prayer.

I have under covert drawn near them, and seen and heard wonders indescribable. Some crying to Jesus for mercy – some shouting, “glory to God for salvation.” Others, praying for their own souls – their brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, friends, ministers – praying for the church – for heathen – yes for the

world at large. Nothing but the Hosanna's of the children on the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, could equal the praises of those infants. Nor is this a hasty flash, but, continues, while they are evidently become both more dutiful and docile. Their desire, as soon as they take the bodily exercise, for instruction, for the means of grace, is past conception. The poor black slaves, are much reformed – they are more dutiful, faithful and upright; and many of their nights, after days of fatigue, are spent in social prayer. In a word the Christian is animated – the hypocrite alarmed and sinners tremble. The doctrines of the cross are thirsted after and more fully understood, than they would have been in a common way, in 10 years regular attention – total depravity – free grace – inexcusable rebellion, and infinite mercy, are favourite topics. – The great object appears to be, to despise self, and exalt the Redeemer. The sinner ceases to make terms with his creator, and surrenders in entire, unconditional submission. The love of Christians for each other, has increased at least tenfold, especially with those who have been subject of the bodily exercises (for it is to be remarked, that all Christians are not the subjects of it) and the zeal of the interests of Zion has had a prosperous increase. Prayer, praise, and religious conversation, are clearly the order of the day; and this practice, passing through the common circles of society, has bettered their state and sweetened the relations of life.

These are some of the effects produced, and while such is the fruit of the moral tree, I shall consider the root good, and the cause producing it divine. I ought to have remarked, that the bodily exercise, is not the effect of the weakness of the nervous system, for the weak hysterical female, will often remain unmoved, while the stout and sturdy veteran, will sink and fall by her side. As soon as any person who has been the subject of the exercises has been attacked by sickness, the exercise leaves him entirely, until he again recovers strength. After all I have

said, you will not be able to form an accurate judgment of the thing without being a spectator yourself, nor can it be fully described by any man on earth.

I have simply stated facts so far as I have gone, not any by hearsay, but what I have seen myself. – Should the bodily exercise produce as good fruits in Philadelphia, as it has done here, I should sincerely wish to hear of it making its appearance in that city. When persons are under the bodily exercise, they can think and express themselves beyond their common level very considerably, and of this I am convinced by experience.

I am, &c.⁶⁵

J. A. Smith. Middle Tennessee.

Middle Tennessee Methodist membership increased to 1,033 in 1803, and 1,477 in 1804. Although growth slowed between 1804 and 1807, averaging only 11% annually, the pace picked up again in 1808.

By 1812 Methodists in Middle Tennessee numbered 7,684, up 1,126 percent since 1800, and far in advance of the 273 percent increase in the rest of the Western Conference and the 397 percent increase in the mid-state population.

New meetinghouses multiplied as the result of the quickening religious interest and influx of new members. More often than not, churches were located near residences of local preachers and known by their names.

More important were the camp-meetings which began to dot Middle Tennessee. After the remarkable gatherings during 1800, camp-meetings replaced cabin-by-cabin evangelizing as the primary means of reaching unchurched frontier families. Camp meetings were first held at temporary sites. Virtually every meeting house must at some time have had a camp ground

⁶⁵ Extracts. 1803 – 1807. 1804, pages 44 – 48.

alongside it, together with a great many fields and woodlands. Yet almost from the beginning permanent grounds, which year by year harboured camp meetings, were developed. Southern Kentucky developed in much the same way.

After he visited Middle Tennessee, Francis Asbury wrote that camp meetings had “never been tried without success.” Soon they spread southeast and north. Although McKendree’s biographer, Robert Paine, was not impressed with his effectiveness as a revival preacher, McKendree joined Asbury in promoting camp meetings in Tennessee and Kentucky and, especially after his election to the episcopacy (1808), in States carved from the Northwest Territory. From there the institution spread into upstate New York where it involved not only Methodists but New School Presbyterians, and their Congregational allies.

Revival intensity could not be long sustained. Between 1803 and 1811 expansion into new areas was responsible for most Methodist growth. Revivals, however, grew white hot again in 1811 - 1812 during the remarkable co-incidence of Halley’s Comet, visible aurorae in the mid-states, and earthquake tremors along the New Madrid fault. In particular, the earthquakes, which created Reelfoot Lake and shook Middle Tennessee, toppling walls and chimneys in Nashville, frightened frontier dwellers into believing Judgment Day was at hand. Stories abound of persons kneeling in prayer during the quakes. Even so discerning a preacher as Cook, an instructor at Bethel, jumped up in the middle of the night and began dressing as the ground shook. When asked by his wife to wait for her, he replied, “When the Lord comes, I’ll wait for nobody.”

John Crane, the child of the earliest Methodism in Cage’s Bend and a boy preacher to crowds of 5,000 to 6,000 during the Wilderness Revival, entered the travelling connection in 1806. He was appointed to circuits north to Ohio and south to Louisiana. Assigned to Duck River in 1811, he found

himself again in the midst of a revival “where the earth seemed to be shaken to its very centre by the repeated shocks of earthquakes.”

Outdoor preaching during the winter – western Maury County had no meeting houses at that early time – produced pneumonia. His father hastened from Cage’s Bend, but young John Crane died on February 14 at Andrew Mitchell’s home near present-day Goshen Church, where a cemetery was laid out around his grave. Although he was never a member of the Tennessee Conference, which was organized in November, Crane’s death was the first reported to the new body.

Apparently Crane was not alone in preaching to throngs during 1811 – 1812. Mid-state membership doubled, briefly reaching five percent of the population. Methodists established leads over both Baptists and Presbyterians, and the General Conference decided to base a Conference in Middle Tennessee.

As with Methodism generally, mid-state membership remained static during the War of 1812. After Andrew Jackson’s army returned victorious from New Orleans, however, the revivals began again. Plenty of prospects were available since settlers were pouring into the region. The population doubled from 128,000 to 284,054 between the decennial censuses.

The leader in this later awakening was Thomas L. Douglass, who came west from Virginia in 1813 and quickly became presiding elder in the Nashville District.

Douglass invited three of his converts, Robert Paine (a future bishop), Hartwell Brown and Sterling Brown to the Tennessee Conference in 1817. As much as anywhere, the new phase of revivals may be said to have begun there. With the Conference locked in debate over slavery, a revival broke out and grew warmer along with the floor discussions. The awakening seems to have continued on certain circuits after the Conference adjourned.

At Fountainhead, the preachers produced an 18 percent gain for the year. Appointed to Lebanon in 1819, Brooks exhorted his parishioners “to look for the power of God and to pray for a great revival.” In the spring of 1820 their prayers were answered when, as Brooks recalled, a “revival in Middle Tennessee broke out on every part of my circuit and in the Nashville circuit.” Duck River circuit, Limestone and Madison circuits [in Alabama], also Elk and Stone’s River circuits.

According to Douglass, Brooks and several local preachers brought the revival to Davidson County during a quarterly meeting. Thereafter, Brooks and Sterling Brown, pastor on the Nashville Circuit, cooperated in leading the awakening in Davidson and Wilson counties. The movement grew quickly. In midsummer a crowd of 5,000, with 33 preachers, gathered at Center in Wilson County, doubling the tents on an already enlarged camp ground.

The din of many mourners became so great that services had to be cancelled because the throngs could not hear the preachers. Conversions were recorded at 202, and 111, including 60 young men, who were received into Methodist societies. Several hundred joined in the closing communion. Page, John McGee, Edward Morris and Charles Ledbetter, the leaders in the earlier revivals, agreed that Center was “the greatest time they had ever seen.”

Douglass organized the Nashville District so each circuit would have an annual camp meeting. During the summer the revival extended to Norvell’s, Windrow’s, Mt. Pisgah, Good Hope in Warren, Zion in Maury, Mt. Nebo in Williamson, and Ebenezer in Wilson where an extra camp meeting was scheduled for the Lebanon Circuit.

In 1818 Methodists and Presbyterians organized the Duck River Bible Society, as an auxiliary of the American Bible Society. A Bible Society anniversary ignited the revival in the

town. In Maury the quarterly conference turned into a camp meeting even before the regular one happened.

The camp meeting at Norvell’s reached such a fever pitch that a portable pulpit had to be built so it could be moved out of crowds of mourners to new places. The harvest was 251 with 148 joining the societies; 400 shared in the communion.

In September the meeting at Windrow’s attracted scores from earlier encampments, who, Douglass suggested, “came for the express purpose of getting their souls converted.” The crowd was immense. Although the camp ground was doubled, fully a third of the tents had to be set up outside. Conversions numbered 350 with 202 received into membership. Douglass reported 81 baptisms and 600 communicants.

Although the minutes record an increase in the Nashville District of 1,705, or 36%, Douglass placed the figure higher, and estimated at least 500 had been offset by emigration to West Tennessee, Alabama and Missouri. The gross gains must have been 50% or better. Lebanon, Caney Fork and Stone’s River Circuits netted increases of 50%, while Nashville and Bedford Circuits exceeded 40%. The revival spread to the west of Tennessee.

Altogether, mid-state membership rose almost 70% between 1818 and 1823, climbing from 7,445 to 12,612. The gain in 1821 alone topped 20%, and the increases in 1819 and 1820 reached ten percent and fourteen percent respectively.

The work load carried by John Brooks in this revival of 1820 destroyed his health, and he had to retire. In his short career, he did not have enough contributions paid to the “Worn-out Ministers’ Fund,” so he had to earn a living for his growing family despite his fractured health, and this became increasingly difficult. Eventually his account of this revival was published in 1848, as a step in that direction.

Revival surges similar to those in 1800, in 1811 - 1812, and in 1818 - 1823 continued to be responsible for almost all

membership increases in Middle Tennessee. Between 1832 and 1834 mid-state Methodists grew by 46% - 23% in 1833 alone, when meteor showers during the conference at Pulaski brought even preachers into the streets in fear.

In the years 1841 – 1846, membership increased by 63 percent with 48% of the growth occurring in 1841 – 1843. A lesser surge in 1858 and 1860 was aborted by the sectional conflict. Most other years before the Civil War brought stagnation and loss.⁶⁶

J. Breazeale. East Tennessee.

About the year 1802, or 1803, a man by the name of Grenade, of the Methodist persuasion, came through East Tennessee, preaching to the people, wherever he could collect a congregation. He gave a very strange account of his religious experience. He stated that when he was stricken under conviction for his sins, the feelings of guilt became so weighty and awful, as in a measure to derange his intellect; in consequence of which, he ran off into the woods, where he remained until he became as wild as the beasts of the forest. One of his brothers brought him food, during this season, he permitted no one else to come near him.

After a probation of something like three years, he suddenly came to his reason, and was irresistibly impressed

⁶⁶ J. A. Smith. *Cross and Flame: Two Centuries of United Methodism in Middle Tennessee*. Nashville. Commission of Archives and History of the Tennessee Conference. United Methodist Church. 1984. pages 55 – 61. Also John Brooks. *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Brooks* in which are contained a History of the Great Revival in Tennessee, with many incidents of thrilling interest. (Plus two of his sermons, and one by the Late Rev. Learner Blackman.) Nashville. Nashville Christian Advocate Office. 1848.

with the weight of that Divine command given by Christ to His apostles, “go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;” in consequence of which, he immediately returned to his friends proclaiming the gospel in their ears, and instantly set out on a tour of the world, preaching wherever he went.

He was a man of considerable mental vigour, of enthusiastic and impassioned feelings, and, withal, possessing some pretensions to literature, and poetic talent. His discourses were desultory, stormy and pathetic. In the midst of religious exercises, he uttered ALOUD impassioned exclamations, and this he denominated “shouting.” He composed many hymns and spiritual songs, all of which were filled with impassioned exclamations.

He was proverbially called the wild man, on account of the strange history he gave of his experience. His preaching produced wonders in the land. Thousands were seized with the same propensity for shouting; and in a short time, the whole country was filled with SHOUTING congregations.

About this time, the Rev. Mr. Doak, who was emphatically one of the fathers of the church in East Tennessee, went upon a journey to the north. After his return, his flock assembled, to see their old pastor, to shake him by the hand, and hear from his reverend lips an exhortation. The meeting took place on the Sabbath, and at the house where this father in Israel had long ministered in holy things.

He was the oldest clergyman in the State, a man of fine genius and extensive learning. – When animated, his voice was like the roarings of the lion, and his eye flashed like the lightnings of heaven. Although he was somewhat dogmatic in the maintenance of his particular opinions, and harsh and absolute in enforcing them, he was, nevertheless, greatly beloved by his flock. He had spent the prime and vigour of life,

(after risking his scalp, by settling in this country at a very early day, while the hostile savage was ringing his frightful yell in the ears of the inhabitants,) in exhorting his fellow-men to “cease to do evil and learn to do well,” and in teaching their children the delightful ways of science and literature.

Consequently, the meeting excited much feeling in the bosoms of all; and was well calculated to stir up all the sympathies of human nature, as well as the pathos of religion. The assemblage was so large, that the house could not contain the half, in consequence of which, the old parson was compelled to address them from a platform erected out of doors. His address was unusually powerful and pathetic. In the midst of his discourse, a strange convulsion seized his corporeal system, which occasioned his limbs to jerk and twist in every direction, and in a short time, set the old parson to jumping; and he finally fell off the platform, tumbled down, and went rolling and jerking down the hill, (the surface of the earth forming a gentle declivity from the platform) and in this manner he continued rolling down the hill for some time, while his congregation stood unutterably astonished and awe-stricken.

After some time, he arose and concluded his sermon, but his limbs continued to jerk, twist and quiver, in a most strange and unaccountable manner. This strange disease did not soon leave the good old man, but continued to afflict him, occasionally, when he was in the midst of his most powerful and pathetic discourses. And it was not long before some of his hearers were seized with the same strange distemper.

It soon began to prevail over the country; and it became a sort of proverb, that Grenade had brought the shouts into the country, and, old father Doak, to match him, had brought the jerks.

Shortly before or after this singular occurrence, a young man by the name of Gideon Blackburn, obtained license from the Presbyterian Church, the same church to which old Mr.

Doak belonged, to preach the Gospel. He was a tall, slender, meagre figure, of pale complexion, afflicted in one leg with a disease commonly called the white-swelling; but the features of his face were fine, and his countenance expressive. He was rather of obscure parentage, and his appearance in the sacred desk excited no particular interest.

Very soon, however, he got to himself a great name, and set all the whole western region on fire. Possessing a burning and brilliant fancy; a vigorous and active intellect; a handsome classical education; a tall, well-proportioned, and rather handsome personage; his face *pale and ghost-like* in appearance, his features well-proportioned; the general expression of his countenance solemn and intellectual; his eye keen and flashing, when excited; his voice clear, loud, shrill and melodious; and his oratorical gesticulation inimitable; - he produced a deep, fervid and wide-spread excitement all over the country, that had never been witnessed before, nor has the like ever been experienced since.

His powers of description were astonishingly picturesque and luminous, and his thrilling, deep-toned feeling, connected with the capacity to infuse into his auditory all the ardour of the orator, produced consequences which could be felt and understood, but cannot be described.

He travelled all over the country, preaching to the people, in churches, court-houses, cottages, in the open fields and in the woods; and hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands congregated together to hear him. He sometimes stood upon crutches, while he preached, on account of his lame leg. And frequently the citizens erected a platform in the woods, elevated some ten feet, upon which he stood and preached for days, to thousands of his fellow-mortals, of all ages, grades, colours, sizes and sexes.

There was something in this extraordinary man, calculated to enchant and enchain “the wilderness of free minds

around him, and to strike a blow in the world that should resound throughout the universe,” the ultimate consequences of which were only to be realized in eternity. The wild man’s shouts, and old father Doak’s jerks, became the common diseases of the country, and prevailed all over the land. Thousands and tens of thousands were seen jerking and shouting; and the most extraordinary scenes were witnessed. Under the pathetic and wonder-working discourses of this prodigy of human nature, hundreds were seen falling down, at one time, in a swoon; others jumping, jerking and shouting, while hundreds were singing, praying and dancing; and some would, occasionally, dash through the crowd, almost with the velocity of the wind, and escape to the woods, their friends pursuing them, under the apprehension that they had suddenly become deranged., and would flee from the face of man, and perish in the wilderness; or, in some wild and lonely place commit suicide.

The opinion became prevalent, that the millennium was just at hand, and the whole religious community were looking with anxiety “for the coming of Christ the second time, without sin unto salvation.,” expecting every day to see him descending through the clouds, seated upon that great white throne, described by John in the Revelation, and followed by a countless throng of angels, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

This excitement was at its highest, perhaps, during the years 1804 and 1805, but it did not entirely subside for many years thereafter.

It has now, however, passed away, and those extraordinary men (Grenade, Doak and Blackburn) who, to all human appearance, were the principal instruments in producing it, now sleep with their fathers, their mortal remains resting in their honoured graves, amongst other departed saints, while their immortal spirits have gone to try the realities of that

boundless and never-ending eternity they so often exhorted their fellow-men to prepare to enjoy.⁶⁷

E. H. Gillett.

Gideon Blackburn was labouring at Marysville, performing much itinerant missionary labour, and devising a plan for carrying the Gospel to the Cherokee Indians.

The revival at the beginning of the present century, which commenced and was most remarkable in Kentucky, and which extended largely over the entire country, was felt also to some extent in Eastern Tennessee. The labours of Blackburn and Henderson were greatly blessed. The influence of these men was extensively and powerfully felt, and the social and moral condition of the people was greatly and beneficially changed.

Blackburn had laboured in connection with the congregations of New Providence (Marysville) and Eusebia since April, 1794. Something of a revival prevailed shortly after his settlement; but in 1798 and 1799 his labours were attended with the least success. No wave of the Kentucky revival had yet reached his congregations. Christians were cold and indifferent; few serious impressions seemed to be made; the youth became more dissolute, and levity and dissipation were alarmingly prevalent.

But in April, 1800, a striking change took place. A general seriousness seemed to overspread the community. The Sabbath assemblies, large before, were now crowded. Several persons seemed to be deeply impressed. In May, the semi-

⁶⁷ J.W.M. Breazeale. *Life as It Is: or Matters and Things in General*. (First published, 1842.)

Knoxville. University of Tennessee Press. 2009. Pages 246 – 251.

annual administration of the sacrament took place, and impressions were deepened. A society for prayer and religious conversation was instituted, and was followed by happy results. A monthly lecture for children was appointed, which was signally blessed.

At this juncture the first number of the *New York Missionary Magazine* came into the hands of the pastor. He read to his people the revival and missionary intelligence, and continued to do so as successive numbers arrived. It proved “a great means of awakening the thoughtless and animating and reviving the pious.” The revival continued with a steady progress, free from enthusiasm or extravagance, till the pastor’s house “was almost constantly crowded” with anxious inquirers. The next season of communion was a memorable one. A large number were received to the church, and more than three hundred and fifty participated in the ordinance. “It appeared,” says Blackburn, “like the gate of heaven. The assembly was melted into tears; solemnity, weeping, and joy appeared in the audience.”⁶⁸

⁶⁸ E. H. Gillett. Volume Two. pages 201 – 203.

CHAPTER NINE.

NORTH CAROLINA.

W. L. GRISSOM.

Chapter 18. The Period of Revivals.

We come now to consider one of the most vital parts of Methodism. After going back to the sources of Methodist history, if we are asked to give a definition of Methodism in one short sentence, we would say, *It is a revival of religion*. In the word “revival” is found its full significance. Methodism did not originate because of any dissatisfaction with the form of church government. Neither was it born in some dogmatic belief. It formed no new article of faith. Hence it was not a revolution against any law, ecclesiastical authority, or doctrine. But it was a vital innate force that could not find expression in any organization of that day. Methodism, therefore, grew out of the necessity of the case.

If we look at the Church throughout all of its long history, we will find that it has had its times of declension and “times of refreshing.” The revival of spiritual life is not an accident. It is based upon the law that “all life ebbs and flows.” We know that this is true in vegetable life, when we look at the flower at springtime, and then see the fading tints in autumn. It is true with animal life, and of intellectual life. And why should not this same law apply to man’s higher life – his religious or spiritual? By investigation you will find that here the law is most clearly demonstrated for here it reaches its pre-eminence. It is essential to the growth of the Kingdom of God. A revival of religion is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not in the power

of man to manipulate a revival into existence. The “times of refreshing are from the presence of the Lord.”

One extreme generally follows another. In the period we are about to consider, the pendulum seems to swing far out on the side of spiritual Christianity. The Church has come through a long period of formalism. The spirit of religion was low. The attention of the people for some years had been turned towards the War with England, and during that conflict everything was demoralized. Since their independence had been declared, much thought had been given to political power, etc. Scepticism was fashionable. Among the educated many were fond of their “free thought.” The influence of Tom Paine and Voltaire had spread its dark cloud over the New World.

But near the close of the eighteenth century the pendulum seemed to swing back, and God manifested himself to the Church in a power no less great than on the day of Pentecost. Scenes and phenomena were witnessed that made men quake and tremble. And from that day to the present, French infidelity has been on the decline. In this chapter it is our purpose to follow this revival fire as it swept over North Carolina in its awakening and saving power. To some extent we will notice the result on other Churches. It is true some denominations did not endorse it, and would have nothing to do with it, yet they no doubt received benefit from it. Among other churches, the denominational lines almost faded out under this greater light of spiritual life.

By some writers the Methodists are almost ignored as instruments in the great revival that swept over North Carolina near the close of the eighteenth century. These historians confine it almost wholly to the Presbyterian Church; but anyone who will investigate the subject will find that it originated in the Methodist Church, and was carried on largely by its preachers.

It is true that the Presbyterians, or at least some of them, joined in the movement, - Presbyterians and Methodists

frequently working together. But these great revival meetings were unknown in North Carolina until the fire began to burn in the “Old Brunswick Circuit” in Virginia, under the preaching of the Methodists. This was as early as 1774 and 1775. When the Methodist preacher came to North Carolina, he brought the revival fire; and from that day on the “ebb and flow” of spiritual life could be seen.

Bishop Asbury was the leader of this revival movement. His zeal was only limited by his physical strength. Around him was a ministry composed mostly of young men of apostolic spirit and character, who counted not their lives dear unto them. They were willing to face the scorn of men and the opposition of demons that they might win souls for Christ. They were soon tested in the fires of opposition and persecution, and found to be men of God, who were “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” These men threw themselves against the Deism of England and the scepticism of France that were beginning to put in their destructive work upon these western shores.

So in this great revival period it was war between formalism and spiritual Christianity; between creed and a religious experience; between a religious faith and scepticism.

And when this wave of spiritual life rolled over this country, it left thousands of souls with an experience as clear as the noon-day sun; and as the darkness of the night is driven back by the morning sun, so all doubt and scepticism faded away under the light of the glorious Gospel on Christ.

The doctrines preached were thoroughly Methodistic. Free salvation, full salvation, present salvation, justification by faith; the regeneration of the heart by the Holy Ghost; the knowledge of sins forgiven; or the witness of the Holy Spirit that the believer is born of God; the joy of religion which is the fruit of the Spirit; and that now is the day of salvation; - these

doctrines had been preached by the Methodists from the time they first entered North Carolina.

The Rev. James McGready (Presbyterian), giving an account of this great revival wave, says, "Party doctrines are laid aside, and nothing is heard from the pulpit but the practical and experimental doctrines of the gospel."

Experimental religion was the great theme of the Methodist preacher at that day. The revival was not confined to any one Church. The Presbyterians and Methodists laboured together in harmony and rejoiced together in their success.

Another striking thing about this revival was that the convictions were pungent and powerful. And with such a deep conviction, the conversion was clear and bright.

There was a camp meeting held in June, 1802, at the Jersey settlement in what is now Davidson county. At least three thousand persons attended, with about three hundred professions. Samuel McConkle (sic) describes the conviction of an old woman who had been mocking the mourners on Monday all day. Late in the afternoon she fell in a state of horror and despair, and in that state she continued with intervals for three hours. Mr. McConkle says: "It was impossible for my imagination to conceive of her being more tormented had she actually been in hell. She often roared out, "O hell! thy pangs have seized me! What torments me? Hell can't be worse. Let me go there at once. It is my dreadful doom!" Two stout men were no match for her struggles. I thought of the man among the tombs with his legion. At intervals she cried, "Oh, for mercy! But what have I to do with mercy? No mercy for poor miserable me!" Hope, however, began to prevail, and at last she shouted, 'Glory! Glory!' as long as she had wailed on account of the torment that she endured.

Men under conviction were often struck down, and not only exercised in mind and heart, but great bodily exercises

often attended. The physical exercises were known as 'the jerks.'

Rev. Barton W. Stone, a leading Presbyterian minister, described some of the phenomena that prevailed. 'The bodily agitation or exercises attending the excitement in the beginning of the nineteenth century were various and called by various names, as the 'falling exercise', 'the jerks,' the dancing exercise,' the laughing exercise,' and so on. The 'falling exercise' was very common among all classes, the saints and sinners of every age and grade, from the philosopher to the clown. The subject of this exercise would generally, with a pious scream, fall like a log on the floor or earth, and appear as dead.' And, 'of thousands of similar cases' he gives specimens. The 'jerks' sometimes affected the whole body, sometimes a part of the body. The same writer and eye-witness continued:

"When the head alone was affected, it would be jerked backward and forward, or from side to side, so quickly that the features of the face could not be distinguished. When the whole system is affected, I have seen the person stand in one place and jerk backward and forward in quick succession, the head nearly touching the floor behind and before.

All classes, saints and sinners, the strong as well as the weak, were thus affected. I have inquired of those thus affected if they could not account for it, but some have told me that those were among the happiest seasons of their lives.

