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A COMPARISON OF METHODS USED  
BY  
PRESBYTERIANS AND METHODISTS ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

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## INTRODUCTION

A COMPARISON OF METHODS USED  
BY  
PRESBYTERIANS AND METHODISTS ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject Introduced

At the close of the Revolution the eyes of the nation were turned westward. Streams of human beings flowed over the mountains causing new settlements to spring up in the territories of western Virginia, Tennessee, Ohio, and Kentucky. Among the things these people left behind was the church. Many of the people living in the frontier towns were unchurched. Thus the churches of early America had to devise means by which they could reach this unchurched population.

Because of differences in doctrine and polity denominations went about reaching the unsaved people in different ways. The Presbyterians and the Methodists, each a leader in a different wing of theology, were two of the denominations who were interested in reaching the people living on the front line of American expansion. What methods did these two churches use on the frontier? In what ways are these methods different or in what ways are they the same?

B. The Significance of the Subject

The main objective of each church should be to carry out Jesus' commission to the disciples. The gospel

should be carried to the ends of the world. The problem of the church was and is what ways are the best for reaching the most people in the shortest amount of time. Church leaders have been trying to find the methods which would carry out their objective.

In the early church the deacons were chosen to help the Apostles in reaching the needy people. The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and later Silas out as missionaries. In the Middle Ages it was the monastery and the crusades. The Reformation put the Bible in the hands of the common man. John Wesley and his co-laborers travelled all over England preaching the Word.

In the formative period of this country the churches had to devise means of carrying out Christ's commission. With the moral and religious conditions of the young nation at a low ebb the church had to shake itself and go to work. How did the churches meet the need and what did they accomplish?

#### C. The Subject Delimited

To put definite dates down for the American frontier is almost impossible. Some people hold to the idea that there are yet frontiers for conquest. The American frontier referred to in this study is the territory settled from 1783 to 1840.

The history of religion in America is the history of many denominations. These denominations were interested



in reaching the people on the frontier and devised methods to accomplish that end. The methods used by all the denominations could not be dealt with in this study. Therefore the field is limited to two denominations, the Presbyterian and the Methodist. These two were selected because they were very active on the frontier and because they represent two different branches of theology.

#### D. Sources of Data

Dr. William Warren Sweet has written a series of books on the history of several denominations' advancements on the American frontier. The two books of this series used in this study are, Religion on the American Frontier, Volume II, The Presbyterians, and Volume IV, The Methodists.

Reverend E. H. Gillett wrote a two volume work entitled, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. These books were used as source material for the activities of the Presbyterians on the frontier. Other books used for the history of Presbyterianism were G.L. Thompson's, The Story of the Churches, The Presbyterians, and A.C. Zenos', Presbyterianism in America.

Besides Dr. Sweet's volume on the Methodists the following books were used. Wade Crawford Barclay has completed two volumes of his series on Methodist missions. Material was taken from the second volume entitled, Early American Methodism 1769-1844--To Reform the Nation. Books on the history of Methodism in the various states on the

frontier were used. W.L. Grissom's, History of Methodism in North Carolina, and William Bennett's, Memorials of Methodism in Virginia are two examples of territorial history used.

In the bibliography the books used in this study are listed. In the appendix books are listed which have a bearing on the activities of the Presbyterians and Methodists on the American frontier. This list is taken from the bibliographies in Dr. Sweet's two volumes, The Presbyterians, and The Methodists.

#### E. The Method of Procedure

The first chapter deals with the methods used by the Presbyterians on the frontier. The chapter shows how through the different organizations of the church such as the presbytery, synods, and the General Assembly, the church acted on matters concerning the church work in the newly settled areas of the country. The colleges and seminaries were also important factors in the work of the Presbyterians. Their methods of evangelism are considered next. These are included under the headings of frontier missionaries, revivals, and camp meetings, and revivalism and controversy.

The second chapter deals with the actions of the Methodists on the frontier. The methods of organization are considered including the Conferences, the travelling ministry, and the local ministry. On the matter of expansion the following points are considered: The colleges, the leaders in the west, revivals and camp meetings, literature published

and the distributing activities of the church.

The last chapter compares the organizational methods used by the Presbyterians and Methodists. It also considers the similarities as well as the differences of methods in evangelism used by these two denominations.