I have seen some wicked persons thus affected, and all the time cursing 'the jerks,' while they were thrown to the earth with violence. Though so awful to behold, I do not remember that any one of the thousands I have seen thus affected ever sustained any injury in body. This was as strange as the exercise itself.

The laughing exercise was frequent, confined solely to the religious. It was a loud, hearty laugh, but it excited laughter in none that saw it. The subject appeared rapturously solemn,

and his laughter excited solemnity in saints and sinners. It was truly indescribable.

The running exercise was nothing more than that persons, feeling something of these bodily agitations, through fear attempted to run away and thus escape from them; but it commonly happened that they ran not far before they fell, where they became so agitated that they could not proceed any further.

I knew a young physician of a celebrated family who came some distance to a big meeting to see the strange things he had heard of. He and a young lady had sportively agreed to watch over and take care of each other if either should fall. At length the physician felt something very uncommon, and started from the congregation to run into the woods. He was discovered running as for life, but he did not proceed far before he fell down, and there lay until he submitted to the Lord, and afterwards became a zealous member of the Church. Such were common.

“Thus have I given an account of the wonderful things that appeared in the great excitement at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That there were many eccentricities and much fanaticism in this excitement was acknowledged by its warmest advocates; indeed, it would have been a wonder if such things had not appeared in the circumstances of that time. Yet the good effects were seen and acknowledged in every neighbourhood and among the different sects. It silenced contention and promoted unity for a while.”

Dr J. M. Buckley is the only historian that we have seen who undertakes to account for, or explain, this strange phenomenon from a scientific standpoint. He has written much on psychology, and is a good authority on this subject. Here is what he says: “The psychological key to the problem is that concentrated attention, accompanied by strong religious emotion, produces a powerful impression on the nervous system, the result being an agitation of the nerves throughout

the body, the effects of which differ according to the constitution of the subject. In one relief is found in floods of tears, in another in hysterical laughter, in a third by unconsciousness, in a fourth by a partial loss of muscular action with marked effects upon the operations of the mind; in yet another complete catalepsy may be produced, every muscle becoming rigid, and so remaining for hours, while no impression is made by ordinary means upon either the sense or the mind; and in still another involuntary motions may be constantly made, lasting for hours together; while some temperaments can bear religious or any other kind of emotion without outward excitement and with no indication except an unusual calmness. These differences of susceptibility are seen outside the sphere of religion, even among members of the same family.”

There is no doubt that but that much of these physical exercises was due to a psychological effect. But there were some of these exercises that cannot be explained by this process. Violent opposers were sometimes seized by “the jerks”; “men with imprecations upon their lips were suddenly smitten with them.” Men on horseback charging in upon a camp meeting to disperse the congregation were arrested by a strange affection at the very boundaries of the worshipping circle, - ‘sometimes struck from their saddles as if by a flash of lightning, and were violently shaken the more they endeavoured to resist the inexplicable power.’”

Dr Buckley’s explanation is perfectly satisfactory where the subject attends a religious gathering with concentrated attention and expectation, but it does not explain the phenomenon when it occurs at a time when there is no excitement and no expectation.

Rev. Jacob Young in his *Autobiography* says: “Sometimes at hotels this affliction would visit persons, causing them, for example, in the very act of raising the glass to their

lips, to jerk and throw the liquid to the ceiling, much to the merriment of some, and the alarm of others. I have often seen ladies take it at the breakfast table. As they were pouring tea or coffee, they would throw the contents towards the ceiling, and sometimes break the saucer. Then, hastening from the table, their long suits of braided hair hanging down their backs would crack like a whip.” Here it occurs seemingly without excitement and without expectation

It was not understood by those who witnessed it at the time, some ascribing it to the devil, others to an opposite source; some striving against it, others courting it as the power of God unto salvation.

There is no doubt that God used it in accomplishing great good during this revival period. Hundreds were reached who could NOT have been reached through any other instrumentality.

Another eye-witness says: “I saw members exercised in this way at a camp meeting held in Lincoln County. Sometimes their heads would be jerked backwards and forward with such violence that it would cause them to utter involuntarily a sharp, quick sound, similar to the yelp of a dog, and the hair of the women to crack like a whip. Sometimes their arms, with clenched fists, would be jerked in alternate directions with such force as seemed sufficient almost to separate them from the body. Sometimes all their limbs would be affected, and they would be thrown into almost every imaginable position, and it was as impossible to hold them still almost as to hold a wild horse. When a woman was exercised in this way, other women would join hands around her and keep her within the circle they formed; but the men were left without constraint to jerk at large through the congregation, over benches, over logs, and even over fences.

I have seen persons exercise in such a way that they would go all over the floor with a quick, dancing motion, and

with such rapidity that their feet would rattle upon the floor like drumsticks.

These instances are sufficient to show the reader something concerning this strange exercise that accompanied the great revival in the early part of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

NORTH CAROLINA. E. H. Gillett.

In no part of the land, during the period under review, were the most unexceptionable features of the great Kentucky Revival more largely reproduced than in portions of the field occupied by the Synod of the Carolinas, and especially within the bounds of Orange and Concord Presbyteries, in the central and western parts of North Carolina. It was here that McGready, before his removal to Kentucky, had lived and laboured; and the memory of his presence and words, as well as the fruits of his ministry, still remained. The report of what had taken place in the Cumberland region was brought back across the mountains, and excited everywhere the deepest interest.

There had been already – subsequent to the close of the War – two marked seasons of revival in this region. The first began in Iredell county; the second commenced at a period when the prospects of religion were exceedingly dark, and when immorality and vice had come in like a flood. The leading instrument in the work was McGready himself, who on his return from Pennsylvania passed through the scenes of the great revival in Virginia. His glowing spirit quickly caught, and was

⁶⁹ W. L. Grissom. *History of Methodism in North Carolina: from 1772 to the Present.* Nashville and Dallas. Publishing House of the M. E. Church South. 1905. Volume One. pages 308 - 317.
Volume One – covers up to 1805. Volume Two was never published.

ready to communicate, the flame. Wherever he went, he preached with a fervour and pungency peculiar to himself. Among his congregations there were close searchings of heart and solemn attention. At Hawfields and Cross-Roads (Orange county) the revival broke out under his preaching in 1791, extending, and continuing for several years, in what is now the upper part of Orange Presbytery.

In 1796, McGready removed to Kentucky, lingering on his way to preach for a few months in Eastern Tennessee. At length, in 1799 – 1800, the great Western Revival commenced. The fame of it spread over the whole land; but nowhere did it command more attention or excite deeper interest than in the region where McGready had previously laboured, and where, as a Boanerges, his stern denunciations of sin were yet vividly remembered.

At Hawfields and Cross-Roads, William Paisley had succeeded McGready, and under his ministrations a communion season was held at Cross-Roads in August, 1801. Dr Caldwell, and Messrs Prather, Shaw and Currie, the last two recent licentiates of Orange Presbytery, assisted upon the occasion. On the days preceding the Sabbath, - for the meetings uniformly commenced on Friday, - and during the administration of the ordinance, nothing unusual or remarkable occurred. There was deep solemnity, as well as earnest prayerfulness, but nothing more to indicate that a blessing was at hand.

But on the next day, as the pastor arose to dismiss the large congregation which had gathered to the scene, - many of them from a great distance, - it was his purpose first to say a few words expressive of his grief that no advance apparently had been made in bringing sinners to God. But, overcome by his emotions, he found himself unable to speak, and sat down. A solemn silence pervaded the assembly. In a few moments he rose again, but before he had uttered a word, a young man just from the scenes of revival in Tennessee, who during the

meetings had much to say to others of what he had witnessed of the work of God in that State, raised up his hands and exclaimed, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God!"

In a few moments the silence was broken by sobs, groans, and cries, which rose commingled from all parts of the house. There was no longer any thought of dismissing the congregation. The remainder of the day was spent in prayer, exhortation, singing, and personal conversation; and it was midnight before the people could be persuaded to return to their homes. The awakening continued to extend, and converts were quite numerous.

This was in August. In October the sacrament was administered at Hawfields, the other congregation under Mr. Paisley's charge. From the first, there were manifestations of deep feeling. The report of the previous communion-season had been widely spread, and had drawn together an unusual number. The people from Cross-Roads were present, in the fervour of excited expectation. The meeting continued for five successive days. Persons from a distance, who had come in their wagons, remained overnight on the ground. With the exception of short intervals for refreshment during the day, and a few hours of sleep at night, the various religious exercises were continued without interruption. The assemblage had become, in fact, a camp-meeting. It was the first in the whole region. But the impression made was deep and lasting, and its apparent results encouraged other appointments. These were successively made until the camp meeting became a kind of established institution in connection with the still extending revival.

The excitement spread rapidly over the upper part of the Orange Presbytery. At the close of 1801, and at the commencement of 1802, its influence began to be felt west of the Yadkin, and within the bounds of the Concord Presbytery, as well as in the eastern portion of the State around Fayetteville. Early in January, Dr Caldwell, of Guilford, appointed a meeting

near Bell's Mills, on Deep River, in Randolph county, and invited the ministers west of the Yadkin to attend. But they had doubts and fears in regard to the work, from their distrust of the unusual bodily exercises by which already to some extent it was characterized. Yet four ministers and about a hundred of their people accepted the invitation. They came to witness and to scrutinize the work.

Dr McCorkle, strongly prejudiced against the "exercises," took some of his congregation with him, designing merely to be a spectator of the proceedings. L. F. Wilson, from Iredell county, Kilpatrick, of Third Creek, and James Hall, of Bethany, each accompanied by members of his congregation, were present.

On Friday evening the preachers reached the ground. On Saturday morning the people in their wagons came pouring in. The meeting proved to be one of great excitement. All the companies, one after the other, were more or less affected. The doubts of all the ministers but Dr McCorkle, in regard to the genuineness of the work, were dispelled. He still held out, - when a message reached him, with a request from his son, who had been struck down, to come and pray for him. He went, knelt by his side, and began to pray; but, as he prayed, his soul seemed melted within him, his heart glowed with longing desires for the conversion of the whole world, his doubts and scruples gave place to conviction, and, notwithstanding the bodily exercises, he confessed his sympathy for the revival, and gave in his adhesion to it as a genuine work of the Spirit of God.

The ministers and people from the other side of the Yadkin who had attended the meeting had travelled from fifty to eighty miles. They carried back with them the spirit of the scenes in which they had mingled. They had witnessed what they had dared ascribe only to a divine power. "Impressions ran through the assembly like fire along a train of powder." The greater portion of the young people were "religiously

exercised," and at times during the meeting nothing was to be heard but cries for mercy. Nor was the influence of the occasion confined to those who were present. As these returned to their homes, "the work broke out like fire" in different places. Opposition was silenced. Some of the most obstinate were brought to submission. From this time the revival began to spread rapidly in all directions, and "general meetings," as they were called, began to be held, at which thousands were present.

[Dr Gillett then proceeds to outline a number of the meetings that were then held in certain parts of the State.]⁷⁰

William H. Foote

Mr. Foote provides background and events showing how the revival spread into North Carolina. His book is mainly a Presbyterian source.

Mr. Foote says:- The report of this extensive and most unusual excitement [in Kentucky] soon reached North Carolina; and the old friends and hearers of McGready and Hodge were moved with great anxiety to witness the revival of God's work as they had experienced in days past themselves, or as they now heard it manifested in the West.

In August, 1801, a communion season was held at Cross Roads, in Orange county. The stated minister, W. Paisley, was assisted by Rev. Messrs. Dr Caldwell and Leonard Prather, and two young licentiates, Hugh Shaw and Ebenezer B. Currie.

Nothing of special interest appeared in the congregation during the days preceding the Sabbath, or during the administration of the ordinance. Great solemnity prevailed, mingled with evident anxiety as well as prayer among Christians, that God would bless the congregation and revive his

⁷⁰ Gillett. Volume 2. pages 75 – 79.

work. On Monday 28th, the public services were conducted by Messrs. Prather and Shaw, without any expression or appearance of emotion among the people. The pastor arose to dismiss the people, intending to say a few words expressive of his sorrow that apparently no advance had been made in bringing sinners to God.

Overwhelmed with his sensations of distress that God had imparted no blessings to his people, he stood silent a few moments and then sat down. A solemn stillness pervaded the congregation. In a few moments he rose again; but before he uttered a word, a young man from Tennessee, who had been interested in the revival there, and had been telling the people of Cross Roads during the meeting, much of the state of things in the West. He raised up his hands and cried out, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." In a few moments the silence was broken by sobs, groans and cries, rising commingled from all parts of the house. All thoughts of dismissing the congregation at once vanished. The remainder of the day was spent in the exercises of prayer, exhortation, singing, personal conversation, and midnight came before the congregation could be persuaded to go to their respective homes. The excitement continued for a length of time, and many were hopefully converted to God. No irregularities appeared in this commencement of the great excitement in North Carolina; the sobs and groans and cries for mercy were unusual, but seemed justified by the deep feeling of individuals on account of the great interests concerned.

In October following, the usual fall communion was held in Hawfields, the other part of Mr. Paisley's charge. The expression of feeling was great from the first; the people from Cross Roads were there in their fervency of excitement and hope; and multitudes whom the report of what had been done at the August meeting drew together, were full of expectation, some wondering, and some seeking their salvation. People from a distance came in their wagons, and remained on the ground all

night. The meeting was continued for five days without intermission; the various religious services of prayer, singing, sermons, exhortations and personal conversations succeeding each other, with short intervals for refreshment during the day, and a few hours for sleep during the night. Impressions of a religious nature were very general and very deep, and in a great multitude of cases abiding.

Camp-meetings soon became common all over the South and West. The excitement spread rapidly over the congregations in the upper part of Orange Presbytery, which then included all the State east of the Yadkin River, and in the early parts of the year 1802, the Presbytery of Concord, embracing the section of the State west of the Yadkin, felt its influence; and the eastern part of the State, now embraced by Fayetteville Presbytery, also began to be visited.

The bodily exercises were intermingled in the meetings in Carolina, as they were in the West, but in neither place had they, at this period, assumed the remarkable extravagance to which they afterwards arose in certain parts of the country. Among the thoughtful these exercises caused great anxiety; "were they the work of God? Were they the necessary accompaniments of the work? or were they accidental things? Or were they delusions?" were questions that led to many discussions. The opinion which prevailed most generally was, that they were inseparable accompaniments of the true work of God. This opinion prevailed for some years, and slowly gave way to the more correct conclusion, that in all cases, they were accidental circumstances and not necessary, and in many cases were entirely delusive.

The ministers west of the Yadkin were much exercised on the subject of the Revival in the West, and in Orange Presbytery, and also about the accompanying exercises. Until

1802, however, no appearance of revival was seen in their congregations.⁷¹

Letter No. 1. Dated Westfield, December 16, 1801.

Sir, I had before received some imperfect accounts of the revival in Guilford, Caswell and Orange counties; but have now received a more perfect account by the Rev. Mr. Finn. A remarkable libertine, says he, has been lately struck down, and the stroke has silenced and confounded his companions. The preacher and people frequently remain all night on the ground in prayer, exhortation or praise. At a late meeting three young men were struck down in the act of cutting whips to correct some poor negroes who were crying for mercy. Our brethren from Orange have invited us to meet them at a sacrament in Randolph on the first day of the New Year. I design to attend. May the work come this way.

Letter No. 2. "January 8, 1802.

Sir, - I now sit down to give you a narrative of the transactions at Randolph, commencing on Friday, January 1, 1802, and continuing until the ensuing Tuesday.

On Thursday, the last day of the last year, I set out from home for Randolph, and lodged in Lexington with some preachers, and a number of people, mostly from Iredell, going on to the same place. The evening was spent in prayer and exhortation, without any visible effect. Next day the preachers arrived at the Randolph meeting-house; but the Iredell company lodged five miles behind.

On Saturday, in the interval of two sermons, the congregation (near 2,000) were informed that the Iredell company were religiously exercised, in a sudden and surprising matter, at evening prayer, in the family or house where they

lodged. This struck with seriousness every reflecting mind, because the effect did not appear to arise from oratory or sympathy, the causes commonly assigned to this work. The second sermon was delivered and the benediction pronounced as usual; but the people paused, as if they wished not to part, nor go either to their homes or encampments.

Just then rose a speaker to give a short parting exhortation: but wonderful to tell, as if by an electric shock, a large number in every direction, men, women, children, white and black, fell and cried for mercy; while others appeared, in every quarter, either praying for the fallen, or exhorting bystanders to repent and believe.

This, to me perfectly new and sudden sight, I viewed with horror; and, in spite of all my previous reasoning on Revivals, with some degree of disgust. Is it possible, said I, that this scene of seeming confusion can come from the Spirit of God? Or can he who called light from darkness, and order from confusion, educe light and order from such a dark mental, or moral chaos as this? Lord God, Thou knowest!

The first particular object which arrested my attention was a poor black man with his hands raised over the heads of the crowd, and shouting, 'Glory, glory to God on high.' I hasted toward him from the preaching-tent; but was stopped to see another black man prostrate on the ground, and his aged mother on her knees at his feet in all the agony of prayer for her son. Near him was a black woman, grasping her mistress's hand, and crying, 'O mistress, you prayed for me when I wanted a heart to pray for myself. Now thank God, he has given me a heart to pray for you and everybody else.'

I then passed to a little white girl, about seven years old. She was reclining with her eyes closed on the arms of a female friend. But oh! What a serene angelic smile was in her face! If ever heaven was enjoyed in a little creature's heart it was enjoyed in her's.

⁷¹ William H. Foote. *Sketches of North Carolina.* pages 378 – 382.

Were I to form some notion of an angel, it would aid my conception to think of her. I took her by the hand, and asked how she felt, she raised her head, opened her eyes, closed them, and gently sank into her former state. I met her next day with two or three of her little companions, I asked her how she felt yesterday. 'O how happy,' said the dear little creature, with an ineffable smile, 'and I feel so happy now, I wish everybody was as happy as I am.'

I asked her several questions relative to her views of sin, a Saviour, happiness and heaven, and she answered with propriety, and as I thought rather from proper present feelings than from past doctrinal or educational information: for when I was afterwards called to examine her in order to communion, I found her defective in this kind of knowledge, and dissuaded her from communicating at that time, though she much desired it. This I have since regretted, for I do believe, upon cool reflection, that she possessed that experimental knowledge of salvation, which is infinitely preferable to all the doctrinal or systematic knowledge in the world without it.

But to return. I pressed through the congregation in a circuitous direction, to the preaching tent, viewing one in the agony of prayer; another motionless, speechless, and apparently breathless; another rising in triumph, to prayer and exhortation. Among these was a woman five hours motionless, and a little boy twelve years of age who arose, prayed and exhorted in a wonderful manner.

After themselves I observed that their next concern was their nearest relations. After this, I went to the second encampment, where seven or eight were prostrate on the earth; while viewing this scene, a stout young man fell on his knees behind me, and cried for mercy. I turned about. He asked me to pray for him. I attempted it. He arose with some assistance, called for a brother, and gave him and the bystanders a most impressive dissuasive against delaying repentance; 'this' said

he, 'has been my own case until I saw the Iredell company passing by. They left me restless and wretched. I was forced to follow. I have just come, and have been running from camp to camp, until I was able to go no further. I now cry for mercy, and feel determined to cry until I find it.'

After I had gone around the encampment I went into the wood to see a large number, some of them my own charge, at a distance from the camps. Two or three had retired for prayer and conversation, and were struck, until there was a large company of spectators and persons exercised. I had now viewed the whole as a spectator. My mind seemed to be made up of a strange mass of sensations, and I retired for a moment to make some serious reflections. Still did the notion of disorder perplex me. What is disorder, said I, and wherein consists its criminality? There is an external disorder, which disturbs formal organized worship. This disorder may arise from the fainting of the speaker, or of any of the hearers, or from any sudden alarm, as Hervey has stated in the story of a press-gang in a seaport in England. Has organized worship ever been disturbed in Randolph? No! Would the disturbance be criminal if it was involuntary? Certainly not! If so, Peter might have been disturbed with the cry of his hearers, and Paul with the fall of Eutyches from the third loft. Yet there was no crime. Where then is the disorder that involves guilt? It is in a multitude of improper, incoherent and wandering thoughts. Do such thoughts pass through the minds of the exercised, or of serious spectators? No! An awful sense of the majesty of God – a painful sense of sin – an earnest desire to be delivered from it, &c., &c., surely there is no disorder here. I see criminal disorder through roving eyes and vacant features. I see it in the conversation of intoxicated youth. I see it in the giddy crowd running from camp to camp, without affixed object, and I see it in the conduct of these profane people who have overturned the

sacramental tables, and trampled them under their unhallowed feet. This is disorder, voluntary, and awfully criminal.

But who will dare to say this of the poor sinners constrained to cry, even in the great assembly; ‘Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?’ But who constrains? I answer, the impression is God’s, the expression ours, and will ever be as the suddenness of conviction, the weakness or energy of the mind, and the sense of aggravation of its guilt.

I had often viewed the unity and variety of God’s works, and thought I began to see these fruits here. What a sameness in the exercises of all, and yet what a wonderful variety in time, place, means, and degrees of exercises! What a sameness and variety in the persons, faces and voices of men; and also in the natural powers and dispositions of the mind. Surely the God of nature is the God of grace. Natural affections begin with self, and then spread around; so do the affections that show themselves in this work. First – What shall I do to be saved? Then, O my child, my brother, or sister, ‘Repent and believe!’ Surely this must be the work of God, and marvellous in our eyes! After all, it seems an astonishing way to reform mankind. It is not the way I would take to do it. But what is conducted the way I would conduct it? – peace or war, plenty or famine, pestilence or health, life or death? No. I can but say, O God, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy thoughts above our thoughts, and thy ways above our ways.

On the last evening of the solemnities were my difficulties completely removed by the ardent exercise of a man near three score, a man far, very far from enthusiasm, and its constituents, melancholy and irrational devotion; a man whose mind was enlightened with the ways of science and religion. This man felt no anxiety or pain for himself. The ardency of his desire, or prayer, was first excited for a particular person who was impressed; but his ardency seemed to rise as high as the heavens, and to extend wide as the earth. It seemed as if God

vouchsafed to answer his prayer, to rend the heavens, and come down; to shine into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and the joy unspeakable, even raptures, that arise from such a view. Never was prayer offered with more ardour for the extending of the work, nor with such firm and unbounding confidence that it would be extended. He seemed to see the glory of all the divine attributes in one view, and to see them all displayed in the progress of this glorious work. He has never since suspected that it was delusion, but has mostly since enjoyed

The soul’s calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy
Which earth can’t give, and which earth cannot destroy.

And he has ever since expressed an ardent zeal to promote this work.

The Second Randolph County Meeting, January, 1802.

Rev. David Caldwell, of Guilford, appointed a meeting to be held at Bell’s meeting house, on Deep River, Randolph county, on the last week of January, 1802, and invited the brethren of west of the Yadkin to attend, and bring some of their people with them. Four of the ministers, and about a hundred of their people attended. (One of these was the Rev. Dr Samuel McCorkle, a widely educated man, and well regarded). Lewis F. Wilson, pastor of Concord and Fourth Creek in Iredell, less prejudiced against the work than Mr. McCorkle, but not prepared to vindicate altogether the exercises, though he greatly desired a revival in his charge, a man of ardent temperament, went with some of his people. Joseph D. Kilpatrick, of Third Creek, anxious for a revival in his charge, but not anxious about the attending swoons or exercises, if his people should be revived, also took some of his people. The venerable James Hall of Bethany, who had served his church and his country in the Revolution, and had been blessed with a revival soon after its close, tremblingly alive to the interests of religion and the

welfare of his people, believed in the work as of God, and was not much troubled about the accompanying exercises, went with a larger company of his people.

The meeting proved to be one of great excitement, and the people that came from a distance shared largely in it. Dr Hall's people began to be exercised on Friday night before they reached the place of meeting, while they were encamped about five miles off. During the meeting, all the companies, one after another, were more or less affected. The brethren returned to their charges satisfied that the excitement was a revival of true religion, and that these bodily exercises were connected in a manner inexplicable, and not to be questioned.

Dr McCorkle held out a long time, at first rather confirmed in his opinions that the work could not be of God, - there was too much disorder. Conversations with the new converts, and those under conviction while struck down, had gone far towards changing his mind, when a messenger came to him, as he was walking round in deep thought, bearing a request from his son, who had been struck down, to come and pray for him. He went and kneeled by him and began to pray, and as he prayed his whole heart and soul became so interested in the work that was going on, and so filled with desires for the conversion of all the world, that when he arose his doubts had given place to deep conviction that the work of God was going on notwithstanding the bodily exercises.”⁷²

James Hall's Survey of Meetings in early 1802.

Sir:- please to accept of my grateful acknowledgement for the copy of your proposals for publishing extracts from the [*Connecticut*] *Evangelical Magazine*, &c.; you may expect my interest in promoting your laudable design. As the revival of

religion has, through the goodness and mercy of God, reached this part of his vineyard, a few sketches as to its rise and progress in that part of our State which lies between the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers; and if they should contribute to the promotion of your design, will tend to our mutual satisfaction.

Last August the revival began in Orange and Guilford counties, which lie northeast of the Yadkin. To those the work was chiefly confined until the last week of January, at which time a General Meeting was appointed in Randolph county, to the southward of Guilford, where some of my fellow-presbyters and myself were invited to attend. Accordingly, Dr McCorkle, Messrs Lewis F. Wilson, Joseph D. Kilpatrick, and myself, set out with about a hundred of our people, having to go from fifty to eighty miles. We who were ministers went on horseback, and the rest in wagons. My people, about forty in number, were alone, except two families who travelled with them. The clergy passed on before the wagons, and arrived at the place of meeting on Friday. That night my people lodged within five miles of the place, where a remarkable circumstance happened among them. At evening prayer at the house where they lodged, a man about thirty years old became deeply affected, who I believe was pious from an early period of youth. Impressions immediately ran through the assembly like fire along a train of powder; so that in a very short time almost all the young people, who composed about three-quarters of the company, became religiously exercised. The fathers were filled with astonishment, as none present had ever beheld such a scene. Nothing but cries could be heard for a considerable time. When those had in a measure subsided, the fathers spent the greater part of the night in prayer and exhortation.