CHAPTER I

THE METHODS USED BY THE PRESBYTERIANS ON THE FRONTIER

## CHAPTER I

### THE METHODS USED BY THE PRESBYTERIANS ON THE FRONTIER

#### A. Introduction

The Presbyterian church at the close of the Revolutionary War was in a very good position to become the greatest of all the churches in America. The church had come through the war with a united front and had increased in prestige. The ministers and leaders had the spirit of the pioneers. Their churches were farther west than any of the other churches. Not only did their leaders have the pioneer spirit but they were an educated group and influential in the government of the United States. Among these leaders were John Witherspoon, George Duffield and John Rodgers.

Another reason for the good position of Presbyterianism was that as soon as American Independence was achieved the church took steps to be organized nationally. Under the leadership of John Witherspoon at the meeting of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia in 1785 the first steps to form a national organization were taken, and by May 1788 the new form of government and discipline, as well as the directions for worship had been adopted.

The survey of the methods of the Presbyterians on the frontier is divided into three main divisions; the

Presbyterian organization, the educational agencies, and the growth and expansion of Presbyterianism on the frontier. The subjects dealt with under the organizational sections are the activities of the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. Under the educational agencies, the colleges, and seminaries, and Christian literature are discussed. The third section shows the methods of growth and expansion of Presbyterianism on the frontier. The subjects under consideration in this section are the frontier missions and revivals and camp meetings. A fourth section deals with controversies that grew out of revivals and camp meetings.

#### B. The Presbyterian Organization

The relative slowness of the Presbyterian church on the frontier has been attributed to the deliberate procedure in forming new congregations.<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterians believed that their government could be found in the Scripture and therefore the government should not be changed.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Thompson says that the polity of the Presbyterian church is a representative type of church government and the parity of the ministry.<sup>3</sup> He also says that the church had much influence in shaping the national constitution. Some of the men at the constitutional convention were also members of the General Assembly meeting at the

. . . . .

1. Cf. W.W. Sweet: Religion of the American Frontier, Vol. II, Presbyterians, p. 25.
2. Ibid. pp. 82-83
3. Cf. C.L. Thompson: The Story of the Churches, The Presbyterians, p.28.

same time and in the same city of Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup>

The three groups which are higher in order to the local congregation are the presbytery, the synod and the General Assembly. These three groups formulated the policies of the church in matters of education and missions on the American frontier.

#### 1. The Presbytery and its Authority

The presbytery is a group of congregations of a certain region. On the American frontier the affairs of the presbytery centered around the educational and missionary interests of the church. Another interest of the presbytery was the examination of prospective ministers. When the necessity arose it brought the ministers to trial for action against the doctrine and polity of the church.

##### a. Educational Action

One of the requirements for a man to become a minister in the Presbyterian church was to be properly educated. Therefore the presbytery felt it necessary to see that there would be opportunity for the men to receive the education. The Transylvania Presbytery in 1797 took the following action in regards to education:

Resolved that this presbytery give & they hereby do give up their care of Pisgah grammar school, as also their right to the house in which said school is taught & any & all lands given for its use, to the Trustees of

. . . . .

1. Cf. Thompson, op. cit., p. 101

the Kentucky Academy to dispose of the same for use of said Academy as they may think proper, so soon (as) said Academy shall be opened.

This Presbytery being informed that there are certain books in the hands of the Rev. David Rice which were given books for the use of students of Theology in this state & to be under the care of this Presbytery, Resolved, that the Pby. think it will best answer the design of the donors to invest the trustees of the Kentucky Academy with the said books for the use of students in theology & therefore order that the Moderator write Mr. Rice requesting him to deliver the books to the said trustees.<sup>1</sup>

#### b. Missionary Action

The Transylvania Presbytery, on the recommendations of the General Assembly to form a Domestic Missionary Society, took the following action:

...Resolved that this pby. form themselves into a Domestic Missionary Society & that Messrs Cleland & Hall be a committee to form a constitution & report tomorrow. ...The committee appointed to draft a constitution for the purpose of forming a missionary society reported one, which being read & the blanks filled was unanimously received & adopted & being signed by the members of pby. together with other individuals, proceeded to the choice of officers & made the necessary arrangements to carry the designs of the society into operation.<sup>2</sup>

#### c. Ordination and Installation of Ministers

The examining of candidates for the ministry was an important function performed by the presbytery. The following excerpt is taken from the minutes of the Cumberland Presbytery, 1803-1806:

Presbytery considering Robert Guthrie, Robert Houston, Matthew Hall and Samuel Hodge as persons of good standing in the church whose abilities also promise usefulness to the souls of their fellowmen, do authorize and license

. . . . .