Public worship was begun next day before they arrived at the place of meeting. They took their seats and attended with composure until the assembly separated, which was in the evening twilight. They then retired to their tents. I did not

⁷² Foote. *Sketches*. pages 391 – 395.

follow for about half an hour, allowing them some time of relaxation, as I expected our meeting would be a tender scene. When I went to them they exhibited to me a scene truly affecting. Not less than twenty of the young people were lying in some distress, and uttering ardent cries for mercy. A multitude had collected around them before I came. My brethren and I could do nothing but pray for them, as they were in no situation for conversation.

Some of them, who, I believe, were pious before, obtained comfort that night; the others remained in distress. Dr McCorkle had previously mentioned to me his desire that his young people and mine should spend the evening together. After some time spent with us in prayer, he returned to his young people, and found the greater part of them religiously exercised. Next morning, which was the Sabbath, Mr. Kilpatrick came to me in much distress, and told me he feared God had forsaken his little flock, as not one of them was affected. About that time his young people and some of Dr McCorkle's, retired to the woods, and spent some time in social prayer. When the hour of public worship approached, and they were about to return, some of them were struck down; and in a short time the greater part of them were so affected that others were obliged to supply them with fire and camp furniture; and they lay there until nine o'clock the next day before they could return to camp.

In fine, before our return home more than nine-tenths of our young people were deeply impressed with a sense of the great importance of salvation.

Only two families of Mr. Wilson's people were with him, as they lay most remote from the place of meeting; but of those who went, as great a proportion were affected as of others. I would not have entered into such a minute detail of so many local circumstances, which, singly viewed, might not appear very interesting to the public, only for this consideration: - In all

our charges, those who followed us to that place were of those families who had been principally engaged in promoting and holding religious societies, and were engaged in fervent prayer for a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; some of them for more than eighteen months before that time.

And should this narrative be thought worthy of the public eye, my design in it is to encourage God's children to be fervent at the throne of grace, not only in secret, but social prayer. From what I have known of the persevering and importunity of those families upon whom that remarkable effusion of divine grace fell, I think I never saw a geometrical proposition demonstrated with more clear evidence, than I have seen an answer given to the prayers of those pious parents who sent or conducted their children on that happy tour.

As the greater part of our young people received comfort before they returned home, it is easier to conceive of than to describe the joy of the parents and children at their meeting.

On my return I preached at four different places before I came home; consequently my people were at home a Sabbath before my arrival. Societies were held in three different parts of my charge, in all of which the work broke out like fire, and was making rapid progress before I had an opportunity of attending even at one society.

Our meeting in Randolph was on the first week of January. Since that time religion has made rapid progress among the people; and so happy are we in unanimity of sentiments respecting that glorious work, there is not one among us who will suffer himself to be accounted as "opposer," and very few seem to view it with disgust. But in many of our neighbouring societies it is far otherwise. Many of our people are opposed to the work; but of those some of the most obstinate have already submitted to it as a display of the mighty power of God.

There are two denominations scattered among us, who bear the Christian name, who are almost to one individual opposed to the work. But this need not be thought strange, as it has been a uniform case with them to oppose themselves to what other denominations call the effects of the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the church of Christ.

As to the progress of the work in the counties of Orange, Guilford and Randolph, you will probably have an account from the members of the Presbytery of Orange, whose bounds include these counties.

From a view of the advantages apparently arising from general meetings, the members of the Presbytery of Concord, of which I am a member, appointed one on the last week of January, near the centre of this county. The number of wagons which came to the ground, besides riding carriages, was about 108. The number of persons who attended on Sabbath, about four thousand. Divine service began on Friday at 2 o'clock. At this juncture a rain began to fall, which continued until near night. A considerable number were exercised that evening. Next morning a considerable heavy sleet began to fall about nine o'clock, then snow, which terminated in a heavy rain. This continued till four in the afternoon; and the day was without exception the most inclement of any during the whole winter. Notwithstanding this, the people collected at ten, in two assemblies, and all ages and sexes stood there exposed until sunset. Exercises went on rapidly, and large numbers were deeply affected. The work went on gradually increasing, until Tuesday morning, except a few hours before day on Monday morning, when the camp was chiefly silent. At 9 on Tuesday morning the people were assembled in the centre of the square, and after some time spent in prayer and exhortation, were dismissed.

Many who went away unaffected were struck with convictions on their return, and others after they went home.

No attempt was made to ascertain the number of those who were affected with religious exercises, but there must have been during the meeting, several hundreds. There were present eight Presbyterian, one Baptist, and two Methodist ministers.

Two weeks after the above meeting we held another, near Morganton, 60 miles to the westward. The country there is thinly inhabited, and the professors of religion few in number; yet a considerable number were deeply affected, and circumstances were as promising as could be expected from the state of the country.

On the second week of March we held another general meeting, ten miles to the southward of the first, at the Cross Roads, near the lower end of this county. The number of wagons, besides riding carriages, was 262. Divine service began on Friday afternoon, and we continued together until Tuesday at noon. Many hundreds were constrained to cry aloud for mercy, of whom many went home rejoicing, as well as others who came to the place under deep distress. The number of those who were present on Sabbath was estimated from 8,000 to 10,000. They were divided into four worshipping assemblies. Those were all numerous. Of ministers present as far as recollection serves, there were fourteen Presbyterians, three Methodists, two Baptists, one Episcopalian, one Dutch Calvinist, and two German Lutherans. It was pleasing to those who were friends of vital piety to see such a gradual and increasing work going on, day after day, until Monday, on which day and that night, I suppose that the number of exercised persons was equal to all that were affected on the preceding days. Many left the place with comfortable sensations of mind, both of those who had been formerly and latterly convicted; and many went away under deep and heavy convictions.

Two weeks after this meeting we held another in Mecklenburg county, near the southern boundary of this State.

The number present was about a third less than that last mentioned.

Twelve Presbyterian ministers, one Baptist and one Methodist attended. Worship began, as usual, on Friday, and continued until near noon on Tuesday. Never have I seen a set of men labour with more assiduity than the ministers laboured from Friday noon until Sabbath night at 9 o'clock, during which time, among the vast multitude which attended, not more than ten persons were visibly affected by religious exercises.

When night came on, the people had assembled at five different places in the encampment, at which the ministers attended. Near the above hour, religious exercises began in all the assemblies; and, from what could be ascertained, there were not more than fifteen, perhaps not more than five minutes of time, when the work began in all those several places. Exercises, prayer and exhortation continued during the whole night. That dispensation, in the eye of the impartial inquirer, is sufficient to obviate the work, "That it is the work of man – from the power of oratory." &c., as I am certain there were, before that time, many instances of more powerful oratory than we are capable of exhibiting, in such an exhausted state.

Nor could such effects be produced by communication from one assembly to another, either by intelligence or noise; for no two of the assemblies knew how each other was affected until a considerably later period of the night.

At break of day public instructions ceased until nine in the morning. At that time a sermon was preached at the public stand in the centre of the encampment. Few, if any, were exercised until after sermon, when six ministers continued worship by prayer in rotation. This exhibited a scene to which I never saw anything similar. I am well assured that many more than a hundred sank down in less than half an hour; and what was remarkable in such a scene, there was hardly a cry to be heard. This I perfectly recollect, that the speakers were

distinctly heard during the concert of prayer. But fervent supplication and cries for mercy soon began.

Shortly afterwards, one of the ministers rose to read and make a few observations on the vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37 chap.), but such were the cries, and the astonished state of the audience, that I suppose he could not call the attention of twenty persons: he read a few verses and sat down. Those in distress were generally taken to their respective tents, where many followed. Some of the ministers continued at the public stand, others went to their tents, where crowds attended. The work went on all that day, and a great part of the following night; so that, I believe, could the aggregate be ascertained, although the work began at so late a period, as good a proportion was affected as had been at any former meeting.

At our first meeting in this county, we had prepared to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; but so numerous were the persons in distress, and so loud were the cries, that we declined the administration of the ordinance. At the two latter, we removed the communion table to a considerable distance from the places of preaching, where we administered the ordinance without embarrassment. At the first, we had about six hundred, and at the second, about five hundred communicants.

At all our meetings, a considerable number professed to obtain the comforts of religion, and of those, I have not heard of one whose conduct has dishonoured their profession. Praying societies are formed in all our congregations, both supplied and vacant. In those the work seems to be promoted as much, and often more, than in our congregational assemblies. The face of the public, in point of morals, is evidently changed for the better, even in those places where the good work has not reached. It is to me no inconsiderable proof that the work is carried on by the same divine, omnipresent Spirit, when I behold such a sameness of exercises in the different subjects.

It is granted, that those exercises, or affections, which are merely bodily, are very different, which no doubt arises from the different temperament or habit of body. The same difference is obvious in different constitutions or habits of body as to swooning, outcries, &c., when the matter of grief or terror is the same, and the distress equally pungent. But these exercises which are mental, appear generally to run in the same channel. This can neither be from sympathy nor imitation; for I have observed the same in the State of Tennessee more than eighteen months ago, as well as in various places in this State, where the subjects had never seen any other person in a similar situation.

The first cry is usually for mercy, although I have attended upon sundry persons, who, when first struck, have been so overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, that they have told me, they were afraid to ask for mercy. But this state is usually of short continuance. And among the hundreds to whose exercises I have attended, have been pleasingly surprized to find so few cases of despondency, and not one instance of what may be called despair. This has been the most remarkable, when such sluices of conviction have been opened upon the consciences of sinners, as to extort such bitter outcries, and produce such terrible effects upon the body.

After fervent cries for mercy, there are usually complaints of unbelief, obstinacy and hardness of heart, together with importunate pleading that those may be renewed.

Then there will appear glimmering hopes of salvation through a Redeemer, who seems to appear afar off. Here are pleadings indeed! Sometimes one person of the adorable Trinity, and sometimes another is addressed, according to his respective province in the economy of man's salvation. This is more especially the case with those who have been previously instructed in the doctrines of the gospel.

In the supplications of those who are ignorant, there is not such a variety; but even their addresses, especially those of children are really astonishing.

When hopes of pardon appear, the importunity, if possible, becomes more incessant. Never did an humble and dutiful child, pleading for a favour from a compassionate father, offer more humble, fervent and affectionate petitions, than are here used for acceptance with God through a mediator. O for faith, for more faith, is the usual cry.

When the patient receives comfort, he generally lies silent; wrapt in deep contemplation. Then some rise with raptures of joy and praise; others in silence, with a placid serenity spread over the countenance. In both it is almost incredible what change it makes on the countenance, which in many will be visible, not only for days, but weeks.

In attending on some of these cases, I have often thought, that were I to set down and commit to writing the manner in which I believe, from the scriptures of truth, the Spirit of God deals with a sinner, in bringing him from a state of nature to a state of grace – from the time he is first convicted of the evil of sin until he has a saving discovery of the mercy of God through the mediation of Christ, I know not how I could succeed better than by recording the exercises of some on whom I have waited; although as to others, who are the subjects of severe exercises, it is evident to those who are tolerably well read in the anatomy of the human heart, that though they rise comfortable, they may still be in the bond of iniquity.

This is not saying, but the most scrutinizing Christian may be mistaken as to the experiences or exercises of another; but we must form our opinion according to our best evidence drawn from the word of God. And if among the subjects of the present work some should persevere, and others draw back, this is no more than can be expected; as the production will be

according to the nature of the soil on which the seed of the word is sown in the human heart.

When comfort is not obtained in those exercises, the subject is generally left under deep conviction of sin, and is usually exercised again, some five or six times again before they obtain comfort. Of those who have received comfort the first time they have been exercised, I have not known any whose religious hopes have not been afterwards shaken, and have fallen under exercises again. Frequently such will rise under clouds, which will not be removed until they have undergone another, perhaps frequent exercises, before their comforts be restored. Those exercises do not appear to be confined to those who never had experienced the power of religion before. I believe many are the subjects of them who have long been acquainted with vital piety. This answers many valuable purposes, as it quickens their graces, brightens their evidences, attaches them more warmly to the revival, and makes them more assistant to the ministers of the gospel.

Nor is this happy revival confined to those who are under visible bodily exercises. I believe that many more are effected in what may be called God's usual way. With many such I have conversed, who appear to be under deep and rational conviction, and who think they have no valid impressions, because they are not the subject of those violent exercises. Some of this class, with whom I have conversed, who, I have every reason to believe, have availed themselves of the benefits of Christ's mediation, dare not appropriate the comforts of religion, because they have not those ecstatic joys which they perceive in others.

It is a matter of gratitude to every pious mind to see how a propitious Providence has smiled upon our general meetings. These have instrumentally spread the work two hundred miles, in a greater or lesser degree, from east to west, and near one hundred miles from north to south; though in these bounds a

very small minority have felt its happy effects. But the work is evidently spreading, and we hope will diffuse itself until the whole is leavened. We are extremely happy in the coalescence of our Methodist and Baptist brethren with us in this great and good work. Party doctrines are laid aside, and nothing heard from the pulpit but the practical and experiential doctrines of the gospel.

Tomorrow I expect to set out to a general meeting, appointed near the boundary of Guilford and Rowan counties, on middle ground between the Presbyteries of Orange and Concord. Another commences on Friday, the 21st instant, on middle ground between the first Presbytery of South Carolina and Concord. Our members are to divide between these meetings.

[P.S.] May 13th, this day I returned from the meeting near the Guilford and Rowan boundary. Five Baptist, four Methodist, and four Presbyterian ministers attended. The place of meeting was at the house of worship, supplied with a stated pastor of the Baptist church. The happy fruits of our meeting at Randolph now appear there. So great is the work there, arising from that meeting, that the pastor of that church baptized twenty-eight persons on the first Sabbath of this month.

Appearances at our general meeting were much as above described at other places. Many were awakened, and a considerable number professed to obtain the comforts of religion. A letter I received to-day, soliciting my attendance at another general meeting in Rutherford county, eighty miles to the westward, to commence on the first Friday of next month, at which I expect to attend. The letter gives pleasing accounts of the happy effects of our little meeting near Morgantown. The contemplated meeting is to be about thirty miles to the southward, where it appears that the happy influence of the other meeting has reached them.

What shall we render to the gracious King of Zion for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the unworthy children of men! What I have written are mere introductory sketches to what might be said on what I have seen during the last three months. Volumes might be written on the subject. Many of the scenes to which I have been witness baffle description. At a communion in my own church on the first Sabbath of this month, we had a solemnity from Friday noon until Tuesday morning, during which time there was scarcely any recess of exercises day or night, and a far greater proportion of the assembly were religiously affected than I had ever seen at our public meetings. May God carry on his work until righteousness cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, and the nations of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!

I am, Sir, your affectionate friend, &c.
James Hall.⁷³

Letters Spread by Dr McCorkle.

Mr. Foote includes a number of these letters, some of which were reproduced in the *New York Missionary Magazine*, and some of which were responses, from time to time, to this long letter which had been written by the Rev. Dr James Hall.

Hall also provided other letters, not so long, to some of his other friends, which were copied and passed on. Some of these were published also.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Isaac J. Keith, D.D., to the Publisher, dated Charleston, May 6, 1802. [The letter was originally written by James Hall, and posted to Dr Isaac Keith.]

“Enclosed I send copies of two letters, the originals of which were received here on Monday the 3rd inst. You will find in them a most interesting and pleasing account of the spreading revival of religion in North Carolina, communicated by two of the most respectable ministers of the Presbyterian denomination. I am persuaded that you will think them well worthy of a place in your *Magazine*. To the greater part of your readers, and the friends of Zion, generally, the perusal of them must be highly gratifying, as they exhibit a wonderful display of the power of divine grace; and furnish a new and rich subject for praise, to the God of salvation.

The great and good work is drawing nearer to us in this city. May it be hastened in its progress to us, and an abundant blessing soon be poured out upon us, and upon all the people of our land, and of the whole earth.”

Iredell County, North Carolina. March 18th, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your favours of Dec. 5th and 15th, are both before me. That almost incredible whirlpool of business, in which I have been since the last week of December, has prevented an answer till this time, which is only a short breathing space between two religious campaigns.

Mr. Adams informs me, that you spoke of having some extracts from my last letter to him, inserted in the *New York Missionary Magazine*. Since the date of that letter, I have, my dear brother, still more and better news to tell you.

After our return from Randolph County, which was on the first week in January, the revival of religion seemed to spread. We then appointed a general meeting, eight miles south of my house, to begin on Friday the 22nd of the same month. This meeting was attended by eight Presbyterian, one Baptist, and three Methodist clergymen. One hundred and four wagons, beside a number of chairs, and other carriages were on the

⁷³ W, H. Foote. *Sketches of North Carolina*. pages 382 – 390.

ground. At an average, ten persons might be reckoned to each wagon, and other carriage; besides many who came by horseback.

Our seat was a solitary grove – remote from any house. A moderate rain fell from the time that worship began, with some intervals, until Saturday morning, when it increased until nine o'clock; it then turned to sleet, succeeded by a mixture of snow, and this was followed again by rain, which continued heavy and very cold until four in the afternoon. This was, without exception, the most inclement day which we had experienced through the winter.

The people, generally, were provided with tents. Those of my own charge pressed me to know what they should do. I told them they knew as well as I what should be done in this case: but though I expected that they would immediately break up, I observed to them, that I would be one of the last on the ground.

In this extremity, a popular speaker took his stand at a large tent, and began an address. I followed his example at a convenient distance. Crowds immediately collected. We were succeeded by other speakers. And notwithstanding the extremity of the weather, the multitude continued there until within an hour of sun-setting; when we requested them to retire to their tents, to take some refreshment, promising that we would there wait upon them in the night.

A considerable number had been religiously exercised on Friday evening; and the number was considerably increased in the night. On Saturday the business went on rapidly. There might be seen not less than a dozen at a time lying in one tent; some speechless and motionless – others with every breath crying for mercy; and some rising with acclamations of joy and praise.

On Sabbath all was prepared for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. But about the time that service was to begin,

such a torrent of cries burst out, that we found it vain to attempt the administration of that ordinance, as the tables were in the midst of the ground, and numbers were exercised during the preceding sermons. The ministers then mingled with the multitude, who divided into parties convenient for hearing one speaker; and thus we continued our exhortations till twilight. The people then retired to their tents, where we attended them again till after midnight.

Monday exhibited a scene similar to what we had witnessed on the preceding days; but that night exceeded all, as to the number who were affected. It appeared that the minds of people became more and more affected, and prepared to receive the influence of the gospel, in proportion to the length of time in which our public exercises were continued.

On Tuesday morning our provisions and forage being exhausted, the Assembly was convened at eight o'clock; and after prayers and short addresses from three senior ministers, it was dismissed.

On the second ensuing Friday another general meeting commenced, near Morgan-town, sixty miles to the westward. At this meeting six Presbyterian, one Baptist, and six Methodist ministers attended. This part of the country is near the mountains, thinly inhabited, and but little improved in religious knowledge. Yet our gracious God vouchsafed his gracious presence to us there also. The first who sunk down were three men, one nearly sixty years of age, and all of them conspicuous characters.

This was on Saturday, in the interval of public worship, when no religious exercises were going on, except that a few people were singing hymns at the tent where these men were sitting together. The number of people affected was considerable, taking into view their immature state. For it may here be observed, that in our parts of the country, there had appeared on the public mind a tenderness and susceptibility for

many months, which I had never seen before, except under revivals of religion. This, as I perceived, at the introduction of the business, was not the state of that people.

On Friday last commenced our third general meeting, in the bounds of our Presbytery, (Concord.). At this there were present fourteen Presbyterian, two Baptist, five Methodist, two Dutch Calvinist, and two Episcopal clergymen: and this was by much the most numerous and solemn assembly I ever beheld. Considerable more than two hundred wagons, besides other carriages, were on the ground. A much greater proportion of persons were affected on Friday, than I had ever seen before at that period of the business; and the work increased until two o'clock on Tuesday morning.

On Monday, three wagons which were on the point of moving, were prevented by the situation in which the persons who were about to return home in them, found themselves at this juncture; while some who were in the wagons, and others who were preparing to get into them, fell down, and were constrained, crying for mercy.

On Sabbath, about six hundred persons received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The tables were placed without the camp, and the communion was solemn, and without noise, except the sound of the voices of the speakers who administered the ordinance. There were within the camp three places for public preaching, and all occupied by vastly large assemblies. The number present on that day, I am persuaded, could not be less than six or seven thousand.

It is impossible to ascertain the number of those who were affected; but moderately speaking, there must have been several hundreds. I have generally observed, that the longer such assemblies continue together, the more generally the work goes on; as the public mind seems to be more drawn to the great concerns of religion. The night also seems to be more favourable to the work. The darkness adds to the solemnity of

the scene. Objects of sight, that would otherwise amuse the mind, are excluded. The bustle of providing fuel and many other things ceases. Strollers, who attend for amusement, retire. The camp is silent, except what is heard of prayers, exhortations, the cries of the distressed, and shouts of praise.

Sinners are stunned, mockers are silent, and those who do not wilfully resist the truth, open their ears to instruction, and their hearts to impressions.

Many receive comfort in a short time after they are struck down – others rise without comfort, and continue under deep convictions. Some I have known struck down as many as five or six different times, before they obtained any comfortable views; and some of these are yet without them.

Some I have known to be struck speechless and motionless for eight hours; except that towards the last they would pray whispering, and then rise in triumph. Others are not so much affected in body, but fall with cries for mercy; and thus I have known some continue not more than two minutes before they would rise up in raptures of joy, and, I may say, with angelic countenances. Others would labour for many hours; and by attending closely to their exercises, you might perceive what appears to be the spirit's usual method in bringing souls to Christ.

After the first shock, the exercise which follows is rather pleading [for] themselves [without relying upon] the benefits of the covenant of grace. Then the cry of all who speak is – “Oh the hardness of my heart!” Then “my unbelief!” Then they have gleams of hope from the gospel; then clearer views of the Saviour, but far off: then the most tender, humble, and pathetic pleadings, such as – “O blessed Jesus, what a sweet and amiable Saviour art thou! O come a little nearer, a little nearer! O for one grain of faith!” &c., &c.

To these identical words, and thousands similar, I have been witness. When comfort is received they lie silent for some time. Then they begin in whispers – “Glory, glory to God!” Strength and vigour are immediately restored to the body, which just before was faint and feeble with violent agonies, and sore and incessant outcries for many hours. Some then rise with low, humble and fervent expressions of thankfulness and praise to God for his mercy and goodness. Others break all bounds with ecstasies, and raptures of joy and praise.

Many of these are struck down sometimes afterwards; and such I have heard thanking God, even in their distresses, for that humbling stroke – as they then saw that they had been too high-minded. Some of these have their comforts restored, and others rise and continue in darkness.

The work does not appear to be confused to those who are affected in this unusual manner. From my acquaintance and observation, I am led to believe, that there may be five, (perhaps double that number) who are affected in the usual way, for one that is affected in the extraordinary manner above described. Many of these, I hope, have a right to comfort, although they dare not take it, because they are not so deeply affected as others. In such cases I do not choose to communicate my opinion to them; but leave it with God to make to them the discovery.

Far am I also from thinking that all who have such floods of joy will prove permanent Christians. The Parable of the Sower checks my hopes on that subject. But, at the same time, I am persuaded, that many of them will persevere to the obtaining of everlasting life.

My dear Sir, long as my letter is, I am only in the introduction. A quire of paper written with much more accuracy than the above, would give but a feeble idea of the work.

We have appointed another general meeting about forty miles north of Salisbury, on the second Sabbath of May; the exercises to begin on the preceding Friday. It is to be the middle ground between the Presbyteries of Orange and Concord, and the members of both are to attend. Would it be practical for you or your colleague to attend?

Let this be considered as one epistle common to yourself, Dr Hollingshead, and Rev. Messrs. Adams, Price, and McElhenny, as it is out of my power to write separately to any of them. This I have written chiefly in the night, and under much bodily indisposition, and have no time for transcribing or correcting it. Yet you are at liberty to make what use, duty and prudence may dictate of its contents.

I am, Rev. Sir,
Your affectionate friend
And fellow-labourer in the Gospel,
JAMES HALL.

P.S. The work goes on rapidly, especially in praying societies; and this day three weeks the work broke out like fire, for the first time, in Mr. Davis’s church, in Lincoln County. This took place at a communion, and twenty-three persons fell down before they left the house.⁷⁴

NORTH CAROLINA.

Waxhaw, Lancaster County, South Carolina, April 3, 1802.

Rev. Sir,

The Rev. James Hall, in a letter addressed to Dr Keith, which he intended as a common epistle to the clergymen in your vicinity, has given an account of the now spreading revival of

⁷⁴ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Volume 3. Pages 175 – 180.

religion in North Carolina, down to the meeting at the Cross-roads, thirty miles above Charlotte. Permit me to inform you, that another general meeting has been held since Mr. Hall wrote as above; and he has enjoined it on me to give you an account of it. The task I undertake with cheerfulness, as I had intended to write to you before I received the express injunction from Mr. Hall.

The meeting, according to an appointment made at the close of the preceding one, commenced on Friday the 27th of March, at New-Providence Church, (Mr. Wallis's charge,) in Mecklenburgh county, North Carolina, about twelve miles to the S.E. of Charlotte, and something more than seventy miles North of Cambden. The encampment was on a beautiful mount, of easy ascent in every direction, and more than half surrounded by a little crystal stream, which afforded sufficiency of water for the people and horses. It was clothed with a thick growth of large and lofty oaken timber, with very little undergrowth.

The people began to collect early on Friday morning to pitch their tents, and cut wood for fuel. This mount, in the morning a lovely grove, was by three o'clock stripped of its sturdy oaks, and became the temporary residence of thousands of the worshippers of the most high God; and was now overspread with covered wagons, and stretched tents arranged in tolerable regular lines of encampment.

About this time the noise of axes and crashing of falling timber began to abate, and the people thronged around a scaffold which was erected in the centre of the camp, from which the ministers were to address the people.

Public service began under the most favourable auspices. The horizon was overcast with a light cloud. A holy fervour glowed in the faces of the ministers, and a grave solemnity seated itself on the countenances of the people. A loud and lofty song of praise, swelled by the united voices of this assembled host, seemed to reverberate from the

neighbouring hills and pierce the opening skies. This was succeeded by a short but fervent prayer; and sermon was introduced with this expressive thought – "Surely this is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven." A great solemnity prevailed; but there were no extraordinary appearances during the services of the day.

After public worship, the people retired to their tents to take some refreshment. The ministers, who were seventeen in number, attended in the evening, and throughout the greater part of the night, at the several tents, for singing, prayer, and exhortation. The novelty of the scene, and the fervour of devotion, which seemed to be kindled up in almost every mind, so arrested the attention of the multitude, that but few in this assembly closed their eyes in sleep during the whole of this memorable night.

Three persons were made the subjects of the extraordinary work on Saturday morning, before public service began. Several persons were stricken at the close of the forenoon sermons; more in the evening, and many throughout the night. There were constantly some persons in exercise, as it is called, from the time the work began on Saturday morning, until the rise of the meeting.

Two action-sermons were preached on Sabbath morning. The Sacrament was administered in the midst of the camp with great solemnity, and without noise or disturbance, to about five hundred persons. Three were preaching in different places in the camp, during the administration; and two others preached in the afternoon. A great number were stricken down, under exhortations and prayers during the night.

On Monday morning the work began early and continued, with increasing rapidity, until about twelve o'clock. At this time, I suppose, there were about one hundred persons down on the ground, the greater part of whom were shouting aloud, and many of them in the most earnest manner, entreating

for mercy. About forty fell at one instant, while Mr. Hall was at prayer on the scaffold. The work continued until the assembly dispersed on Tuesday morning.

There were at this meeting one hundred and sixty wagons; chairs, and other carriages were numerous; but I do not know that their number was ascertained. It is difficult to guess at the number of persons with any tolerable degree of certainty. Calculations were made on this plan – suppose so much ground covered, and allow four square feet to each individual. It is thought, by some, that there might be about five thousand, and I do not think the account too large.

It is still more difficult to say anything respecting the number of persons stricken. Beside those affected at the place of preaching, many were taken in their tents, many more in their wagons, and a great many in the woods, while at prayer, and some on their way going home.

I have had the pleasure of attending at two or three of these famed campaigns. They exhibit to the mind a scene truly august and solemn; and especially in the night season. When the fires are lighted up, the whole camp becomes illuminated, and the rays of light are beautifully reflected from the tents, which are generally of white cloth, and from the remaining trees, the solemn sounds which address the ear, are truly interesting to the feelings of a tender mind.

Lofty songs of praise – pathetic prayers – solemn exhortations – shrieks of keen distress – loud cries for mercy – shouts of “Glory;” – and the most exalted expressions of boundless joy, may at times be heard from every quarter of the encampment; and all this with as little confusion and disturbance, as the people of a city pursue their various occupations in the busy scenes of life.

In those assemblies a pious person feels himself in a very solemn situation. In the immediate presence of the adorable Jehovah, in the presence of that God, whose temple is

all space, the bespangled heavens his canopy, the wide extended earth his pew, and all intelligences his fellow worshippers. In this situation who would not worship; who would not adore?

Many theories are made by those who are unfriendly to this work, by which to account for it. Bodily imbecility, fear, weakness of the nervous system, sympathy, ministerial oratory, demoniac delusion, or a combination of many or all of these: But there are many causes which elude every theory of this kind, and leave the judicious mind no room to doubt, that however God may bless his own ordinances, and honour his own institutions; however he may employ the various powers of body and mind, which he has given to his creatures, in the exercise of it, yet he does it in such a manner as to testify to the world, that the power is Divine.

The design of Divine Providence, in this work, appears to be to convince the world, that there is a truth and power in the Christian religion, by addressing the external senses with undeniable testimony. And so soon as this truth is fully and sufficiently known to the world, I think these extraordinary exercises will undoubtedly disappear.

The subjects of this work experience it in various degrees from the slightest impressions of feebleness, to the most convulsive spasms. Some feel the impression only a few minutes, others for a longer period. Many are impressed from two to four hours, some twenty-four hours, some few three days: and we are able to say, upon respectable authority, that a young woman in Kentucky, lay nine days and then recovered, without any sense of hunger or thirst.

Although the subjects of this work make the most piteous outcries, they universally declare that they feel no bodily pain, and, no inconvenience follows it. Women of the most weak and delicate nerves, and deeply affected with hysterical complaints, are nothing injured by being the subjects of it.

This work has no respect for persons: it takes the high and the low, the male and the female, the rich and the poor, the free and the bond, the learned and the ignorant, the friend and the enemy, without distinction.

There has been no meeting of this kind, in this country, which has not caught some of the Deistical tribe. A remarkable instance of this kind happened at Providence: This man, when affected, endeavoured to conceal it, to shake it off, to deny it; and when more deeply affected, said it was a kind of fits to which he had been subject; but before it left him he was obliged to cry for mercy.

It is impossible to give an account of all the various shades of difference in the appearance of those who are affected. The following may serve as a kind of general outline of the work: When a person begins to be affected, he generally sinks down in the place where he stood, and for a few minutes is overwhelmed in tears; he then makes a weeping noise – some person near lays hold of him – he shrieks aloud – and discovers a desire to be on his back – in this he is indulged – and a friend sits down and supports the head of the person on his lap. Every tear now leaves his eye, and he shouts aloud for about twenty minutes. Meanwhile the features of his face are calm and regular. His voice becomes more and more feeble for about twenty minutes more.

By this time he is speechless and motionless, and lies quiet perhaps an hour. During this time his pulse is rather lower than the usual state; the extremities cold, the skin fresh and clear, the features of the face full, the eyes closed, but not so close as in sleep. Speech and motion return in the same gradual manner; the features become more full than before. Pleasure paints the countenance as peace comes to the soul; and when faith is obtained, the person rises up, and with the most heavenly countenance shouts – “Glory to God.”

This ecstasy abates in about a quarter of an hour, and the person is generally led away by a friend to his tent. Calm, mild, sedate, pleasure marks the countenance for several days; and those who have been most exercised in this pleasing manner, shew a sweet mixture of love and joy, which no tongue or pen can describe.

Another great meeting of this kind is appointed at Waxhaw, on Friday the 21st May next. I do not think that it would be improper for some of the religious people of your city to attend. I venture to suppose they would find themselves amply rewarded for their trouble.

I am, Rev. Sir,
with great respect,
Your obedient servant.
JOHN BROWN.⁷⁵

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Moses Hoge to the Rev. Dr Ashbel Green, dated Mecklinburgh, (North Carolina,) April 24, 1802.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I have seen strange things since I came to this State; a revival of religion after the manner of that in Tennessee and Kentucky. It is, indeed, a very extraordinary work, and I rejoice much that I have seen it. It appears to me more worthy the attention of philosophers of every description than any natural curiosity in our country. If it be only the work of man, it seems to open to our view some springs and powers in human nature which have hitherto escaped the researches of the acutest philosopher; and admitting it to be a work of God, as I believe it to be, it seems to lead to a more clear and distinct view of the

⁷⁵ *New York Missionary Magazine.* Volume 3. pages 180 – 183.

operations of the Divine Spirit upon the heart of a sinner in his conversation and in subsequent communications than can be obtained from ordinary revivals. For as a pious and sensible woman of this country has well expressed it, Jesus Christ, in that case, seems to be there executing in a visible manner his office as a Mediator.

Were it only the ignorant, the weak, and the timid, that become the subjects of this work, it might with some plausibility, at least, be ascribed to the measures employed to carry it on; but when men of information, of strong nerves, and vigorous understandings, are overcome – especially when Deists of this description, who have fortified themselves against every religious impression, from the writings of Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, and Paine; when such men fall – what shall we say? Shall we ascribe this to the word of a weak mortal? The Deists themselves ought to be ashamed of this solution.

It must, moreover, be observed that it is not unusual for persons to fall where nothing commonly alarming or affecting is to be seen or heard; and must this not be ascribed to the finger of God? If not, it seems to be absolutely unaccountable, for no natural cause with which we are acquainted appears to be adequate to so astonishing effect. And I have not so learned the Scriptures as to ascribe such a work as this is to the finger of the Devil.

It is, however, chiefly upon the moral nature of this work that I rely, as an evidence that [it] is of God. With a view as forming as correct ideas of it in this respect as possible, I took my seat by the side of some prostrate penitents, and as they appeared to express without reserve the various sensations of a wounded spirit; I had a good opportunity of learning the cause of their distress. Very piercing and importunate were their cries for mercy, and very bitter and affecting their lamentations over a hard, proud, unbelieving heart.

At length, however, they seemed to be generally led to the knowledge of Christ, as an able, suitable, and willing Saviour; and after a severe conflict with unbelief, some of them rose in triumph from the dust of the deepest affliction, and broke out in the most rapturous praises of their gracious deliverer, and the most moving exhortations to perishing sinners.

This was to me a very interesting scene. It could not be affectation. A Garrick could not have acted the character of a convinced sinner, and of an exulting young convert, as well as I saw it done by ignorant boys and girls.

This was the first thing that satisfied me with respect to the nature of this extraordinary work. The subjects of it appeared, as far as I could observe, to be for the most part thoroughly convinced of sin and of righteousness, and led to Jesus Christ for righteousness and strength.

And every work producing such fruits must be of God, with what disorders so-ever it may be attended. It would indeed have been more to my taste, could we get the world reformed in a manner more conformable to my ideas of order and propriety; but the ways of God are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.

In our solemn assemblies, where there is such particular attention to external order, there is, perhaps, less attention paid to the heart, and consequently more real disorder than in those apparently less orderly assemblies., where the heart seems to be the chief concern.

It must, however, be observed, that in the time of sermon there is seldom much, if any disorder; and after the solemn exercises of public worship are over, it is disorderly for the people to enter into a free conversation upon the most interesting subject in the world?

Nay, have we any Scriptural evidence that it is improper for such as are qualified for the task, and conceive it to be their

duty, to rise up and exhort others to flee from the wrath to come! It must indeed be admitted, that several exhorters sometimes address the same audience or little circle at once, and that persons whose knowledge is very disproportionate to their zeal, sometimes undertake this work; but is this a just reason for prohibiting such exercises altogether? I think not – and it seems to me singularly remarkable, that the most inveterate enemies of our holy religion are sometimes made the subjects of this work, even when it is conducted in a manner which I could have thought more likely to strengthen than to overcome their prejudices. Is not this the doing of the Lord?

That much of what is uncommon in this work ought to be ascribed to man, to the measures employed to carry it on, I doubt not, but not the whole. I am well convinced that the measures employed for the conviction and conversion of sinners at the meetings I attended, were not sufficient to produce the extraordinary effects with which they were attended, without the concurrence of a supernatural influence upon the heart.

I have heard in Virginia, sermons and exhortations, more powerful and impressive, it appears to me, than any I have heard in this State; but they were not attended with a similar effect.

Were we to admit the prostration of the body, the loud cry for mercy, and the subsequent exultations of the young convert, ought to be ascribed rather to the measures employed to carry on this extraordinary work than to a supernatural influence upon the heart; it would still remain a question worthy of particular attention, whether these measures may not be proper and advantageous?

When a sinner is publicly arrested, and made to cry out under the terrors of the Lord, and afterward to bear his testimony in public, to the power and grace of his gracious deliverer; and this is not unfrequently the case with some of the most abandoned and profligate, it has a wonderful effect: Nay, it seems to be an improvement upon the eloquence of the stage –

Instead of fictitious characters, the characters themselves, the convinced sinner, and the exulting young convert appears personally upon the stage, and act their several parts to the astonishment of every spectator! This extraordinary work still continues to spread with much rapidity. Its subjects are already numerous. Apostacies will, it is probable, be pretty numerous; but such a number will, I doubt not, persevere, as will be sufficient to evince the work to be of God.

I rejoice to hear that Philadelphia has been visited. When will all the kingdoms and nations upon earth become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ! That the various revolutions of the present age may be rendered subservient to that great event, is the prayer of Reverend and dear sir, your brother in the gospel,

MOSES HOGE.⁷⁶

KEHUKEE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION. (North Carolina.)

After a long and tedious night of spiritual darkness and coldness in religion, blessed be God, the sable curtains are withdrawn, the day has dawned, and the sun of righteousness has risen with healing on his wings. The churches appeared to be on a general decline. Many of the old members were removed from the church militant to the church triumphant. Some had moved to the western countries, and some had gone out from us, “that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

These things reduced the number of members in the churches greatly. So that in some churches there were hardly

⁷⁶ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Volume 3. Pages 307 – 309.

members enough to hold conference, and in some other churches the Lord's Supper was seldom administered. *Iniquity abounded and the love of many waxed cold.*

The Association nevertheless met annually, and in every church there were a *few* names still left, who seemed anxiously concerned for a revival.

There were but few added by baptism for several years. In 1790 there were 446 baptized. In 1791 – 99. In 1792 – 192. 1794 – 57. In 1795, only 19. In 1796, only 33. In 1797 - 13. In 1798 – 43. In 1799 – 72. In 1800 – 129. At the Association in 1801, 138 baptisms were returned in the letters from the churches to the Association.

Thus the work progressed but slowly, but there always appeared some worthy characters in every church sensible of the coldness in religion, and at almost every Association would be devised some ways and means to bring on a revival.

As early as 1778, a revival was greatly desired, and a fast was proclaimed, to humble ourselves before the Lord and to solicit the throne of grace for a revival.

In 1785, at Shoulder's Hill another fast was proclaimed. The same year, at an Association at Kehukee, it was agreed to set apart some time between sunset and dark every day, for all the churches to unite together in prayer, and earnestly pray for a revival. And in 1794, the Association agreed to appoint Saturday before the fourth Sunday in every month, a day for *prayer meetings* throughout the churches; whereon all the members of the respective churches were requested to meet at their meeting houses or places of worship, and there for each of them as far as time would admit, to make earnest prayer and supplication to Almighty God for a revival of religion.

Thus the means were used, and the request was so laudable that there was no doubt but the Lord would grant the *desires* of the righteous. For the Lord has promised, *ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be*

opened to you. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers. And where the Lord puts it into the hearts of people so earnestly to desire the increase of Christ's kingdom, and the revival of his work amongst the churches, the request is so laudable, that Christians need not doubt but the Lord will hear them in his own time and way. So when the set time to favour Zion was come, he heard the prayers of the Kehukee Association.

There was a small appearance of the beginning of the work in Camden, and the Flat Swamp and Connobo church, in 1800 – 32 this year were baptized in Camden, 22 in the Flat Swamp church, and 24 at Connobo.

But at the Association meeting at Great Swamp in 1801, Elder Burkitt just returning from Tennessee and Kentucky, brought the news to this Association, and proclaimed it from the stage, that in about eight months six thousand had given a rational account of a work of grace on their souls, and had been baptized in the State of Kentucky, and that a general stir had taken place amongst all ranks and societies of people, and that the work was still going on.

The desirable news seemed to take such an uncommon effect on the people that numbers were crying out for mercy, and many praising and glorifying God. Such a Kehukee Association we had never before seen. The ministers all seemed alive in the work of the Lord, and every Christian present in rapturous desire, was ready to cry, *Thy kingdom come.*

The ministers and delegates carried the sacred flame home to their churches, and the fire began to kindle in the greatest part of the churches, and the work increased.

The first that was discovered was, *great numbers of people* attending the ministry of the word, and the congregations kept increasing. It was observed in some places that as many people would now meet at a meeting on a common day, as used to meet on a Sunday, and as many would come on Sundays as

used to attend at great meetings. And it was also observed that the audience was more *solemn* and *serious* than usual. This was the first beginning.

Thus the work began to revive in many places within the bounds of the Association. The word preached was attended with such a divine power, that at some meetings two or three hundred would be in floods of tears, and many crying out loudly *what shall we do to be saved*. Another thing was observed, *old Christians* were so revived, they were all on fire to see their neighbours, their neighbours' children and their own families so much engaged. Their souls seemed melted down in love, and their *strength renewed like the eagles*.

Many *backsliders* who had been run away for many years, returned weeping home. The ministers seemed all united in love, and no strife nor contention amongst them, and all appeared engaged to carry on the work, and did not seem to care whose labours were the most blessed so the work went on; and none of them seemed desirous to take the glory of it to themselves, which ought carefully to be observed.

God is a jealous God, and will not suffer any of his creatures to take the glory of *his* work to themselves. We hope that no person will ascribe the glory of the work to any person or persons whatever, but to the Lord alone; for true religion is *a work of God*.

The work increasing, many were converted, and they began to join the churches. In some churches where they had not received a member by baptism for a year or two, would now frequently receive, at almost every conference meeting, several members. Sometimes 12, 14, 18, 20 and 24 at several times in one day. Twenty-two and 24 were baptized several times at Flat Swamp, Cashie, Parker's Meeting House, Fishing Creek, Falls of Tar River, &c. Some of the churches in the revival received nearly 200 members each. In four churches lying between Roanoke and Meherine rivers, in Bertie, Northampton, and

Hertford counties were baptized in two years about 600 members: and blessed be God the work seems yet progressing.

The work has engaged the attention of all sorts of people – rich and poor, and all ranks. Many very respectable persons in character and office have been called in this revival. There are a few churches within the bounds of the Association that have not as yet experienced a revival, but we hope for them! According to the accounts returned to the two last Associations, 1500 have been added to the churches by baptism in the Kehukee Association.

It has been objected by some that we ought not to number the Lord's people, and bring for example the bad consequence which attended David's numbering of the people of Israel. But we think ourselves justified in mentioning our numbers, when we are actuated by good principles. David might number them to *boast* of the number, and to put confidence in a multitude, not considering *the race was not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. But we number them to exult in the riches of God's free grace, in magnifying his mercy in the conversion of thousands. We find that the Scripture makes mention of the great addition at the day of Pentecost – *The same day were added about three thousand souls*. Acts 2: 41.

The Lord was pleased to make use of weak and simple means to effect great purposes, that it might be manifest that the work was *his* and not *man's*. *Singing* was attended with a great blessing: Elder Burkitt published two or three different pamphlets, which contained a small collection of spiritual songs, some of which he had brought from the western countries. They were in very great demand. As many as about 6,000 books were disposed of in two years. We might truly say, the time of singing of birds had come, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land. At every meeting, before the minister began to preach, the congregation was melodiously entertained

with numbers singing delightfully, while all the congregation seemed in lively exercises. Nothing seemed to engage the attention of the people more; and the children and servants in every house were singing there melodious songs. From experience, we think, we can assure our readers, that we have reason to hope, that this, with other means, proved a blessing in this revival. Shaking hands while singing, was a means (though simple in itself) for to further the work. The ministers used frequently, at the close of worship, to sing a spiritual song suited to the occasion, and go through the congregation, and shake hands with the people while singing; and several when relating their experience, at the time of their admission into the church fellowship, declared that this was the first means of their conviction. The act seemed so friendly, the ministers appeared so loving, that the party with whom the minister shook hands, would often be melted in tears. The hymn:

“I long to see the happy time,
When sinners all come flocking home;
To taste the riches of his love,
And to enjoy the realms above.”

And especially that part of it,

“Take your companion by the hand;
And all your children in the band,” –

many times had a powerful effect. *Giving the people an invitation to come up to be prayed for* was also blessed.

The ministers usually, at the close of preaching, would tell the congregation, that if there were any persons who felt themselves lost and condemned, under the guilt and burden of their sins, that if they would come near the stage, and kneel down, they would pray for them. Shame at first kept many back, but as the work increased, numbers apparently under strong conviction would come and fall down before the Lord, at the feet of the ministers, and crave an interest in their prayers. Sometimes twenty or thirty at a time. And at some Union

Meetings, two or three hundred would come, and try to come as near as they could. This very much engaged the ministers; and many confessed that the Lord heard the prayers of his ministers, and they had reason to hope their souls were relieved from the burden of their sins, through the blood of Christ. It had a powerful effect on the spectators to see their wives, their husbands, children, neighbours, &c., so solicitous for the salvation of their souls; and was sometimes a means of their conviction. Many ladies of quality, at times were so powerfully wrought on, as to come and kneel down in the dust in their silks to be prayed for. The act of *coming to be prayed for* in this manner had a good effect on the persons who came, in that they knew the eyes of the congregation were on them, and if they did fall afterwards it would be a disgrace to them, and cause others to deride them; this therefore was a spur to push them forward.

Relating experiences, and the administration of the ordinance of baptism were greatly blessed in this revival. When the churches held conference to receive members (which they always did in a public assembly) the congregation would draw up in such crowds, as they would tread one on another, anxious to hear the experiences of their neighbours and families. And while the candidates were relating their experience, the audience would be in floods of tears, and some almost convulsed while their children, companions and friends were relating their conversion. And several declared this was the means of their conviction.

And when the ordinance of baptism was administered, nothing had a more solemn effect. Sometimes *fifteen* or *twenty* would be received at one time; and at the time appointed for baptism, great numbers would attend; from 200 to 1,000 and more would assemble at such times. And then to see fifteen or twenty persons suitably attired, to go into the water, who usually stood in a row, a small distance from the water, hand in hand, and the minister joined the rank at the head, would march

down into the water regularly, like *soldiers of Jesus*, singing as they went;

“Come all ye mourning souls who seek rest in Jesus’ love,

Who set your whole affections on things that are above;

Come let us join together and hand in hand go on,

Until we come to Canaan, where we no more shall mourn.”

would take a solemn effect on the numerous assembly. Numbers would be in floods of tears, and so greatly affected they could hardly stand, while they would express their sincere wishes that they were prepared to go in with their children and companions.

Sometimes they had the pleasure to see the father and the son, the mother and her daughter, the wife and the husband, go into the water together, hand in hand. This proved conviction to many. Thus the Lord carried on his work.

Evening Meetings were greatly blessed. Some years past it was customary to hold night meetings; but for some time they were disused. When the revival commenced they began to revive. In some neighbourhoods, they met once a week on an evening; and numbers would attend. At some times, and in some places, nearly 200 people would meet, and some people would come ten miles to a night meeting. And when they had the opportunity for a minister to attend them, they usually had a sermon preached, and the rest of the time they were together, would be spent in exhortation, singing, and prayer. And we are fully satisfied the Lord blessed these meetings.

Where they had not the privilege of a minister to attend and preach, the time would be spent in singing, exhortation, prayer, religious conversation, &c. Sometimes they would tell each other their experiences and examine others whether they had any experience to relate. Thus the work went on.

Union Meetings have also been attended with a blessing. A Union Meeting consists of several churches, being convenient to one another, of the same faith and order, who meet at stated

times to confer in love, about matters relating to peace, brotherly union, and general fellowship. The time the meeting holds is generally three days. On the first day when they meet one of the ministers delivers a suitable sermon introductory to business; then all the brethren present from every church, who are in fellowship, sit in conference, and any brother is at liberty to propose such cases of conscience, as he wants advice on; or any difficult passage of Scripture on which he wants light; or anything else which tends to the harmony of the churches, or to love and peace amongst brethren. And when the conference adjourns, the rest of the time is employed in preaching, praying, singing, &c.

[There follows a further discussion about Union Meetings – their arrangements, constitution, etc.]⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Elder Joseph Biggs. (including Burkitt and Read) A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association. Tarborough, North Carolina. George Howard. 1838. pages 109 – 118.

CHAPTER TEN.

SOUTH CAROLINA.

Revivals Spread to South Carolina.

The workings of the Holy Spirit did not always take notice of State boundaries, and did not necessarily stop at the border. The revivals in this period moved from North Carolina into South Carolina. Albert Shipp describes some of the revivals in this transition. [Ed.]

The first camp-meeting in Rutherford county, at the western end of North Carolina, was held in 1802 near a Presbyterian Church called Little Britain. It was conducted by Dr Hall and Dr Wilson, of the Presbyterian Church, who, however, welcomed the labours both of Baptist and Methodist preachers. Thomas L. Douglass, from the Swannano Circuit, attended this meeting, became a great favourite of Dr Hall, and preached with great power and effect.

David Gray, a gentleman of piety and intelligence, who lived and died near Rutherfordton, and who was present at this first camp-meeting, as also at others held at the same place, gave, by request, the following account of it:-

There was a powerful work among the people, such as had never been witnessed before in this part of the country. Many were astonished beyond measure, and appeared to be frightened almost to death. They would fall sometimes, under preaching, their whole length on the ground, and with such suddenness and violence as seemed almost enough to kill them.

Some of my neighbours fell at my feet like men shot in battle. This the people called being "struck down," and when they professed religion, they called that "coming through." Persons of all ages were "struck down," and "came through;" and even little boys and girls, not more than ten or twelve years old., were subjects of this work; and their exhortations to the people were calculated to melt the hardest heart. Those who had no religion looked like condemned criminals before the judge, waiting to hear the sentence of death pronounced against them.

A married lady, during one of the services, sat under deep conviction, and cried for mercy in the greatest distress of mind for an hour or two, when at length she was powerfully converted and shouted the praises of the Lord until she was exhausted. After a little she called for her child, about four months old, and when it was brought and placed in her arms, she dedicated it, like Hannah of old, wholly to the Lord, and raising both her hands, uttered one of the most fervent and touching prayers I ever heard, that the Lord would spare his life and call him to preach the gospel. I thought at the time, if I lived long enough, I would note particularly the history of this child. When about twelve years of age, the Lord converted his soul and he joined the Methodist Church. Soon after his father moved to Tennessee. When he grew up, the Lord called him to the ministry; he became an able preacher in the Tennessee Conference; representing the Church in the General Conference and in the Louisville Convention, and died honoured by all the people. The child was Ambrose Driskell, grandson of Mr. Kilpatrick, the first man in Rutherford county, though a Presbyterian, to open his house for preaching by the Methodists, and who afterward, with his wife, four daughters, and two sons, became members of the Methodist Church.

One of the most mysterious exercises among the people was what was called the jerks. I saw numbers exercised in this way at a camp-meeting held in Lincoln county. Sometimes

their heads would be jerked backward and forward with such violence that it would cause them to utter involuntarily a sharp, quick sound similar to the yelp of a dog; and the hair of the women to crack like a whip. Sometimes their arms, with clenched fists, would be jerked in alternate directions with such force as seemed sufficient almost to separate them from the body. Sometimes all their limbs would be affected, and they would be thrown into almost every imaginable position, and it was as impossible to hold them still almost as to hold a wild horse. When a woman was exercised in this way, other women would join hands around her and keep her within the circle they formed; but the men were left without constraint to jerk at large through the congregation, over benches, over logs, and even over fences.

I have seen persons exercised in such a way that they would go all over the floor with a quick, dancing motion, and with such rapidity that their feet would rattle upon the floor like drumsticks.

I will mention a strange fanaticism which, in these early days, showed itself in the congregation at Knob Creek Church in this (Rutherford) county, which was originally a Presbyterian Church, but was finally cut off because nothing could be done with the members. Every impression made upon the mind, they professed to believe, proceeded directly from the Lord, and they endeavoured to obey it, no matter what might be its character.

For example: One man said that he had an impression from the Lord that he must sow his corn broadcast, and cultivate it with a wooden plow and wooden hoe; he did accordingly, and made an exceedingly small crop.

An old lady said that she had an impression that one of her neighbours ought to break her crop of flax for her; he accordingly did as she said the Lord had directed.

I was well acquainted with a man among these people who told me that he went one day to hunt his cows, and looked

all over the woods in which they generally grazed but did not find them. "At last," said he, "the Lord came upon me, and a light appeared before me; I started right after it through the woods, over the logs and over the brush, till at length I came to my cattle in a place where I never would have thought of looking for them; then the divine power left me; the light disappeared, and I understood the whole matter."

These fanatics held night-meetings two or three times a week, and would often visit several houses in one night, because someone would have an impression after assembling at a particular place that they ought to go elsewhere.

They would sometimes gather around the roots of a tree and bark as dogs, saying that they had treed the devil.

They pretended to administer the sacraments among themselves, and used a kind of tea instead of wine. Some who were regarded as men of intelligence and worth in the community, fell into this strange and deplorable delusion.

There was another exercise among these people called the marrying exercise. A young man would go to a young lady and tell her that the Lord had given her to him for a wife, and they must get married or be lost; and sometimes the young lady would have the same kind of impression. Three couples were married in this way at one prayer-meeting, and many were so married on other occasions. I believe the people have these kind of impressions at the present day and try to obey them, but not exactly in the same way as these fanatics.

Other delusions.

The Rev. Joseph Moore encountered these fanatical extravagances, and thus speaks of them in a letter addressed to Jesse Lee:- (Dated May 16, 1806.)

Some of the Presbyterians got into some extremes and brought a reproach upon the good work. They got into what they called the dancing exercise, the marrying exercise, etc.

Sometimes a whole set of them would get together and begin dancing about at a most extravagant rate. Sometimes they would be exercised about getting married, and one would tell another he or she had a particular revelation that they must be married, and if the one thus addressed did not consent, he or she must expect to be damned. Thus many got married, and it was said some old maids, who had nearly gotten antiquated, managed in this way to get husbands. But this was condemned by the more sober part among Presbyterians and Methodists, and it has now nearly subsided.⁷⁸

From the *Charleston City Gazette*.

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Pendleton District, to his Friend in this City. Dated July 30, 1802.

Notice was given that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper would be administered in the congregation of the Rev. Mr. Gilleland, at Broadway Creek, in Pendleton District, on the fourth Sabbath of July, it being the 25th day of that month.

The preparation service was to commence on Friday, the 23rd. On the evening before, however, the camps began to be pitched in the wilderness, and not within the view of any artificial improvements of any kind.

I attended as an astonished spectator, with a number of others, no doubt in the same situation. The great and wonderful works which appeared to the wondering multitude, are as far above my powers of explanation as of comprehension. It must be observed, then, that the faint description I am aiming at, may

⁷⁸ Albert Shipp. *History of Methodism in South Carolina*. pages 273 – 276. The problem of people thinking that every impression entering their minds is uncritically a word from God is very common. It was widespread in modern Pentecostalism and in the Charismatic Movement also. [Ed.]

be very imperfect, as well as incorrect, as the whole is made up from my observation. Some parts, therefore, may be wrong through my incapacity in seeing through the mysterious parts, and other parts must be founded in conjecture.

Near two hundred heavy wagons were upon the ground, besides other carriages, and it is thought, (including every age and sex) there could not be less than five thousand persons.

Two stands were erected on the ground, and at a convenient distance, for the daily exhibitions of the public speakers, as also the table for administering the Lord's Supper. The stands, however, were occupied by the different ministers, while the Lord's Supper was administering to perhaps about seven hundred communicants.

The camp was well illuminated through the night, by a good fire being kept up in front of every camp, besides candles, which were kept burning in different parts of the encampment. The whole of the time was taken up, both day and night, (time for every necessary refreshment only accepted) in praising, praying, preaching and exhortation; and this time was only taken up as the very pressing necessities of the respective people required it; so that divine service was constantly kept up, perhaps the whole of the time, both day and night.

Professing ministers of the gospel of different sects attended, viz. of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches, and performed their respective duties occasionally, with very great zeal and fervency, night and day, as their respective abilities enabled them to undergo the extraordinary fatigue.

A very great number of people of every age, I believe from two years to seventy, were struck down. To risk a conjecture of the precise number would be idly uncertain, because they fell in the camps, on their way home, and after they got there. Although but a few days have elapsed since the meeting, yet I have heard of several being struck down after

they got home, who lived twenty miles distant from the place of meeting. The whole number who fell must have amounted to many hundreds. It was thought that more than two hundred were down at one time.

Many were exercised with very great apparent severity, and the time of continuation was very different upon different subjects; from thirty hours (and some were longer) to two, and some were up in a less time. Some indeed appeared to be exceedingly distressed, and considerably exercised, who were not struck down, but walked to their tents, with the assistance of one person or two, where, after lying a few hours they became comforted and composed in a tolerable degree, and some of them in a very extraordinary degree.

From my own observation it appeared they were struck down, and exercised in very different ways, although they generally trembled exceedingly, and were remarkably cold in their bodily extremities. After they recovered, some said they felt a great load about their heart, a little time before the severity of the stroke: others said they were rather in a slumbering and inattentive way, not at all affected at that moment, with what they were hearing or had heard, when they were struck down in an instant, as with a thunderbolt.

Some were totally insensible of everything that passed for some considerable time, others said they were perfectly sensible of every word spoken in their hearing, and everything done to them, although to the spectators they appeared in a state of equal insensibility. Many cried out exceedingly when they were first struck down; the cries were like those of the greatest bodily distress imaginable. But this was generally succeeded, in a little time, by a state of apparent insensibility, which generally lasted much longer; and which, in some, was succeeded by the strongest appearance of extreme agitation and distress, exhibited by incessant cries for mercy, and acknowledgements of unworthiness and ingratitude to a blessed Saviour, who had paid

their ransom in languishing torture and death, that they might live.

Two things were very remarkable throughout the progress of this business, as they appeared to me. The first is, that the people did not fall so much immediately under the ministry, as they did at their camps, or walking through the space between the different encampments, and when not in hearing of the public speakers.

The next is, that those who led the most immoral lives, were struck down and exercised with the greater apparent severity; and those who were good moral characters, although they appeared considerably distressed at first, yet they were not constrained to cry out, but by silent and comfortable contemplation they soon recovered perfect serenity of mind; and the most delicate constitutions, although in all appearance greatly agitated, yet they only complained of weakness, but rejoiced exceedingly in themselves, and to their confidential friends, of the consoling comforts they received, passing knowledge, at least of the natural man, in a state of nature.

I do not pretend to assert this as a general rule, but it appears to me to be the case, so far as my observation went. Several young men were struck down, some of whose exercises I attended to, and who (as I was informed by their acquaintances) came there as opposers, making boasts of what they would do if they were struck down in their presence, and exulting greatly in their own strength, and defying all the ministers to strike them down.

As I observed before, I attended some of the exercises of one or more of these young men. They appeared to be in the most agitated misery which it is possible to conceive or express, rolling and tumbling about for many hours in the greatest agitation; sometimes crying for mercy, acknowledging the most accumulated load of guilt; then despairing to obtain mercy; then pleading again; praying for the souls of their little brothers and

sisters; for those of all who were met together in that camp; and for all the world of mankind, and with all the greatest apparent fervency and sincerity, that none of them might be called from time before their peace was made with the Redeemer.

All with whom I conversed after their exercises were over, seemed to be under deep convictions; and from the declaration they made, I do believe many were converted.

Not having experienced these extraordinary operations myself, to risque an opinion of them may be thought premature and improper. As they appeared to me, however, to be novel and extraordinary, my mind and attention was much engaged endeavouring to discover the true cause, as far as my weak ability might enable me. On attending to a few cases, I soon discovered, (and with certainty too) they could not have their origin in human nature: then I must look to some supernatural impelling power for the cause.

I can have no idea of any power which can operate upon the mind and will of man, but two: the one a bad, and the other a good one. Common sense must forbid my belief in the first; because whatever influence the Devil may have over mankind, (and it is generally thought he has a great deal) he exercises it in a very different manner, namely, to strengthen his own kingdom; to seduce and draw the people from the service [of] God; and to enlist and keep them under his own banner, and in his own service. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Then it remains, that it must be the good power – the power of God. In further support of this belief a strong judgment arises from the effect of the operation itself: the pleadings, professions, and declarations of the subjects, when under the exercises, after they recover the use of speech, are the same with what we have described in the gospel, as the declaration of the sinner, when under the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment.

We find that, Saul of Tarsus, was struck down, made blind and trembled, who had been a violent persecutor of the church of God, and who was converted in that extraordinary manner: we also find he was a chosen vessel of the Lord, and became the great apostle of the gentiles.

If this is the power of God displayed amongst us, (of which I cannot entertain a doubt) I must leave you to conjecture why this power is thus manifested, at this time, and in this particular and uncommon manner. The answer to this question, I believe, is not within the grasp of human wisdom – it is hid from our eyes.

It may be to bring about some great event, or design of Providence, for purposes which we can neither conceive, nor comprehend.

It may be that the very great deadness and formality of things of religion, make this miraculous mercy of God necessarily exhibited amongst us, to show his power, and to convince of sin, righteousness and judgment. But these things are too deep for me.⁷⁹

Lancaster, South Carolina.

Extract of a letter from the Rev. John Couser, to a friend, dated Lancaster, South Carolina, April, 21st, 1802.

“I have the pleasure to inform you, that religion, - languishing, dying religion, - is beginning to revive in an astonishing manner in this country. Perhaps you have never seen a more sudden and happy alteration upon any people, than has taken place in these parts within a few weeks past. I have lately attended two religious encampments, as they are called, and can assure you that they far exceeded anything I ever beheld. They convened on Friday, and did not break up till

⁷⁹ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Volume 3. pages 310 – 313.

Tuesday; during which time religious exercises were going on night and day, almost without interruption. Upon a moderate calculation, there were at the first camp which I attended between ten and twelve thousand people. At the last there were about eight thousand people. How many were made the subjects of this work, on these two occasions, cannot be determined. I am persuaded, that in the first camp, there were three hundred, if not more, struck down on Monday; besides many, whose minds were seriously impressed, who did not fall.

The solemn dignity which attends these meetings, the impressive and interesting scenes which constantly present themselves to the mind of an attentive spectator, baffle all description. It appears to me, that God is affording the world, in this age of degeneracy and infidelity, a testimony of the truth and efficacy of the Gospel, addressed to our senses, little inferior to that which he gave to the world on the day of Pentecost. Perhaps, since that day there has not been such an astonishing and abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit.

This work appears to be no respecter of persons. No age, nor sex, nor condition in life, has excused the people where it has travelled, from being the subject of it. There has scarce been a meeting in this country in which there have not been some triumphs of divine grace over infidelity, and many over the most confirmed habits of sin, and the strongest prejudices of the mind on the subject of religion. This work is the most complete check to the mischievous doctrines of infidelity. It presents a demonstrative proof of the power of the Gospel, thereby prepares the way for access to the heart; and whenever the heart is touched, this serves instead of a thousand arguments in favour of Christianity.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Robert Young. pages 209- 210.

Albert D. BETTS. (Methodist historian.)

Revivals and Camp Meetings.

With the early circuit riders, preaching daily, except Mondays, most of their congregations were small groups in the homes of the people. Where ten or more awakened people could be banded together, a society was formed which generally was the beginning of a local Church. Some of these small societies died thru lack of pastoral care or the lack of local leadership. But wherever the interest grew and numbers increased Chapel or Church was erected, usually of logs, and seating 50 to 100 people. Hereby greater permanence was secured.

It was the general practice for the preacher to conduct service once every two weeks at each point in the circuit. Most circuits were planned on a four weeks basis, with a senior and a junior preacher preaching alternately every two weeks. But where there was only one preacher appointed it would be a two weeks circuit. Also there were some large six weeks circuits with three preachers making the rounds.

However it was the practice that each society or preaching point would have a service at least twice a month led by the itinerant assigned. Their labours were often supplemented by the local preachers and exhorters with Sunday services.

In each society there would be formed a “class” composed of the members in good standing, and under the leadership of an official known as a “class leader.” This class met weekly, usually on Friday night, and it was a mighty instrument in giving cohesion to the local society and definite objects in service. After preaching the itinerant would meet with the class in closed session, and they were very personal in their inquiries and discussions concerning their own spiritual welfare, and that of their unsaved or backslidden neighbours.

In their new meeting-houses or local church buildings, they built a chancel in front of the pulpit. This served effectively as a place for the Methodist custom of administering the Lord's Supper. It also became a place of prayer. In common parlance it was called "the altar," tho strictly speaking the "altar" is the table on which the consecrated elements of the sacraments were placed, and to which the offering is brought.

The so-called "altar-call" for backsliders and penitent sinners was not at first the practice of the preachers. Rev. James Jenkins says in his *Autobiography*:

"On one occasion, while I was preaching at this place (Jeffrey's Creek), from 'Many be called, but few chosen,' a young woman who had been sitting near the door came through the aisle crying, and begging me to pray for her.

And here, for the information of any who wish to know how the custom of calling mourners to the altar began, I will state that in those early days of Methodism, mourners trembling and alarmed invited themselves to the altar and then called upon the preachers to pray for them.

Afterward the preachers observing the signs of the times, invited those who felt their need of religion to approach the altar that prayer might be offer up in their behalf."⁸¹

The Quarterly Meetings of those days were the occasion of the visit of the presiding elder to meet with the preachers, class-leaders and other Church officials. But it was usually held on Saturday and Sunday. No only preachers and officials were expected, but the members and friends of the entire circuit were invited to come. Most of the time was given to preaching, worship and fellowship. These gatherings of hundreds and

⁸¹ Quoted from James Jenkins. *Autobiography*. page 79 – 80. I have not been able to see a copy of Jenkins.

sometimes thousands of people could not be housed in the little Chapels, so they were forced to go out of doors. Often Bishop Asbury speaks of standing in the Chapel door and preaching to the throngs outside.

These two-day Quarterly Meetings became a fixture for many years. Sometime on Saturday the presiding elder would meet with the preachers, class-leaders and other officials in what was called the "Quarterly Meeting Conference" to hear reports and transact the usually small amount of routine business for the charge or circuit. Not only the presiding elder but the other preachers present would preach, and they became great occasions for reaching many sinners and those who had grown cold in their religious experience. Large results soon followed in additions to the local churches, and in the building of a fine Christian fellowship among believers. Occasional visits from the Bishops were a benediction.

So effective were these quarterly occasions that the preachers would announce a "two-day" meeting at some central point or points in a circuit, or in a group of circuits, and when results justified (at favourable seasons of the year) they would "protract" the series of services for several days or weeks longer. Thus arose the term "Protracted" meetings leading to our modern revival services.

In the course of time out of such experiences the "Camp-Meeting" arose. McClintock and Strong (Encyclopaedia) say that it began in Kentucky in 1799. James Jenkins says it was in 1800, and here is his statement:-

"They (Camp-Meetings) were becoming quite common in some of the states, particularly in Kentucky and Tennessee; where they commenced about the year 1800, under the labours of William and John McGhee – the one a Presbyterian and the other a Methodist minister. They united their labours on their sacramental occasions, at which the work of the Lord broke out; and such were the gracious results of these meetings, that in a

short time multitudes came from every direction: some prepared to remain only a day at a time; others in wagons to stay all night; and soon others put up small tents and camped during the meeting. It was not long before other ministers and communities, seeing the good effects of these meetings, were induced to hold similar ones for their own benefit. So in two years their example was followed by nearly all of our Conferences.

Jesse Lee says:- “About this time (1801) Camp Meetings were first introduced. But I never could learn whether they began in the upper parts of South Carolina, in Tennessee or in Kentucky. However, I believe they took place, thru necessity and without design; and that there was no plan laid for them in the beginning.

In new parts of the country where the people were but thinly settled, there were such crowds collected together that no house could hold them, and there were not neighbours enough to entertain them. The ministers were obliged to preach in the woods, and some of the people to lodge on the ground in order to be at the meetings the next day. Sometimes they had meetings for three or four days together, and on some occasions where the work of the Lord was uncommonly powerful, and souls were under deep distress, the meeting would continue all night without intermission.

In some cases persons were struck down by the power of God, and lay helpless most part of the night and could not be taken away. In such cases ministers and others felt it to be their duty to remain with their friends, and to encourage and pray with such as were in distress.

After awhile the people expecting to be detained all night at some of their great meetings began to prepare some kind of tents, made out of cloth or bushes, and carried their provisions with them, in order that they might tarry both day and night at the place at meeting, without being a burden to

anyone, and without being altogether exposed to the night air, or to the weather when it was wet or disagreeable.

As it became more common to make such preparation for encamping, and the people saw the good effects of staying together and keeping up the meeting through the night (where there was a particular manifestation of the Divine Presence) it was thought proper to advise the people to come prepared so to tarry.

In some cases public notices were given to the people to come to meeting prepared to lodge on the ground, and to bring provision for both man and beast, that they might stay together three or four days, and wait upon the Lord continually. As the people were invited to come and encamp on the ground, they soon gave those meetings the distinguishing name of CAMP MEETINGS. After that, when the announcement of a Camp-Meeting was heard, the people knew what provision was necessary to be made for the purpose.”

James Jenkins makes an interesting observation here:-

“In those days we understood very little about the proper method of constructing tents. Some of them were of common cloth; others were shelters covered with pine bark – none of which would keep out the rain or serve, by reason of their smallness, the purpose of holding public worship.”

In the beginning Camp Meetings were largely co-operative among the evangelical denominations, especially Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists. But the Presbyterians began to shy away from them because of the seeming lack of order, for the Methodist preachers and people were very demonstrative. The Baptists at that time were dominated by the Primitive Baptist opposition to mission and education, together with their insistence on immersion as the only mode of baptism and consequent closed communion. So they generally did not

feel entirely at home in a union meeting in which theological views and church practices would more or less clash. Among a number of individual ministers and people of other denominations such differences were not barriers to this larger Christian fellowship, and so many of them made fine contributions to even official Methodist Camp Meetings.

But the Camp-Meeting became a characteristically Methodist institution for a larger reason: Our type of close-knit Church organisation, and missionary expansion zeal promoted by the travelling ministry, could and did press this effect more effectively than was possible under either Baptist or Presbyterian polity.

The movement grew up to meet a great need of Christian people without Conference action or overhead planning. It was one of those cases in which God guides His people into new methods of approach to the world, in order that by all means they may save many of the unredeemed.

Camp-Meetings in South Carolina.

Where was the first one in this state? This point is settled by James Jenkins where he tells of the Hanging Rock Camp-Meeting (in Lancaster Co) in June, 1802.

“The Methodists had a general meeting a few days past at Hanging Rock. There were fifteen ministers, Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian, with about 3,000 people. The work began in some degree on Friday night. The preachers were singing, praying, or preaching all the night. Saturday evening it began again at the stand. Sunday evening at the close of the sacrament, some fell to the earth; and the exercise continued the whole night.

Monday morning the people came together again and began singing and exhorting; the Lord wrought again, and this was the greatest time. They were crying for mercy on all sides.

One man who had on Sabbath evening been in a dreadful rage, at the close of the meeting the power brought him to plead for mercy. I found him weeping; he had watered the ground with his tears. We judge 12 or 15 found peace. A letter from Daniel Asbury informs me that he never saw such a work; and that he had joined (received into the Church) 50 in going around Yadkin Circuit.”⁸²

Dr Albert M. Shipp *History of Methodism in South Carolina* tells of the Methodist preacher who was the principal pioneer in the Camp Meeting movement:

“John McGee, whose name is associated with the origin of Camp Meetings in the West, was born on the Yadkin River below Salisbury, N.C., and lived in the upper part of the Pee Dee and Anson circuits in the South Carolina Conference, and entered the travelling connexion in 1788. He was associated with Daniel Asbury in the work in 1789, placed in charge of Lincoln Circuit in 1792, and located in 1793, and remained in a section of the country where camp meetings had become well known and popular till 1798, when he removed and settled in Sumner county, Tennessee. It was a great service rendered the Church at large when he transferred these meetings from Catawba River to the banks of the Red River in Kentucky, and the Cumberland River in Tennessee, and five years after their origin made known practically to the Western country an instrumentality by which under the blessing of God thousands were brought to the knowledge of salvation.”

This statement by Dr Shipp implied that Camp Meetings originated in western North Carolina, but did not become general until after the development on the Red River in Kentucky.⁸³

⁸² Jenkins. Op. cit. pages 116 – 117. Cited in Betts, quoting Shipp.

⁸³ Albert Shipp. page 272.

At this time we have in South Carolina only three of the old-time Camp Grounds remaining: Cattle Creek in Orangeburg County, Cypress and Indian Fields in Dorchester County. It seems well nigh impossible to list all of the old camp grounds, for apparently nearly all of the larger circuits had such a place.”⁸⁴

Again we quote James Jenkins, who, in 1842, reflected thoughtfully on the developments in camp meeting procedures and conditions:

“I wish to say something about camp-meetings generally: I think in some ways we have improved, viz: The tents are better; we know how to carry on the work with more regularity and order: but in others we have changed for the worse.

Preachers generally do not pray as much as formerly, they are not so much in the spirit of the work. There is too much company in the preachers’ tent, too much smoking of tobacco, and light, frothy and trifling conversation. In the intervals between preaching there is not enough of singing and praying in the tents elsewhere. Preachers, exhorters and class-leaders, together with the stewards, do not take the lead in this matter as formerly, when it was not unusual for private tents to be made the scenes of most remarkable displays of divine power. True this sometimes occurs now, but not very often.

I am grieved to see so much labour and parade about the eatables, and such extravagance in dress. I think we might do without pound-cake, preserves and many other notions. And I am sure if our dresses were plainer, we would feel much more comfortable; for then the mind would not be harassed so much with the care of preserving them from becoming a little soiled. Many, I have no doubt, live much better and dress much finer at

⁸⁴ Betts. pages 159 – 162.

camp-meetings than they do at home. And this is one great reason why more good is not done.”⁸⁵

SOUTH CAROLINA. (Baptist history.)

From the preceding history it appears, that for more than a hundred years the Baptists have held a respectable standing in South Carolina, and that they have increased with great rapidity within about twenty or thirty years past. This great increase has been mostly in the middle and upper regions of the State, which were formerly immoral and irreligious to a proverb. The prevalence of religion has had a very pleasing effect in moralizing, and, indeed, in humanizing the manners of the people. Most of the famous race-grounds are now deserted, and the barbarous sports, which were once very common, are now but little known. The author having previously heard so many reports to the disadvantage of the people, in what are called the back countries in this and the adjoining States, entered those parts with some unpleasant apprehensions. He expected to find many saints to befriend him, but he was fearful of meeting with some heedless sinners who might molest him. But he has the pleasure of declaring, that he was most agreeably disappointed in the general manners of the people, and was treated by all classes with much civility and hospitality. There are, it must be confessed, the remains of that class of people, who gave this country such a bad name, who occasionally commit acts of violence and outrage, but they are generally among themselves, and not on strangers and sober people.

This reformation in manners, so much to the credit and happiness of the people in this country, must not be ascribed wholly to the exertions of the Baptists; for the Presbyterians and

⁸⁵ Betts. Op cit. page 166. Cited from Jenkins. pages 149 – 150.

Methodists are entitled to a respectful share; and to the powerful and salutary grace of God belongs all the praise.

The great revival in this country, soon after the commencement of the present century, has often been referred to in the preceding narrative. We should be pleased to give a more particular account of it than we have hitherto done, or than we, for the want of materials, are able to do. The most we can say is, that between the year 1800 and 1803, there were most surprizing movements of a religious nature on the minds of the people in South Carolina; and notwithstanding the manifest enthusiasm of many, the great Shepherd of the sheep gathered into his fold a large a precious number of Adam's ruined family. Of these, between three and four thousand joined the [Baptist] churches belonging to the Bethel and Broad River Associations.

Large numbers were, at the same time, added to the Methodist and Presbyterian churches.

Camp meetings, during these refreshing seasons, were often held in the middle and upper regions of the State, which were promoted mostly by the Methodists and Presbyterians. Many of the Baptists, however, attended them, and united with their brethren of other denominations, so far as they could consistently with their principles. They also held meetings of a similar nature among themselves, so long as the necessity for them continued; and when they ceased, they returned to their usual places of worship.

The two following letters will give the reader a view of the manner in which the meetings above-mentioned were conducted.

The following is an Extract of a Letter, written by Rev. David Lilly, dated Aug. 23, 1802, to the Editor of the Georgia Analytical Repository, number three.

Rev. and dear Sir,

“I take my pen in hand to transmit to you good tidings. A great work of God is going on in the upper parts of this State. Multitudes are made to cry out, ‘What shall we do to be saved?’ A few days ago, I returned from our Association. We have had a truly refreshing season. A vast concourse of people assembled on Saturday, and considerable appearances of solemnity soon took place; but no uncommon effect till Sunday late in the evening. Then the Lord was pleased to manifest his power to many hearts. Numbers were powerfully exercised through the whole night, and some were thrown to the ground.

On Monday the work increased. The hearts of many were made to melt; and several men, noted for their impiety, were stricken and lay among the prostrate. I must acknowledge it was a memorable time with my soul; the like I had not felt for many years before.

In general, the people were much engaged through the greater part of Monday night. Before sun-rise, on Tuesday morning, the sacred flame began to burn afresh; several, who had been before unaffected, came to the earth. The Association rose about 3 o'clock in the afternoon; and such a degree of brotherly affection as appeared among the ministers and messengers of the churches, I scarcely ever saw. It was enough to melt the heart of the greatest infidel living. So very intent were the people to hear, that they petitioned for preaching, after business was finished; and some of the ministers continued with them, in constant exercise, till midnight. During this time, the work appeared to increase. About twenty persons came to the ground, several of whom were lusty strong men; and many more were made to pray heartily to God. Among the number very deeply affected, were several officers of considerable rank, and others of equal responsibility. Be assured, my brother, the Lord is doing great things for his people in this country.

The hearts of sinners melt before the word of truth, like wax before the sun. Infidelity is almost ashamed to show its

head. Several deists have been constrained, under a sense of their lost condition, to cry out aloud for mercy. A few, even of those who attributed the effects among us to infernal agency, have been reached, and overcome by an influence, which they now acknowledge to be divine.

The work under the preaching of the Presbyterian ministers, is going on rapidly indeed, and has already extended northwards into Virginia and through the upper country southwards to Georgia. The clergy of all denominations, join hand and heart, in the common cause of Christianity. In some of the churches of our Association here, the great revival is but just beginning; in others it rapidly increases.

Among the most successful of our ministers in this work, are the brethren Slackleford, Palmer, Holland, Clayton and Greer. Besides their churches flourishing to a degree that exceeds all former experience, there are several others where the work is almost as great; and very few without some promising appearances. Ministers preach day and night; and when they make no appointments, are surrounded by distressed souls. These are daily obtaining the most satisfactory sense of peace with God, and pardon through the blood of Christ. After believing, they openly profess their faith, and crowd into our churches.

A few weeks past, Mr. Slackleford baptized thirty-six at one time. Two of those were little girls; one was twelve, and the other but ten years old, yet they both gave satisfactory evidence of a gracious change. With these I must mention two lads, but little past those ages, and several young ladies of nearly the first respectability in the back country, who were not ashamed to follow Christ through the liquid grave. On this occasion, it was supposed, that there were no less than two thousand persons present; a third of whom, at least, were in tears at the same moment of time. Crowds came up to the ministers to be prayed for, and many fell helpless on the ground.

This took place at Woodruff's meeting house, in the district of Spartanburgh. The number baptized in our Association, since last year, is seven hundred and three.

God has greatly magnified, and is marvellously magnifying his word. In some way and degree or other, almost everyone seems to feel and acknowledge its power. My poor soul, some time ago much dejected and bowed down, is now rejoicing in God my Saviour. At this instant my eyes overflow with tears of gratitude and joy, while the flame of divine love burns in my heart.

Yours, &c. D. L."

A Letter from Dr Furman of Charleston, to Dr Rippon of London. Charleston, 11th Aug. 1802.

"Rev. and Dear Sir,

"Having promised you some information respecting the extraordinary meeting at the Waxhaws, to which I purposed going at the time I wrote in May, and having accordingly attended it, I now sit down to perform my promise.

It was appointed by the Presbyterian clergy in that part of the country, but clergymen of other denominations were invited to it; and it was proposed to be conducted on the same principles and plan with those held in Kentucky. The place of meeting is about 170 miles from Charleston, in the midst of a large settlement of Presbyterians, but not far distant from some congregations of Baptists and Methodists. This Presbyterian congregation is one of the first which were formed in the upper parts of this State; has for its pastor a Mr. Brown, who is a respectable character; and is furnished with a commodious place of worship. But as the place of worship would not be in any wise equal to the numbers expected, a place was chosen in the forest for an encampment.

The numbers which assembled from various parts of the country, formed a very large congregation, the amount of which has been variously estimated; to me there appeared to be 3,000, or perhaps 4,000 persons; but some supposed there were 7,000 or 8,000. My information respecting the number of ministers who attended, was probably not correct; but from what I observed, and collected from others, there were eleven Presbyterians, 4 Baptists, and 3 Methodists. The encampment was laid out in an oblong form, extending from the top of a hill down the south side of it, toward a stream of water, which ran at the bottom in an easterly direction, including a vacant space of about 300 yards in length and 150 in breadth.

Lines of tents were erected on every side of this space; and between them and behind, were wagons and riding carriages placed; the space itself being reserved for the assembling of the congregation, or congregations rather, to attend public worship. Two stands were affixed on for this purpose: at the one, a stage was erected under some lofty trees, which afforded an ample shade; at the other, which was not so well provided with shade, a wagon was placed for the rostrum.

The public service began on Friday afternoon, the 21st of May, with a sermon by the Rev. Dr M'Corkel, of the Presbyterian church; after which, the congregation was dismissed: but at the same time the hearers were informed, that they would be visited at their tents, and exhorted by the ministers, during the course of the evening. To this information an exhortation was added, that they would improve the time in religious conversation, earnest prayer, and singing the praises of God. This mode of improving the time, both by the ministers and a large portion of the hearers, was strictly adhered to: not only were exhortations given, but many sermons were also preached along the lines in the evening; and the exercise continued, by the ministers in general, till midnight: and by the

Methodist ministers, among their adherents, nearly or quite all the night.

On Saturday morning, the ministers assembled, after an early breakfast, and appointed a committee to arrange the services for that day and the two following. The committee consisted wholly of Presbyterian ministers. They soon performed the work of their appointment, and assigned the several ministers present their respective parts of the service. By this arrangement, two public services were appointed at each stand for that day; three for the Sabbath, together with the administration of the communion, at a place a little distant from the encampment; and two at each stand again for Monday. The intervals, and evenings in particular, to be improved in the same manner as on the former day.

Necessary business calling me away on Sunday evening, I did not see the conclusion of the meeting. This, however, I can say, it was conducted with much solemnity, while I was at it; and the engagedness of the people appeared to be great.

Many seemed to be seriously concerned for the salvation of their souls; and the preaching and the exhortations of the ministers in general were well calculated to inspire right sentiments, and make right impressions. In the intervals of public worship, the voice of praise was heard among the tents, in every direction, and frequently that of prayer by private Christians.

The communion service was performed with much apparent devotion, while I attended, which was at the serving of the first table. The Presbyterians and Methodists sat down together; but the Baptists, on the principle which has generally governed them on this subject, abstained.

Several persons suffered at this meeting those bodily affections, which have been before experienced at Kentucky, North Carolina, and at other places, where the extraordinary revivals in religion within this year or two have taken place.

Some of them fell instantaneously, as though struck with lightning, and continued insensible for a length of time; others were more mildly affected, and soon recovered their bodily strength, with a proper command of their mental powers.

Deep conviction of sin, and apprehension of the wrath of God, was professed by the chief of them at first; and several of them afterwards appeared to have a joyful sense of pardoning mercy through a Redeemer. Others continued under a sense of condemnation, after those extraordinary bodily affections cease; and some from the first, appeared to be more affected with the greatness and goodness of God, and with the love of Christ, than with apprehensions of divine wrath.

In a few cases there were indications, as I conceived, of enthusiasm, and even affectation; but in others a strong evidence of supernatural power and gracious influence. Several received the impressions in their tents; others in a still more retired situation, quite withdrawn from company; some, who had been to that moment in opposition to what was thus going on, under the character of the work of God; and others, who had been till then careless. The number of persons thus affected, while I was present, was not great in proportion to the multitude attending.

I have, indeed, been informed several more were affected the evening after I came away, and the next day; but in all, they could not be equal to the proportional numbers which were thus affected at some other meetings, especially in Kentucky.

Several, indeed a very considerable number, had gone 70 or 80 miles from the lower parts of this State to attend this meeting; of these, a pretty large proportion came under the above described impressions; and since their return to their houses, an extraordinary revival has taken place in the congregations to which they belong. It has spread also across the upper parts of this State, in a western direction. There are

some favourable appearances in several of the Baptist churches; but my accounts of them are not particular enough to be transmitted.

Taking it for granted that you have seen the publication entitled "Surprizing Accounts," by Woodward, of Philadelphia, containing the accounts of revivals in Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, I therefore say nothing of them; but only, that the work in North Carolina increases greatly; opposition however is made by many; and I am informed that the congregation, of which I have been writing so much, (that at the Waxhaws) is likely to be divided on account of it; and that Mr. Brown has been shut out of the place of worship since the meeting was held there, by some, I suppose a majority, of his elders and adherents.

A particular reason of the offence taken by them, as I understand, was the practice of communing with the Methodists. Having mentioned this denomination frequently, I think it proper to say, that it is that class of Methodists who are followers of Mr. Wesley, which is intended; few of the followers of Mr. Whitefield are to be found in the United States, not at least as congregations.

These general meetings have a great tendency to excite the attention, and engage it to religion. Were there no other argument in their favour, this alone would carry great weight with a reflecting mind; but there are many more which may be urged. At the same time, it must be conceded that there are some incidental evils which attend them, and give pain to one who feels a just regard for religion. Men of an enthusiastic disposition have a favourable opportunity at them for diffusing their spirit, and they do not fail to improve the opportunity for this purpose; and the too free intercourse between the sexes in such an encampment is unfavourable.

However, I hope the direct good obtained from these meetings will much more than counterbalance the incidental

evil. I am, reverend and dear Sir, your friend and servant in the gospel,

RICHARD FURMAN.”⁸⁶

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

VIRGINIA.

Rev. Drury Lacy’s First Sight of the Revival.

Dated 22nd January, 1802, the Rev. Drury Lacy sent a letter from Mount Ararat, Prince Edward, Virginia, to his merchant friend Robert Ralston.

The letter firstly complained about the fact that Lacy had not received a letter from Ralston for a long time. Lacy then went on to describe a gathering of ministers of different denominations, with the aim of them deciding upon an ethical position which would allow them to work together, regardless of their doctrinal and cultural differences. The third part of the letter described activities following this meeting, where a large congregation had gathered to observe what agreement would be made. The following is the second and third sections of the letter. (Ed.)

The Ethics of Inter-Communion Activities.

On Christmas day about 10 Baptist preachers, an equal number of Methodists, and 6 Presbyterian ministers met at Bedford court house in this state. The object of the meeting was to discourse freely together on the subject of our differences, and to see if we could not adopt some terms for living more friendly than we have done, and even to commune together. I have not a Minute of the proceedings, but will relate the substance of what we did as well as I can, from memory.

⁸⁶ David Benedict. *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America.* (First publ. 1815.) 2 Vols. Gallatin, Tennessee. 1985. Volume Two. pages 163 – 171.

It was mutually agreed, that the ministers of the different denominations should exercise all good offices towards each other, and preach in each other's pulpits as occasion might serve, where it would not interfere with a previous appointment; and that it should be esteemed unfriendly for the minister of one denomination to refuse the use of his pulpit to a minister of another, unless where the congregation was opposed.

It was further agreed, that the members of the respective societies might commune with the churches of the other denominations where they found a freedom to do so; and that such should not be called to account by the respective societies to which they belonged, as if guilty of any breach of irregularity.

That the members of the different denominations would watch over each other in brotherly love; and in cases, where offences should be committed by a member of one communion known to a member of another which required the discipline of the church, that the society to which the offender belonged should be informed, and the party aggrieved be admitted to state the particulars of the offence.

That the ministers of one denomination should receive the members of another to communion upon their producing a certificate of their good standing in their own society; or upon receiving satisfaction of the same in any other method.

That if a member of one denomination wished to become a member of another, the latter should not receive him, unless he produced a certificate that he was free from church censure in the society to which he formerly belonged.

It was further agreed that, each Presbytery among us would admit two Baptist and two Methodist preachers to sit with us as correspondents; that each association of the Baptists would admit two Presbyterian and two Methodist ministers; and that each Conference of the Methodists would admit two Presbyterian and two Baptist ministers as correspondents, upon

such producing certificates of their appointments properly attested.

It was finally resolved to submit our proceedings to the consideration of the Presbyteries, associations and conferences to which we belonged.

The Meeting that Followed.

The congregation that attended was more numerous than I ever saw collected for public worship. There could not have been fewer than 3,000 people. There were two sermons preached on Friday. Many of the hearers appeared pretty solemnly affected; and after sermon, continued together praying and singing, till nearly sun-down; although the greatest part of them had several miles to ride home.

On Saturday four sermons were preached. The people were much affected at times, and I hope many solemn impressions were received. They continued together till night.

On Sabbath, I hardly ever saw a more solemn scene. Near the close of the first sermon, I am persuaded more than half of the audience were in tears. It appeared to me that something like a supernatural power suddenly arrested the attention of the people, and rested on almost every mind. What seemed more remarkable was, that the preacher had not appeared to enjoy any uncommon degree of liberty in preaching, until that particular juncture.

Another sermon was immediately preached, during which, there was no such extraordinary impressions; but the people appeared very attentive, and many of them from time to time affected to tears.

During the third sermon, the people, most of whom were standing out of doors, were discomfited by its beginning to rain. The congregation then divided, and being collected in and about three of the largest houses in the village, were preached to by three different preachers.

While a Mr. Tomkins was preaching, at the place where I was present, the scene became truly solemn. – Very few dry eyes were to be seen. A young man, and three young ladies were so overcome by their impressions that they were unable to stand.

I was near the young man, and never saw a more striking image of death exhibited in a living person. By the way I do not understand this falling down, but when I am satisfied it is wholly involuntary, I am willing God should carry on his work his own way.

By this time the people from the other places, where there had been preaching were dismissed, and came crowding on all sides, and the impressions seemed communicated almost with the rapidity of an electric shock. I doubt not but a great deal was sympathetic feelings; but I hope convictions reached some hearts, that will never be erased, but by the blood of Jesus.

Several prayed and exhorted, and the feelings of the people continued till the evening. I left the place about sundown, but heard that many continued till 10 o'clock. The place being seventy odd miles from where I live, I had heard nothing further until to-day. Mr. Alexander called on me to-day, and informed me that he had seen Mr. Tomkins last week, who told him, that he and Mr. Turner had continued to preach in that place and neighbourhood every day through the week following, and that convictions appeared to be made on great multitudes. Many fell in the course of the week, but not a tenth part of those who seemed under powerful awakenings. I really hope that God is reviving his work in that part of the country. The Presbyterian congregation there is under the pastoral care of Mr. Turner and Mr. Mitchel. O that Christ may ride forth conquering unto conquer, until all his enemies be bowed at his foot-stool. Even so come, Lord Jesus, Amen.

There is nothing like what I have described amongst us, but we are not without encouragements. More people attend public worship than has done for years past, and generally appear more attentive. Three or four have lately had a hope in Briery congregation that they have passed from death unto life. I hope they are the first fruits of a glorious harvest. The promise of God to his church seems to be fulfilling. “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.”

We indeed seemed to be threatened to be overwhelmed with a deluge of infidelity and impiety. But the blessed Saviour has told us, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church. O that we had faith to trust his word and rejoice in his gracious promises.

Permit me to add here, an abridgement of a letter I lately received from Rev. J. Chavis, dated Caswell county, N. Carolina, December. He informs me that there is a glorious revival in that state almost equal to the accounts from Kentucky – that he never expected to see the Spirit of God poured out in so miraculous a manner upon the guilty sons of men: that at three Sacramental meetings, at which he had been present 180 had been hopefully converted, that hundreds are under impressions, that the work has spread through seven congregations since the last of August, that Deists are silenced, and many who were opposers at first have become the subjects of the work. That the Dutch, who form a part of those settlements, are flocking to Jesus in multitudes, &c.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Woodward. *Increase in Piety*. pages 66 – 71.

W. W. BENNETT. Methodism in Virginia.

The year 1802 was ushered in with revivals. The good work of grace at the General Conference was only like a few preclusive drops before the descending shower. On the adjournment of that body the preachers bore away with them to all parts of the work the flame of divine love. At the Duck Creek Conference, held in Delaware, two weeks after the General Conference, there was a most extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit. Many persons, fresh from the revival at Baltimore, attended this meeting. The business of the session was conducted in a private house, while the church, and even the homes of the neighbours, were filled with eager crowds listening to the word of life. The meetings were continued every day and night for a week. "Some of the people," says Jesse Lee, "when they were almost worn out, would go home in the evening or at midnight, and take a little sleep, and then as soon as they awoke, they would hurry off to meeting again, at any hour of the night." On one occasion the exercises continued without intermission for forty-five hours – the people going off in companies to procure food and rest, and then returning to relieve those who remained to labour for souls. Not less than one hundred and fifty were converted during the meeting."

Over the whole field of Methodism, from Canada to Georgia, and from Delaware to Kentucky, the revival influence extended. The churches in Virginia shared largely in this gracious visitation. In his annual journey through the State, southward, Asbury was cheered by the tidings that reached him of the spread of the good work. From New London, in Campbell county, he writes: "Good news from the South District of Virginia, Brother Jackson writes, 'two hundred souls have been converted this last quarter; there is a revival in all the circuits but two, and great union among the preachers and people.'"

The Virginia Conference for 1801, began at Dromgoole's chapel in Brunswick, on the 9th of April. We present extracts from the record.

The year following this Conference was greatly fruitful throughout the bounds of the Church. The circuits in Virginia shared largely in the great revival which was rolling like a wave of fire over the land. In the southern portions of the State, where the churches had felt the severest effects of division and discord (i.e.- the O'Kelley break out.) the Lord freely poured out his Spirit, and Zion raised her drooping head. The bands of love were strengthened among the older Christians, and many sinners were brought to feel the saving power of the gospel.

At Mabry's Chapel, in Greenville, there was a glorious manifestation of the Spirit. Jesse Lee, who conducted the meeting, has left an account of the stirring scenes.

"The place was awful indeed. After a while, one proclaimed aloud that God had converted her soul. Another spoke out and said, 'God had reached a young man's heart.' One of the preachers called to one of the sisters, saying, 'Sister, your daughter has promised that she will set out for heaven.' Thus they continued for a considerable time"

He had another powerful Quarterly Meeting at Jones's Chapel, in Sussex. He thus describes the scenes of the Sabbath: "The meeting continued till sunset, in which time it was said sixteen souls were converted. The work was also among the blacks. About sundown a lad was converted, who was the last, there being but few people in the meeting-house...."

In Sussex circuit more than one hundred were converted in six weeks. The work of revival was not confined to this portion of the State; in every district and in almost every circuit the churches were quickened and sinners were converted. On the eastern shore a general revival was in progress. Norfolk, Portsmouth, and the adjacent country shared largely in the

blessed work. In Rockingham, at a meeting which continued for nine days, so great was the excitement that almost all secular business was suspended and the people flocked in crowds to the house of God. Some reminiscences of the meeting have been preserved by the Rev, Joseph Travis, who was an eye-witness of the scenes described. In his tour through the Valley, Bishop Asbury visited Harrisonburg in company with Nicholas Snethen and Enoch George. The preaching of these holy men was in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. Under the pathetic appeals of George, “the flinty hearts were broken in pieces, the iceberg professors melted into tears, while sinners were made to quake and tremble.”

The Bishop and his companions passed on their way, but the meeting was continued by Leonard Cassel, one of the circuit preachers, assisted by the local brethren. While Cassel was preaching, “about midway the sermon, quick as lightning from heaven, the power and presence of the Great Head of the Church was manifested in the midst. Ah! It was truly glorious – sinners crying for mercy, mercy – happy Christian shouting, luke-warm professors weeping and groaning – those who had been at variance, in each other’s arms weeping, and mutually begging each other’s pardon, and promising hereafter to live in peace, and pray for one another.” The exercises lasted until midnight. Next day they met again, and the displays of Divine power were still more wonderful. For nine days and nights the work went on with increasing power and success.

“Never did I witness before, nor have I since,” says the narrator, “such displays of Divine power. Profane swearers, downright sceptics, and God-defying wretches, would enter the church with their sarcastic grins, and countenances telling out upon them their rage and hellish malice at the work going on, and in less than ten minutes the very vilest of all such would be stricken to the floor, as if shot by a deadly arrow, and for an hour or so, remain speechless, breathless, pulseless, and, to all

appearance, dead – then, afterwards, with a heavenly smile, look up, stand up, and shout aloud, “Glory, glory to God! My soul is converted, and I am happy.”

Many became afraid to enter the church; and at a tavern one day it was asked by the company who would venture to go in and bring back the news of what was going on, when a Mr. Mackay proposed himself, as he was not afraid. I knew this young man well – he was amiable, but very wild and heedless about religion. I noticed him when he came in. He began to count the number of persons then down on the floor. He proceeded as far probably as from one to six in counting, when down he came. He lay for about an hour. I remained close to him, and when he arose he commenced shouting, “Glory to God!” and taking my hand, he exclaimed, “Oh! If I had known the power of God, I should not have resisted it, as I have done.”

One of the greatest triumphs of grace at this meeting was in the case of a young man of talents, birth and education, but an avowed infidel. “He came into the church defying any power, human or Divine, to make a fool of him; when, astonishing to relate, within ten minutes, yonder he lays prostrate on the floor. Breathless and pulseless, he lay for an hour or more, and when he arose it was tremendously glorious. He afterwards became a minister.”

Father Travis believed that this great work was in answer to the fervent prayers of the pious class-leader. The Church in Harrisonburg had been in a deplorably luke-warm condition, “and prejudice abounded much more than the grace of God.”

“I shall never forget,” he writes, “the night I attended my class, when the leader sang and prayed, unfolded his class paper, burst into a flood of tears, and with a half-choked utterance, said: ‘Brethren, go home, I cannot meet you in class tonight.’ He picked up his hat and walked out; in slow procession the rest of us followed. On my way home, passing

by the stable of the leader, I heard a groan, the sound being that of a human being. I approached, and it being a moon-light night, on looking in I saw the leader, James Burgess, upon his knees, begging God to have mercy upon the Church. Oh, that we had more such leaders in this day as he then was!" The holy flame spread through the Valley, and across the mountains to the counties lying along the Potomac.

The year 1803 is famous for the introduction of camp meetings into Virginia. In the spring of this year the first meeting of this kind was held in the county of Brunswick. It was held "at a new meeting house," says Jesse Lee, "which was named Camp Meeting House, that it might be remembered in future, the first camp meeting in that part of the world was held in that place." The exercises began on the 27th, and closed on the 30th of May. During this time thirty persons were converted. From this date these meetings became almost an institution of Methodism, and so vast were the numbers converted at them, that it becomes proper to give some account of their origin. (here follows a McGee-style account of the McGready material.)

The Quarterly Meetings were seasons of special interest; vast congregations attended, and many persons came from a distance of forty or fifty miles. At one of these meetings, held at Little Levels, in Greenbrier, not less than one hundred souls were converted in the space of six days. But the camp meetings, which now became frequent, were marked by the most extraordinary displays of Divine power. During the Summer and Autumn thousands were brought to God at these great gatherings of the saints. In the counties of Botetourt and Greenbriers alone, more than five hundred were converted at the different camp meetings.

In the latter part of the Summer a meeting of this kind was held near the town of Suffolk, where the saving power of God was felt in a wonderful manner. The meeting was

conducted by the Presiding Elder, Daniel Hall, assisted by a number of zealous and powerful preachers, both travelling and local. The exercises lasted but four days, and within that time nearly four hundred persons were converted.

"The accounts of that meeting," says Jesse Lee, "appear to be incredible to those who were not present; but those who were eye and ear-witnesses, think it too great to be sufficiently described." The flame kindled here, rapidly spread to the surrounding circuits, and hundreds of happy converts in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Princess Anne, Isle of Wight, and other places, crowded the gates of Zion.

Under the labours of Stith Mead and other preachers, the work greatly revived in Bedford, Campbell, Amherst, and other counties in that portion of the State. Within six months at the various Camp and Quarterly meetings conducted chiefly by this faithful man, nearly twelve hundred persons were converted, and eight hundred and fifty [were] added to the Church.⁸⁸

Letter from Virginia, November 9, 1802.

Extract from a letter from the Rev. James Hughes, dated West Liberty, Ohio County, Virginia. November 9, 1802, to Rev. Stephen West. D.D., of Stockbridge, Mass.

I am happy in being able to give you a sketch of intelligence at present, which I believe will be pleasing to you; and I hope the source is such, that it will furnish more for a future day, viz. – That the Lord has lately very remarkably visited this part of His church with the effusions of the divine influences. There hath been something more than usual of a stir, and raised expectation among the people, through the past

⁸⁸ Bennett. pages 430 – 450.

summer; and on sacramental seasons, much appearance of solemnity and serious exercise. – Numbers were added to the church: - But nothing very remarkable took place, until about the last Sabbath of September when the Lord's Supper was administered in a congregation called *The Three Springs*, of which Mr. McCurdy is pastor, about twenty miles north of this place. On this occasion, the Lord began to work in a powerful manner – many were awakened, and the exercise increased so, that, on Monday evening, the usual time of breaking up, the people could not part, but continued all night, and until 11 or 12 next day.

The work was in the same manner, as in the states of Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. – Numbers sunk down in their distress, and appeared to be in very great concern and anguish of spirit. Some few, perhaps, five or six, obtained relief and comfort before the assembly was dispersed; and gave ground to hope that they got their rest on the sure foundation. Two weeks after said time, the sacrament was administered at Racoon, a congregation not far distant from the former, and under the care of Mr. Patterson. By this time, the awakening and exercise had considerably increased, and it was a very solemn season. Many very hardened and bold sinners were awakened and brought into awful distress. The appearances were such that it was thought proper to appoint the last Sabbath in October, for an extra meeting and communion. A great multitude attended on this occasion. – numbers went in wagons, took their families and provisions with them; and we continued at that place from Saturday until Tuesday morning: - This was the Cross-roads, said Mr. McCurdy's other congregation. There were ten ordained ministers and four licentiates present: About 750 communed. – The exercise continued day and night – The cries and groans of the distressed were almost incessant from Saturday evening until we left the place; and, sometimes, to such height that the public speaker would have to desist. I

believe few obtained relief or comfort until Monday evening, though the number of awakened and distressed was increasing until that time. On Monday we had sermons at three different places, sufficiently distant from each other to prevent disturbance. – One was in the meeting house. About the time the assemblies were dismissed, and were endeavouring to disperse, the Great Comforter took possession of some hearts, and their groans and cries of distress were changed into acclamations of praise and glory to their deliverer.

Some very young were enabled to speak, recommending Christ, and inviting and warning sinners in a manner truly astonishing. Under this means awakenings increased, and most piercing cries and groans were mingled with the praises. These exercises, (and when the noise would admit of it) prayers and exhortations were made by the ministers – all of which contributed a solemn, awful and pleasing scene through the whole night, and sometime in the morning. Before we could part, it was agreed to appoint next Sabbath as another extra meeting and communion. It is probable great numbers will attend, as it is in a very central place – Upper Buffalo congregation.

Nov. 18th.

Being providentially prevented from sending this by the last mail, I can now inform you, that I attended at the proposed meeting on last Sabbath; and it was a great and solemn meeting indeed. It is supposed, the number which attended was not less than ten thousand. There were twelve ministers attended. – We continued on the ground from Saturday morning until Tuesday. The number affected was great, perhaps upward of two thousand, counting from the first to the last. About one thousand were communicants. During the two last nights, there were, I think, seldom less than, from two to three hundred at once: And of these, the cries and groans were very affecting.

Toward the latter part of the solemnity, numbers appeared to get relief; though few in comparison with number affected. The distressed appeared to have awful apprehensions of their sins – Their cries generally were – Oh, my sins. Oh, my hard heart – O Jesus, take away my hard heart! But room and time at present forbid enlargement: And in many sheets [of paper] I could not give you any adequate description of the wonderful scenes.⁸⁹

Letter from William Heath to Ezekiel Cooper – dated Lynchburg, July 24, 1804.

To you I suppose it will be a matter of joy to hear of the prosperity of Zion in these parts of the Lord's vineyard.

The Camp Meetings which have been usual in the South and West for some years never began with us until last Spring.

On the 24th of March a Camp-Meeting was held by Lorenzo Dow, in conjunction with a number of other preachers, and ministers, at which fifty souls professed to find peace with God; from this the work of God spread in almost every direction. At the several meetings which were held at Flat Creek Meeting House, by the 16th of April, twenty-four souls professed converting grace; and the work has continued to be more rapid at that place ever since; 40 have joined the Church there, and sixteen in the neighbourhood above have professed conversion and planted a Society among us. In the town and vicinity, from the beginning of the work in April, until now, from six to twelve and sixteen, at a meeting, have professed to find the pearl of great price; so that from a class of twenty members, we have now 160. Bless the Lord, O my soul! And let the people magnify his holy name!

On the 4th of May, a meeting was appointed at a place fifteen miles above us, called the Tabernacle, to be held three

days, but the work was so great that it was continued five days, day and night, with very little intermission; in which time one hundred were thought to have obtained true conversion.

From the 12th to the 15th of May, at a place called New Hope, five miles from town, we had another meeting which also continued day and night, at which there were about a hundred converted, and many were daily added to our members. From the 17th to the 22nd of May, meeting again at Tabernacle, at which place the people encamped on the ground, and continued preaching, praying, and other godly exercises, night and day for five days, in which time one hundred and fifty were converted, and one hundred and forty joined the Methodist Church.

From the 8th to the 12th of June, another Camp Meeting was held at Charity Chapel, Powhatan, at which one hundred souls were converted, and sixty joined the Methodist Church. From the 20th to the 24th of this month, we had a Camp Meeting in Bedford at Leftwich's meeting house, at which one hundred and ten came forward and gave testimony of their faith, that God had converted their souls.

Very many are the prayer, class, and preaching meetings, not mentioned here, at which the Lord pours out his Spirit in a wonderful manner. Considering the low ebb of religion among us before the revival began, I can truly say that I never saw or red of greater times.

Stith Mead became the person who planted Methodism in Lynchburg during this revival. Previously he had been persecuted mercilessly by the inhabitants, and could not make much progress there in building a Society. Mead was not alone in his opinion of this town. Lorenzo Dow writes in his Journal after a visit; "Lynchburg was a deadly place for the worship of God."

But this seat of Satan at length felt the power of god. (sic). Five years after the persecution mentioned above, the

⁸⁹ *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*. Volume 3. Pages 315 – 317.

revival of 1804 broke out, and religion gained a hold in Lynchburg which it has never lost.

“In 1804, on my way from Georgia to the General Conference at Baltimore, I sent an appointment by Lorenzo Dow, to manage a meeting in my native county, Bedford, and which was accordingly held in the month of March at Timber Ridge, at which fifty souls were converted. Having also an appointment in the Mason’s Hall in Lynchburg, the old battleground, I preached and had a melting, solemn time. I preached also in Amherst, a short distance from town; the work here was powerful, and sixteen were converted. I determined, as I had a little time to spare, to return to town and preach again, and in doing so in the Mason’s Hall, eight souls were converted. I repeated the same the night following, and ten souls professed conversion; and so on in town and country, until hundreds were awakened and converted, and a Society above a hundred members formed in Lynchburg; and so, under God, I gained the victory over my adversary the devil, and his agents, my spiritual enemies.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ W. W. Bennett. *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia*. Chapter 11, up to page 454.

CHAPTER TWELVE.

GEORGIA.

GEORGIA. (Baptist)

From a respectable Minister of the Gospel, in the upper part of Georgia, to his friend in Savannah, dated November 17, 1801.

Several churches here within four months past have received and baptized from twenty to fifty persons; and one in Elbert county, has had an addition by baptism of about one hundred and forty. According to the best accounts from Kentucky, there has been added to the Baptist churches, since last March, near six thousand; while multitudes were joining the Methodists and Presbyterians. There are six Baptist Associations in that state. Of these Elkhorn is perhaps the smallest, and from their Minutes of last August, it appears that the number is three thousand and eleven souls. – O that influences of such large and rapid accessions to the churches may be multiplied, till not only Kentucky and our upper, but our lower country, and *even Savannah, shall be filled with the glory of God.*⁹¹

Letter from the Rev. Stith Mead to the Rev. Dr Coke.

Date, May 11th, 1802.

“To give you a minute detail of every circumstance which has fallen under my observation, respecting the revival of

⁹¹ Woodward. *Increase of Piety*. pages 49 – 50.

religion in this country would swell a letter to a volume. For ten years past, there has been a great declension in this State. Satan extended his dominion during that period, and immorality, pride and infidelity predominated. There has been no check to ungodliness, of a general nature, until lately; what sprinklings of the divine blessing, which occurred in the intermedium, were through the persevering endeavours of the itinerant Preachers. This appears to have been the state of religion until the year 1801.

In the month of January, 1801, I was appointed to the Georgia District. In my first round I discovered some traces of the divine favour, by a few awakenings, which were as drops of rain before a shower. On the second round, there were great shakings and tremblings at all the Quarterly Meetings, with a few conversions a little before the commencement of the third quarter. The work made its remarkable appearance at the Quarterly Meeting, held for Burk Circuit, at Harris's house, on Saturday, the 18th and 19th of July. On Saturday evening, I inquired of Brother Harris – How long is it since the last revival in your neighbourhood? He replied, 'It is yet to begin.' As we were conversing together with Brother Morte about the nature of revivals, and the distance between the times of a general outpouring of the Spirit, we concluded that the favourable period was now arrived, and I exhorted them to look for it.

Nothing remarkable happened till the administration of the Lord's Supper, on the Sabbath morning, when we had a soft melting time, and holiness seemed to be the object of some of the advanced Christians. At the close, I proposed to pray for the penitents, and desired them to kneel round the communion table. Two of Brother Harris's daughters came pressing over the benches and the people, with loud lamentations and streaming eyes, entreating their father to pray for them. The youngest of them was quickly converted, and spoke of the divine goodness with such energy, as greatly affected the whole

congregation; and many from that day dated their convictions, and have since found redemption through the blood of Jesus.

About a fortnight after, I visited Mr. Harris's again, and the work continued to prosper. On the 12th of August the Lord showed himself in majesty and power. I laboured incessantly for four days together, and often till the sun went down. A great number of awakened sinners lay across the benches, and on the floor, in agonies of distress for their souls; their groans and cries seemed to pierce the very heavens. Some of their expressions were as follows:- 'O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, and save my soul from hell! Lord, remove this hardness from my heart! No mercy for me! I am lost! I shall be undone for ever. My aged father and mother, and the Preachers, have so long and often prayed for me, and I have never prayed for myself before today! I thank God, I am not dead and damned! Glory to God, I am out of hell, and upon pleading ground! O that I could find but one crumb of mercy! The Lord has long strove with me; but I have barred the door of my heart against him. O that I could clasp him in my arms! O that he would convert my soul! Lord, heal my backslidings! O my hard heart! What shall I do to be saved? Where is my father and mother - that they don't come and pray for me? I shall be damned, if Jesus don't save me! It was but last night I was laughing and making game of religion. Lord, forgive my sins! Etc., etc.

Now hear the expressions of joy, which flowed from the hearts and lips of those that found peace with God through faith in Christ Jesus. 'I feel lighter; I love my sweet Jesus! I love you all! Glory to God I am happy! O how happy I am! O that I had known how good he was before, I would have sought him sooner. Come, father and mother; come, brothers and sisters; come, relations and neighbours; come, and go with me to heaven! Glory to God, he has pardoned my sins, and has had mercy on my soul! I have felt more happiness in these few

minutes, than in all my life before.' &c. In six days forty persons professed to be converted.

About this time I received the joyful news of the work breaking out in the upper part of Georgia, and running like fire in the dry stubble. Since which most of the Circuits in the District have caught the fire, which has continued to spread. We have built a commodious chapel, and the number of hearers are from one thousand to twelve hundred, with many awakenings, and frequent conversions. You know, Sir, what a seat of infidelity this has been. I suppose Augusta, and its vicinity, contains at least four thousand souls. What cannot the Methodists do, through grace? Glory be to God, primitive Methodism shines in this country, and through America. The number converted in this district I suppose is to be about two thousand since the work began to revive.

I presume you have had frequent accounts from different parts of this continent, of the astonishing outpouring of the Spirit; the increasing union between the Presbyterian and Methodist churches; and, of late, an addition to the Moravian church. A letter from the Presiding Elder of South Carolina, dated the 22nd of March, says – ‘These combined forces lately drew their spiritual weapons on an assembly of about four thousand souls, in ---- County, North Carolina. It is supposed that three hundred persons were born of the Spirit during the meeting. Glory be to God, the north is giving up; the south keeps not back! The sons of God are coming from far, and his daughters from the ends of the earth. O that this may be the ushering in of a glorious Millennium! May the Jews and Heathen be quickly Christianized, and all brought to know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. Suffer me to hail you across the Atlantic Ocean, for Zion’s prosperity. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof, lift up their voice, the villages of Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout

from the top of the mountains. So prays your affectionate brother, son and servant, for Christ’s sake.”⁹²

George G. Smith. Georgia and Florida.

The great revival tide which swept over America came in blessing to Georgia this year. The Baptists participated largely in it, and during the next year, 1802, over 700 new members were reported in one association. At this Conference, January 1, 1802, there was reported 2,094 white and 400 coloured.

On the 31st October, Asbury, Whatcoat, and Nicholas Snethen entered Augusta. The church was now so far completed that it could be occupied. The congregations were large, but there was no considerable awakening. Nicholas Snethen, who came with Asbury, was a Marylander, and was one of the most eloquent and cultivated men of the connection. He afterwards in common with many others, went into the Methodist Protestant Church, and had much to do in giving shape to an organisation more in accordance, as he thought, with his firmly held views of religious liberty. The three travellers pursued their usual route, visiting Wilkes, and on to Petersburg. This was then a young town, in which there were eighty stores; now not a cottage remains. Snethen had been very popular at Augusta, and Asbury, at the request of the congregation there, sent him back to spend some time in the city. The Bishop speaks of the sweet peace that filled his heart as he went from cabin to cabin, turning the cabin into a court. At Henry Pope’s they found good quarters. Here the Bishop wrote in his Journal: “Why should a living man complain: But to be three months together, where you have only one room and fireplace, and half a dozen folks about you, strangers perhaps,

⁹² Robert Young. pages 182 – 186.

the family for certain. Hence, you must meditate here, preach, read, write, pray, sing, talk, drink, eat and sleep, or flee to the woods.”

On Sunday at Pope’s the congregation was not far from a thousand people. The Bishop preached; Hope Hull and Stith Mead exhorted. Then they rode to General John Stewart’s, and by Liberty Chapel to Rehoboth, in Warren. There was a great meeting in Heath’s. The love-feast began at nine and continued till three o’clock. Eight souls were converted that day. The Bishop preached in the woods, but was interrupted by the singing and shouting. He now came to Sparta for the first time. Hancock County, of which Sparta is the county site, was laid out in 1773. Sparta was, therefore, a frontier village not ten years old when this visit was made.⁹³

1802.

This was a year of great revival. Beginning in Kentucky in 1799, there was a work of grace, the most wonderful America had ever seen, which swept over the whole land. Camp-meetings grew out of it, and they advanced it. Cook, McGee, McKendree in the West; Jesse Lee, Douglas, Ballew, in Virginia; Stith Mead, Hope Hull, Randle, Blanton, in Georgia; Tarpley, Dougherty, Myers, James Jenkins, in South Carolina – constituted a corps of evangelists such as are not often met with. It was not a swollen summer torrent which exhausted itself in an hour, but a steady stream of blessings for years.

The church was vitalised in all its parts. It never increased more rapidly in numbers and in spiritual power. From 1800 to 1812 the revival fire blazed. There was constant effort to save souls, there was intense spiritual interest, and there were those strange phenomena which had always attended great religious excitements.

⁹³ Smith. Pages 89 – 90.

Men and women fell senseless under the weight of the emotions. The excited soul deprived the mind of all control over the body, and there were jerking exercises, barking, dancing, and many other physical extravagances. The timid were alarmed at this. The more thoughtful deplored its wildness, while the more superstitious confounded these mere physical manifestations of excited feeling with religion itself. The Christian Philosopher has neither to lay aside his common sense, his philosophy, nor his faith, to account for all this. It was neither directly of God, or of the devil. These phenomena were the natural results of an intensity of feeling, rational enough in its origin, and legitimate in every way, but which a clear, cool reason did not, and perhaps could not, properly direct.⁹⁴

Man and woman alike, infidel and Christian alike, were subject to those nervous excitements; but only when a true penitence and a living faith was at the base were the effects of the intense excitement good and abiding. Dr Pierce gives, in the Advocate of 1874, an account of these remarkable manifestations of feeling, such as had not been seen before in American Methodism, and such as were not seen afterwards. David Brainerd had somewhat the same experience among the Indians, Whitefield and Wesley among the colliers, and Whitefield and his Presbyterian friends in Cambuslang among the Scotch.

Mead was in his glory in a great revival, and he swept like a conqueror from one part of his large district to another. Out of this revival sprang the camp-meetings in Georgia; the first of which we have account in the State was in Oglethorpe County. There were neither tents to dwell in, nor a roof to shelter the worshipper. A grove and a spring were chosen, and a stand for the preachers was built. Logs were cut for seats,

⁹⁴ Smith. Pages 93 – 94.

and the people in wagons and carts flocked to the meeting, sometimes going seventy-five miles to it.

At the camp meeting in Oglethorpe, Hope Hull and Benj. Blanton, besides the itinerants, were present. Among those converted at that meeting was Major Floyd, father of Judge Jno. J. Floyd and of Stewart Floyd, Esq., formerly of Madison.

The next year, 1803, there was a camp meeting on Shoulderbone, not far from Sparta; at this meeting there were 176 tents, and Dow supposed there were 3,000 people on the ground. From 1802, for nearly forty years these meetings increased, until at last the Georgia Conference, about 1838, advised against their multiplication. Sparta camp-grounds have been the scenes of great battles and great victories.

Lorenzo Dow, after having consented to take a circuit in New England, *was impressed* that he ought to come to Georgia, and as his lungs were weak and his head hard, he decided against the advice of his friends that he would come, and took passage for Savannah. He reached that city early in 1802. He found no Methodist church there, but a Mr. Cloud, one of the Hammettites, as the followers of Mr. Hammett were called, had a place to preach in, and about seventy hearers. He preached for him, and for Andrew Marshall, the old coloured Baptist preacher. He then left Savannah and travelled to Augusta; of his stay the reader is referred to the account of Methodism in Augusta. One morning, *being impressed*, that he ought to leave Augusta for Washington, where Hope Hull was, he set out before daylight. He had been converted under Hull's preaching, in New England, and regarded him with great affection.

He found him at his corn crib, and saluted him with "How are you, father?" The father was not enraptured at seeing one whose strange impressions had led him to go on foot through England, Wales, and Ireland, and now to come to Georgia; but he treated him very kindly, and gave him some

sound advice about discarding these impressions and sticking to his work. Dow heard him calmly, and soon after, while Hull was sending an appointment for him to preach in the village, Dow dashed away on foot and reached it first, scattered his tracts, and was ready to preach before the messenger arrived.

There was much about his aspect and manner to arouse attention even at this time, though he grew much more eccentric in after-life. Elisha Perryman, a Baptist preacher, heard him on one of his visits, and thus describes his appearance: "He wore an old half-red overcoat, with an Indian belt around his waist. He did not wear a hat, but had his head tied up with a handkerchief. Coming into the house, he sat down by the fireplace for a few minutes, and then all of a sudden jumped up, and cried out: 'What will this babbler say? Those that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'" This was his text, and his talk was much every way, for it appeared to me to run from Britain to Japan, and from the torrid to the frigid zone. Yet this strange man was a man of no common intellect, and preached with real power. He was a great polemic. He had been brought up in New England amongst the Calvinists, and as they were the only errorists, for so he regarded them, who had been much in his way, he never preached a sermon without attacking their views. He called them ALL part people. To relieve the church in Augusts from debt, he published his *Chain*, which is mainly directed against the Calvinists. It is a fine piece of homely reasoning, and evinces real power in argument.

His habits were wildly eccentric. During this visit he came to a house just in time to escape a heavy storm. In the night, he says, "I felt uneasy, and my heart felt turned upon the road." So he declared he must go, nor would any discussion keep him from doing so. Night as it was, raining as it had been, go he must, and go he did. His kind friend accompanied him till daybreak, and then returned. He visited some of the

appointments in Oglethorpe, and held a meeting at Pope's Chapel, Tigners, etc. He then returned to Augusta.

Many strange stories circulated for many years about Lorenzo Dow. Historians have found it difficult to divide between stories which might have been true, and those which were apocryphal. Dow moved around the western States, visiting Natchez on the Mississippi, and Louisville, further north. When he finally left the area, the State Governor organized a testimonial for him

"Dow's visit to Georgia in 1802 had been a real service to the cause of Christ. At the Conference of 1803, the results of the year's work was reported. The number of members had largely increased, over 1,300 new members had been added during the year."

Even at this stage, Dow was known as someone who would use a stunt or a gimmick to back up his message, and create a greater impact. On this tour, he would announce that he would preach in a place a year or two in advance, but he always kept his appointments, and crowds would be waiting for him at the given time and place.

In later life, Dow's eccentricities brought him into disrepute with the brethren, and he travelled as a cosmopolite, preaching the doctrines of the Methodists, and leaving those converted to choose their church connections for themselves.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ George G. Smith. Pages 93 – 98.

Concluding Comments

Southern Ohio.

Several times in our documents we have seen references to the fact that the Kentucky Revival spread north into the southern parts of Ohio.

For example, the fame of the Cain Ridge meeting travelled far and wide, including north across the Ohio River.

Later, an extract of a letter from the Rev. James Hughes, dated West Liberty, Virginia, August, 26, 1802, says:-

"By the latest accounts I have had, the good work in Kentucky and the Carolinas appears still to go on with power. – I have also had late accounts of such work, in the same manner in the North-Western Territory, on the waters of the Miamis and Sciota: The wilderness seems to be blossoming, and it is hopeful there may soon be large and fruitful fields there. I feel considerably encouraged by letters I received yesterday from friends on the Miamis."⁹⁶

At the time, this area was known as the North-West Territories, having been that part of the country which had been ceded to the United States when they had defeated Great Britain in the Revolutionary War. The township of Cincinnati was one of the parts of this Territory which had been opened so that soldiers from the War could return to civilian life.

Cincinnati was named after the Roman soldier Cincinnatus, who had led an army and saved Rome, but who returned to his farm when the war was over, thus rejecting the opportunity of creating a military dictatorship. This settlement was opened by several Presbyterian laymen. These men were part of what became known as the Society of the Cincinnati,

⁹⁶ *New York Missionary Magazine*. Op. cit. page 352.

because they were soldiers who returned to civil life after the War ended. It had about 2,600 members. The first governor of the North-West Territories, Gen. Arthur St Clair, named the town after the Society, in 1790.

Initially there were three small settlements on the Ohio River between the Great Miami River and the Little Miami River, in the Hamilton County. These were called Columbia – on the Little Miami; North Bend – on the Great Miami, and Losantiville in the centre. It was this last-named village which developed into the township of Cincinnati. The first church in the town was a Presbyterian church, followed several years later by a Baptist church.

The earliest Methodists in the area settled a little further away, close to the settlement of Milford, in the Clermont County. The early leaders were circuit riders who had “located.” Francis McCormick was first to arrive, soon followed by Philip Gatch in 1797, and others. The first Methodist church in this whole area was built at Milford, although the Circuit stretched up the Little Miami to the area of Dayton, and then back down the Greater Miami to the Ohio. Over the years 1797 to 1799 a circuit of Methodist preaching places developed, and in 1799 a preacher was appointed – the Rev. John Kobler, who started his work there in August, 1798.

McCormick and Gatch took part in the Ohio Constitutional Convention in 1802, when the State was formed. Ohio was not a slave State, but Kentucky was.

Philip Gatch had seen revivals in earlier days back in Virginia. In February, 1802, he wrote to an old friend back in Virginia, Edward Dromgoole, to report that they had experienced “a stir of religion” in the Milford area, during which one of his children, “and a Black Boy of our family got converted.”

Gatch also wrote “the work of God has been wonderful in Kentucky the last year. I and a Brother of mine from

Baltimore was over a great deal of Kentucky, last summer. We have a Brother living below Salt River whome we went to see and I held several meetings in different parts of the state”⁹⁷

The burgeoning city of Cincinnati was the scene for a number of remarkable revival movements through the following several decades.

John Wesley and “Bodily Exercises.”

It was noted by several writers that “bodily exercises” were not new in the history of revivals, and occurred in Biblical times as well. So there is an historical study which can be made of them, as well as learning directly from observation.

John Wesley had experiences of bodily exercises amongst the people who listened to his preaching in the first revivals which he experienced, in Bristol, London, and in Newcastle.

Although these experiences were at first a complete surprize to him, he rapidly developed an interesting understanding of them, which is shown in the following excerpt from one of my fugitive articles:-⁹⁸

The third revival [in John Wesley’s ministry], listed by Robert Young occurred at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Wesley arrived there on Thursday, 27 May, 1742.

Wesley said, “I was surprised: So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing, even from the mouths of little children, do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Connor. *Methodist Trail-Blazer: Philip Gatch*. page 195.

Also “The Edward Dromgoole Letters” are in W.W. Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier. Volume 4. The Methodists*. pages 152 – 153.

The brother he travelled with was Nicholas Gatch.

⁹⁸ Robert Evans. “Another Look at John Wesley’s Early Revivals.” In *Church Heritage*, the Journal of the Uniting Church in Australia’s Historical Society. March, 2018.

a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

After preaching in Sandgate, the poorest part of the town, on both Sunday and Monday, to large crowds, he left Newcastle on Monday, 31, because Wesley had a commitment to preach at Birstal on the Tuesday.⁹⁹

However, the impact of these addresses in Newcastle prompted Charles Wesley to visit Newcastle, “whose word was as fire among dry stubble, producing astonishing effect.”

Upon John Wesley’s second visit, which began on Tuesday, 23 November, he commented that there “appeared to be a deeper work in many souls than I had observed before. Many trembled exceedingly: six or seven, both men and women, dropped down as dead: Some cried unto God out of the deep; others would have cried, but their voice was lost. And some have found that the Lord is gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.”¹⁰⁰

On Thursday, Wesley noted that the work developed more evenly than in some other places. While he saw many people deeply convicted, he did not see “that triumph of faith” which had been so common in other places.

On Monday, 20 December, they laid the corner-stone of their new church building. “Many were gathered from all parts to see it: but none scoffed or interrupted, while we praised God, and prayed that he would prosper the work of our hands upon us.”

A very important passage appears in the *Journal* for Thursday, 30 December, 1742, when Wesley carefully examined and questioned the people who had cried out in the congregation.

⁹⁹ John Wesley *Works*. pages 373 – 374.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Young. page 27.

“Some of these, I found, could give no account at all how, or wherefore they had done so: only, that of a sudden, they dropped down they knew not how; and what they afterwards said or did they knew not: others could just remember, they were in fear, but could not tell what they were in fear of. Several said they were afraid of the devil: and this was all they knew. But a few gave a more intelligent account of the piercing sense they then had of their sins, both inward and outward, which were set in array against them round about: of the dread they were in of the wrath of God, and the punishment they had deserved, into which they seemed to be just falling, without any way of escape. One of them told me, ‘I was as if I were just falling down from the highest place I had ever seen. I thought the devil was pushing me off, and that God had forsaken me.’ Another said, ‘I felt the very fire of hell already kindled in my breast: and all my body was in as much pain as if I had been in a burning fiery furnace.’ What wisdom is that which rebukes these, ‘that they should hold their peace.’ Nay, let such an one cry after Jesus of Nazareth, until he saith, ‘Thy faith hath made thee whole.’”

About two months later, John Wesley returned to Newcastle. After some days of expository preaching, he conducted counselling with some members of the Society “who did not walk according to the Gospel.”

The result was that about fifty persons had to be “put away” from Society membership. However, he commented, that there were still about eight hundred left.

By Saturday, 12 March, 1743, Wesley said that he concluded his second course of visiting, when he had enquired particularly into the case of those who had cried out aloud almost every night of the previous week during preaching.

He reached four conclusions. The **first** was that they were all in perfect health, and were not subject to fits of any kind. The **second** was that this had come upon every one of

them suddenly, without any previous notice. It had occurred either as they were hearing the Word of God, or were thinking on what they had heard.

The **third** conclusion was that, in that moment they dropped down, lost all their strength, and were seized with violent pain. They expressed it in different ways. Some said they felt as if a sword was running through them. Others said they felt as if a great weight lay upon them. Some said they felt choked, and they could not breathe. Others felt that their hearts would burst, and as if the inside of their body was being torn to pieces.

Wesley believed that NONE of these sensations could be attributed to the work of the Spirit of God, or to any normal process. He had no doubt that this was the work of Satan. “And hence proceeded these grievous cries, whereby he might design both to discredit the work of God, and to affright fearful people from hearing that Word, whereby their souls might be saved.”

The **fourth** conclusion was that their minds had been as variously affected as their bodies. Some people could hardly give any account of what had happened to them, and Wesley attributed this loss to the work of the devil – like the seed which fell by the wayside in the parable of the Sower. The evil aim was the same - to discredit the message, and frighten people away from coming to Christ. On the other hand, others gave a very clear and particular account from the beginning to the end.

“The word of God pierced their souls, and convinced them of inward, as well as outward sin. They saw and felt the wrath of God abiding upon them; and were afraid of his judgments. And here the accuser came with great power, telling them, ‘there is no hope; they were lost forever.’ The pains of body then seized them in a moment, and extorted those loud and bitter cries.”

“Charles Wesley soon after this visited Newcastle again, and the blessing thus begun, was greatly strengthened, and extended through his effective ministry.” Charles Wesley wrote a special hymn about these experiences in Newcastle.¹⁰¹

The Camp Meeting Movement

As has been mentioned several times, holding camp meetings became a very widespread form of evangelistic outreach throughout the whole of the U.S.A. for many years after this particular revival movement had subsided, especially up to 1840.

For some years, many local churches owned camp sites and used them regularly. Some of them became holiday places where people owned cabins and other homes away from home.

The movement had many aspects, and became a widespread and very successful form of evangelistic and social outreach which continues to some degree with us unto the present. It has made a vast and valuable contribution to the churches, and to society as a whole.

The best books for studying this extended result of the Great Southern Revival of 1800 are by Charles A. Johnson and Elizabeth K. Nottingham. (Consult the Bibliography.)

Where Did These Exercises Come From?

David McCollum’s thesis discusses a wide range of interpretations which various people placed upon the various exercises which appear in the documents we have quoted in this present book. He also explores some of the reasons people had for drawing these interpretations.

¹⁰¹ Robert Young. pages 29 – 30.

The view taken in this present book is that MANY of the Revival Exercises cannot be accounted for in purely human, psychological and/or sociological terms.

Many of the exercises seem to demand an explanation which includes the activity of God, as men like James McGready believed. The view is taken here that the Revival would not have occurred except by the gracious action of God in pouring out His Holy Spirit in answer to the prayers of MANY of God's people.

John Wesley also believed that some of the exercises which he saw should be explained arising from the activity of some kind of demonic power as a primary source. And it is not hard to believe that the same principle applies to some of the exercises in the Great Southern Revival.

There were also, no doubt, many instances where a human origin is completely adequate to account for what happened. Christian leaders must always depend upon the Holy Spirit to give us discernment in understanding what is happening, and to pray continually that God will save us from making mistakes.

It is possible to draw a paradigm picture where the Holy Spirit convicts a person strongly of their sins; of their guilt and blame before God for these sins; and for the punishment which will be meted out to those who persist in their sins. They realize that their own efforts are totally inadequate and unsuitable to redeem them. This is followed by the person being shown their need of a Saviour, who is adequate, able and suitable to be the Redeemer, and they are taught to turn to Christ and rely upon Him. The relief and joy which comes to a person when they realize that Christ has redeemed them was also very obvious on many occasions.

Many people, however, only went through a part of this process, and did not reach its conclusion. Wesley thought this indicated that a demonic power had short-circuited the effects of

the work of the Spirit of God, as in the parable of the Sower, or that people had allowed their minds to wander.

In many instances, the exercise happened to a person in a manner which was entirely beyond their control. This seems to indicate that they were affected by a power outside of themselves – whether Divine or demonic.

These questions are very important in their own way, and take us into the area of Spiritual Deceptions, where every instance needs to be evaluated on its own merits.

In an earlier book of mine this subject is outlined, and other examples are discussed in some detail.¹⁰² As the conclusion of this present book, an outline of the subject will be provided here for the reader from this previous publication.

The subject is MUCH wider than merely trying to understand the religious exercises in any revival.

SPIRITUAL DECEPTIONS

A Summary of the Evangelical Understanding of Them

The Twentieth Century has seen an enormous outbreak of new religions and cults, often quite strange, which are in some way related to Christianity, however remotely. This has happened even more so in the Twentieth Century than happened in the Nineteenth Century, although people who lived through the previous century might have thought that they saw so many

¹⁰² Robert Evans. *Fire From Heaven*. A Description and Analysis of the Revivals of the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York, 1800-1840, and Spiritual Deceptions. Hazelbrook. 2005.

new religions and cults that a great increase in them would not be possible.

This new upsurge has created a further enormous literature relating to this whole area of interest. Although many insights were available about the subject in the Nineteenth Century, this new literature and research has enabled us to gain some better insights into the whole subject than was possible in the previous century.

In the first instance, we will here attempt to summarize the subject, although this will be done from a very specific point of interest, namely, that of understanding spiritual deceptions in terms of Protestant Evangelical theology.

Foundational Statements

The question of spiritual deceptions, as viewed from the stance of evangelical revivals, raises a considerable range of subjects and issues. Despite its scope and diversity, an attempt will be made here to summarize this area. First of all, a few basic assumptions must be set out.

(a) All spiritual movements are mixed in quality. Many things occur in revival movements which seem to be the direct work of the Holy Spirit of God. But, as soon as these workings of the Spirit have been understood or expressed by a human mind, they become mixed with misunderstandings, workings of “the lower nature”, selfish motives, psychological factors, various forms of sin, unscriptural ideas, and demonic activity. This mixed nature of things is both recognized in the New Testament (Matthew 13), and is also a matter of continual experience.

(b) Every person is different. God deals with us all differently. Everybody has different experiences, including our personal contacts with God. Although common principles and

factors can be recognized and studied, each personal experience has to be evaluated on its merits.

(c) Each claim that we have been deceived, or that someone else is deceived, has to be evaluated separately, and on its own merits, in the light of all the wisdom that we have to draw upon.

(d) The only ultimate test for any deception, whether real or imagined, is the best understanding that we have of the Scriptures. Under this general heading, the main test is the one mentioned by Jesus, that it is by their *fruit* we shall know them. Another secondary level test is that the accumulated wisdom of God's mature, saintly people is to be ignored at our peril.

(e) It is desirable, however, to be able to recognize, and take evasive action about, as many deceptions as possible before they produce bad fruit, if we can wisely do so. Regrettably, at times, this is not possible.

(f) It is important to remember that a heresy, and belief on which deceptions are based, are usually at least *half true*. They are rarely totally incorrect. There may well be Scriptural teachings to support them. The problem arises because people unwisely make a part into the whole. There are other Biblical passages relevant to the matter which have been ignored, and which would have provided the healthy and wise balance. If enough mature Christians had a knowledge of heresies and problems which occurred in the past, we would have been saved from being so affected by our present heresies and problems.

What is Being Included Here?

Every time a person believes that something has come from God, when in fact it did not, that person is deceived at that particular point, and is open to further deception at that point.

This holds true, regardless of what the deception was, or where it came from. Every person who believes a thing to be true, when in fact it is not, is deceived at that point, and is open to other deceptions at that point. Any of the deceptions can be simple mistakes, even the result of ignorance. They can be of human origin, or demonic in nature.

Four basic kinds of deception will be described here.

(a) Many deceptions arise from mistakes, shoddy work, uneducated guesses, or heresies in theology, and wrong understandings of the Scriptures.

(b) Many deceptions arise from sinful, foolish or immature behaviour, or from actions prompted by “the lower nature”.

(c) Many deceptions arise from misunderstandings of psychological factors, or from the misuse of psychic or psychological factors.

(d) Other deceptions arise from demonic sources.

(a) Deceptions Based in Theology, or Mis-interpreted Scriptures

This kind of deception has a very long history, of course, and many classic examples could be quoted.

Very basic kinds of deceptions can occur when a person does not understand correctly what the character of God is like, as revealed in the Scriptures, or does not understand what it means to become and be a Christian. This can lead people to believe they are saved, or born again, when they are not, or some similar fundamental mistake about their relationship with God. So, deceptions like this can be very important.

Deceptions can arise when someone becomes too entrenched in the supposed correctness of their own understanding of the Bible. Arrogance can make a person very determined that what they believe is true, and make them unable to appreciate the value embedded in contrary opinions, and see the degree of

truth they might contain. Without realizing it, they equate their own human views with the infallible eternal thoughts of God Himself.

A simple deception is seen in the claim to know when the Second Coming will occur. Such claims upon someone's belief that they have a much more reliable source of knowledge about this subject than anyone else's. They display their own unwillingness to learn from *all* that the New Testament says.

In recent decades, a new crop of deceptions have appeared under this general heading. For example, some preachers have claimed to have won enormous numbers to Christ. In most cases the number can very easily be shown to have been seriously over-estimated. Some instances of speaking in tongues are believed to come from God, when the source may be psychological, or demonic, or exercising the gift may have become simply a matter of habit. Many instances of alleged physical healings have later been shown to be fraudulent, because no improvement occurred. Many alleged prophetic messages have not come true as stated, or when the events prophesied were supposed to have happened. Prophetic words which predicted the time of coming revivals have often been notorious examples of this, indicated by the fact that the revivals did not occur in the year which was predicted.

This difficulty has been made worse because many Pentecostal and Charismatic preachers have not taken the care to warn their people about these possible deceptions. They have been more willing to assume that everything came from God, unless there was some obvious, and overwhelming reason for not accepting it.

Also included in this kind of deceptions are such American folk religion theories as the Prosperity theology, and much woolly-headed teaching about healing. Disguised claims to infallibility by ordinary people, because “God told me so”, and by many preachers claiming Divine guidance for their opinions,

who ought to have known better, are fertile sources of heresies, and of divisions in the body of Christ.

(b) Deceptions Based in Immature Behaviour, or “The Lower Nature”

Deceptions of this kind cover a wide range. A simple example during a revival movement is that very often young people, or new converts, can be pushed forward to testify, and take part in meetings. This can often be a very good idea, but such people should not be given responsible leadership roles, as Saint Paul plainly taught us. When they are, unwise things can often be said and done which can damage the work, mislead others, spread strange opinions, and promote lop-sided views of the Gospel.

Charles Finney emphasized that the first lesson a new convert should be taught is to act on principle, instead of on feelings. In other words, they should learn quickly to do something because they know it is right, and not because it feels right, good, or happy, or will “save face”. It is regrettable that vast numbers of Christians, who one might hope would know better, continue to act according to their feelings, and their intuitions, in all sorts of ways. Our feelings can lead us to do foolish and un-Scriptural things, and can thus create deceptions for ourselves, and for others with whom we might associate.

Many times people decide what they think the will of God is, by means of some feeling or intuition. This can lead us to pray for some particular thing to happen, and to believe that we are praying in faith. While sometimes God might lead us to pray that way, it is very unreliable, as a general principle. Many times we will find our prayer is not answered as we expect. This proves that the idea we had about the will of God was mistaken, when we followed our feeling or intuition. Such a thing can confound some people, and cause them to lose their

faith. Generally, guidance should be through the Scriptures, as interpreted by people who know the Bible best.

Following feelings and intuitions can be useful, at times, but it is a notorious source of deceptions which cause many and major problems.

(c) The Misuse or Misunderstanding of Psychological Factors

The work of the Kingdom of God is always achieved through the merits of Christ crucified and risen, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, who acts to glorify Christ, and not Himself. Our role in God's Kingdom is simply as a channel or instrument for God, and yet God has also made us into partakers or team-members. The Spirit can also use many other means in doing His work, but the real, operative power is all of God.

As a result, God may use our minds, words, actions and our natural abilities, in His work of implanting eternal life within people. But, if we try to do the Spirit's work ourselves; if we try to create an effect, and manipulate and manage the situation ourselves, and take charge of producing results, these results may be on the human level only, and God may not have imparted any eternal life at all. In such a case, we may have led people to believe they have eternal life when they do not have it.

We can use the force of our personalities, personal magnetism and charisma, the forces of mass psychology, dominating or domineering personal force, a commanding presence, argument, or psychic and hypnotic powers, to achieve something which looks like the work of the Spirit of God, to all outward appearances. The deception will only be revealed if we realize the mistake we have made, and try to recover the situation, which may be very difficult. Or, we will have to wait until the fruit appears, which will reveal the emptiness in spiritual quality of all we have done. Deceptions of this kind

can occur on a massive scale, especially within the various forms of mass evangelism.

In recent years, an entire literature has also developed around the abusive methods of some cults and religious groups in brainwashing their followers, depriving them of normal contacts with family and the outside world, maintaining control over their personalities, and swindling them out of their worldly wealth. The practice of dominating and controlling the personality of another is far more widespread than many people realize. It is unwise to say that the Holy Spirit never does a certain thing, but, as a general rule, the Holy Spirit does *not* use this kind of behaviour in the work of the Kingdom of God. It is contrary to the great commandments and the golden rule, and represents great arrogance on the part of the leaders of such activities. The long-term spiritual fruit resulting from it will be very poor, or non-existent.

Many cults today are dominated by a leader, or by a committee, who tell the other people what to believe. This is the case with such groups as the Moonies, and the Exclusive Brethren. In considering this kind of deception, it becomes clear that people can become bound to an organization which controls and dominates their lives, rather than by a leader. The Jehovah's Witnesses fit into this category. Rank and file members are dominated by the local group activities, as well as by the central committee in New York.

My book *Fire From Heaven* contained a chapter about the origin of the Mormons, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. This is not a cult splitting off from normal Christianity, but is now believed by the experts to be a different religion, although it happens to involve a personality called Jesus Christ, and who is believed by Mormons to be the same person who figured in the New Testament story. The records of Joseph Smith's visions and revelations, and his inspired instructions to his followers, effectively replace the New

Testament as the final authority. Despite this, the religion is controlled by a committee.

The range of different religions and cults which exist today, and which claim to depend upon visions from God, emphasizes the need of every Christian to be very wary of anyone who professes to have visions, or to receive messages from God, or from angels. It is not impossible for such visions to come from God, but, overall, their track record is so bad that they should be avoided. As a general rule, new revelations and visions alleged to come from God should *not* be believed, especially if they include new doctrines. They are either demonic, or are based in mental peculiarities.

(d) Deceptions More Directly Related to Demonic Activity

In one sense, everything which achieves the goal of being a deception can be said to be demonic. However, most people do not see value in using the term "demonic" in this very wide sense, but restrict it simply to those things which can be attributed more directly to demonic activity, or to the influence of evil powers of one kind or another.

Evil spirits are able to deceive Christians in many ways. The unconverted are already successfully deceived. (2 Cor. 4:3-4.) The New Testament says that the devil is able to make himself look like an angel of light. Jesus said that, at the last day, many people would say "Have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and in your name done many wonderful works?" - only to find that they were deceived.

The activity of evil spirits can be linked with many of the forms of deception listed already, especially where someone carelessly leaves themselves open to the workings of evil spirits. For example, where a person is in an attitude of prayer, with their minds open to impressions from outside of themselves, if that person leaves their mind blank, instead of concentrating

upon Christ, and His victory, as revealed in the Scriptures, the impressions they receive may well come from an evil spirit. If the mind is allowed to go blank, while open to outside impressions, there is then no guarantee where the impressions may come from.

The person may have enough perception to recognize that the impression in their mind is purely psychological in origin, or is demonic, or comes from God, for reasons that they can understand, and explain.

There has to be some way of testing these things, both by the person who has the impression on his or her mind, as well as by other people to whom the impression might be described and explained.

If an incoming impression is accepted by any person as if it came from God, when in fact it did not, that person has been deceived. The impression may have been purely mental, or may have been demonic. It does not matter where the impression actually came from. If the person believes it came from God, when it did not, that person is deceived at that point, and can be deceived again in the same way.

We are enjoined in the New Testament to test all things, and to cleave to that which is good. So it is perfectly in order for any Christian to pray for wisdom in making such enquiries. Further, the Christian does not need to fear offending God through unbelief, until such enquiries are wisely concluded, if one is diligently seeking such wisdom and guidance from God, and is willing to be fully obedient.

The only remedies for deceptions of this kind are for people to realize where and how they have been deceived. Then, deliberately to reject the deception, claiming victory over it through Jesus Christ, concentrating one's thoughts and prayers upon Him. We need to pray repeatedly that God will save us from being deceived, and will show where any deception has occurred to us. Jesus Christ has victory over all evil, and His

Spirit is able to guide and enlighten people. We need to be open to the light that the Spirit is giving us, particularly through the Scriptures, and not determine beforehand how or when we will receive this guidance, or what conclusion will be reached at the end of it.

Other Comments

Many other sundry comments could no doubt be made about this whole area of spiritual deceptions. These will, however, be limited to a few only.

(a) If an alleged prophetic word, vision or dream, is experienced which says that someone will perform a great work for God here on earth, or has a special relationship with God, or has a special role to perform in the Kingdom of God which will somehow put them into a special place in heaven, then very special care should be taken before these words, visions or dreams are ever believed to be true.

There is no doubt that God calls people to special works, but He nearly always does it in such a way that we do not know what the next step is, or where the present situation will lead. God keeps us humble in the process, and continually dependent upon Himself.

The thought that "I will have a special work for God." or "I will have a special place in heaven because of what God has called me to do." is very well calculated to feed our ego, and to make us proud. It is a recipe for spiritual pride.

Several times I have seen examples of someone getting a "prophetic word from God" to say that a certain person has a special task to perform which will transform the nation's history. This information is duly announced as a message from God, so that the person concerned becomes a centre of attention. (That is, either the prophet becomes a person of note, or the person apparently destined to perform the great work.) These

situations are usually a complete deception, and a recipe for spiritual pride. They normally do not lead to anything special at all. But, if they lead to any great work, it is more than likely to have large elements of “a new cult” mixed up with it. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The devil will use any opportunity possible to make a person proud, and therefore much less useful to God.

(b) While definitions of magic, and of the occult, will be discussed later, here it needs to be said that - If a message comes to a person, and they believe it could come from God, and if it has anything to do with magic, or with some aspect of the occult, then very special care should be taken before such a message is ever believed to be truly from God.

If a message appears to come from God, and the person who receives the message has ever had anything to do with the occult, in the past, then very special care should be taken before the message is ever believed to be truly from God.

The Biblical story contains descriptions of several occultic events, and this kind of thing was a very large part of life for many people in Biblical times. A substantial range of magical and occultic practises are very strongly condemned in the Bible. But, occultic practices, and the use of magic, are NEVER recommended in the Bible. There is always the possibility that such things are somehow linked with God, but extreme care should be taken in testing such things. The track record of such things as a revelation from God is so bad that they should all be earnestly avoided. It is a wise and great guiding principle that magic and the occult should never be part of the practice of the Christian life.

People linked to the occult, and to the world of magic, are far more prone than others to have strange spiritual experiences. They are much more likely to be mistaken about where these experiences come from, unless they are absolute experts in the

subject. Many people who dabble in these areas of spiritual experience are relatively uneducated, and are practicing some form of popular religion. If such people get the idea that their experiences come straight from God, or are angelic and therefore are from heaven, there is a great likelihood that they are mistaken, and therefore that they are deceived.

Who Is Open to Being Deceived?

The simple answer is that ANYONE can be deceived in these various ways. Nobody is safe. The only real safety is in Christ Jesus, in living the fruit of the Holy Spirit, in resisting the devil, and in practicing the humility that the New Testament speaks of so widely. We must be ready at all times to admit our mistakes, confess the stubbornness with which we have clung to some of these mistakes, confess our sins, and admit that our only true righteousness is someone else's, namely, Christ's.

While admitting that we are all liable to be misled, we can easily make a list of the kinds of people who are more prone than others to be misled. This list might include:-

Uneducated, or insufficiently educated preachers and teachers;

Preachers who are not aware of the implications of what they say;

People using unusual or unwise methods of interpreting the Scriptures;

People using unwise methods of conducting Christian work;
Difficult, strong and “magnetic” personalities;

Preachers who have special abilities to sway their audiences;

People who have a secret, or special liking to exercise power over others;

Those claiming knowledge which is more advanced than the Bible;

Academic theologians who are exploring new ideas, and trying to build their careers;

Those who have already been deceived;
People whose theology is affected by popular ideas in society;
People with wrong personal motives;
People who are uncritical about their alleged experiences of God;
People who live by their emotions, feelings and intuitions;
People with very big egos;
People who are stubborn and unteachable;
People who believe anything they are told;
People with insufficient humility.

What to do When Confronted with an Apparent Deception?

Whether we come across this apparent deception in our personal experience, or we read about it, several initial points should be remembered:-

(a) Because of the importance of the issue, each claim needs to be investigated, but *not necessarily* accepted as true in any sense, or believed.

(b) We must be careful about the meanings of words. Probably, some words will be involved which have special or technical meanings quite different from the normal meaning of the word in ordinary language. Also many words which have a technical meaning in ordinary Christian theology may have special meanings in the viewpoints which have to be explored in understanding an alleged deception.

There may be a need to understand a whole range of words with special meanings. If this is not handled wisely and properly, no useful outcome will flow from the exercise. Further misunderstandings may well abound.

(c) The alleged deception may indeed function on the basis of an entirely different theology from the one we are used to, and this should be explored.

Tests

As mentioned earlier, the primary test for any deception is found in the Scriptures, as they are understood by mature and experienced Bible experts in the mainline Christian denominations. The best wisdom should be used that has come down to us through the history of the Church, and through the great theologians of the Church.

However, a test of beliefs and ideas is only a part of what is required. Holiness of life must be produced, as well.

The test of any so-called Church, as to whether it is a real Church of Jesus Christ, or not, has always been - **Does it produce great saints?**

Similarly, the test of any personal profession to be a Christian is - Is that person progressing in holiness of life? **Does the “new birth” produce its proper fruits of repentance, and faith in Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit?**

Any alleged deception, in ourselves, or in anyone else, must pass the same test - Am I progressing in holiness, as a result of this experience? What negative results are there? Am I fleeing from these negative factors?

So, the touchstone is obedience to the Scriptures, greater Christlikeness, more fruit of the Spirit, more holiness, more humility, more love for all God's people, more meekness, more teachableness.

There will be a corresponding decline in all forms of pride and arrogance, less criticism of God's people, more willingness to sacrifice myself in the service of Christ, greater love for God, more desire for open truthfulness, more willingness to admit my own nothingness, and that Christ is all. There will be continued willingness to admit that others are better than I am. My only

righteousness is Christ's. My only hope is in Christ. All of God's people are my people. The little use I am, or value that I have, comes from God, and is not my own. If I am kept from great deceptions, the thanks belongs to God.

So, safety is only found in being close to God, in being covered by Christ's blood, and in obeying Him, in all humility and meekness.

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