1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 168-169
2. Ibid., p. 246



them to make public appointments and exercise their gifts in exhortation in any congregation or settlement within the bounds of this presbyter.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Synod and its Authority

The synod was composed of not less than three presbyteries and it met annually, reporting its proceedings to the General Assembly. Some of its functions were to erect, unite, or divide presbyteries; to promote spiritual growth in the churches under its care; and to propose to the General Assembly such measures as may promote the general edification of the church.

Some of the educational and missionary work on the frontier was under the care of the synods of the Presbyterian church. Reverend E.H. Gillett says:

One of the first acts of the Synod of Philadelphia after its formation was the initiation of a fund "for pious uses." Each minister was to contribute something himself, and use his influence on proper occasions to induce others to contribute. The fund was under the Synod's control, and was devoted to the aid of feeble churches, assistance in building houses of worship, sustaining the ministry, and extending relief to the widows of deceased brethren who had been left in indigent circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Among the most active synods in connection with frontier missions were the Synod of Virginia and the Synod of Pittsburgh.

### a. The Synod of Virginia

As the result of the remarkable revival which

. . . . .

1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 285
2. E. H. Gillett: History of Presbyterian Church, Vol. I, p. 276

had visited the campus of Sidney College and Prince Edward County there were many young men converted who desired to enter the ministry. The Synod of Virginia did not fail to seize the opportunity these gifted young men offered. In 1789 a committee of the Synod for missions was appointed:

The committee met in the following April, and proceeded at once to business. The Synod was divided into four districts, corresponding to the four Presbyteries. The pay of a missionary was to be sixty pounds per annum, and Nash Legrand, a probationer of Hanover Presbytery, was first commissioned. The funds were supplied by the voluntary contributions of the people, and the missionaries were to report in person at each annual meeting of the Synod.<sup>1</sup>

The plan worked well and many results were seen. There was a marked change in the moral and religious condition of the people. Pulpits that had been vacant or supplied by superannuated men, were now filled with full-time ministers. Churches that were about dead were resuscitated and new congregations were gathered. The church was roused to new life and vigor on all sides.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of a revival in the vicinity of Liberty Hall many young men were converted. Under the supervision of the Synod of Virginia a theological department was added to Liberty Hall. This was the first theological school in connection with a college in America.

b. The Synod of Pittsburgh

. . . . .

1. Gillett, op. cit., p. 282
2. Cf., Ibid., pp. 282-283

The Synod of Pittsburgh, composed of the Presbyteries of Redstone, Ohio, and Erie, was erected in 1802. At its first meeting it resolved itself into the Western Missionary Society, the object of which was "to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel among the inhabitants of the new settlements, the Indian tribes, and, if need be, among some of the interior inhabitants, where they are not able to support the gospel." On March 20, 1810, the Legislature of Pennsylvania passed an act constituting the Synod of Pittsburgh "a corporation and body politic, in law and in fact, by the name, style and title of 'The Western Missionary Society,' for the purpose of promotion and spreading the knowledge of agriculture, literature and Christianity among the Indian tribes of America." The Society was permitted to hold property "provided that the clear annual income of all such property shall not exceed five thousand dollars: and provided also, that the fund of said corporation shall not be employed for any other purpose than the mechanical arts, or agriculture, and the knowledge of the Christian religion among the Indian tribes."<sup>1</sup>...

In 1804 the Synod sent four missionaries to the River Raisin in Michigan Territory and to the Wyandot Indians in Ohio. Also the cause of learning was not neglected by the Synod of Pittsburgh or its constituent presbyteries. Schools under its direction were Cannonsburg Academy, later changed to Jefferson College and Washington College.

### 3. The General Assembly and its Authority

The highest legislative body in the Presbyterian church is the General Assembly. From its beginning this body acted upon matters pertaining to missions and education.

The Assembly of 1789 was interested principally in the mission fields of western Pennsylvania and of northern and central New York. In order to provide necessary means

. . . . .

1. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 605-606

for the support of the missionaries annual collections were directed to be taken in all the congregations and the money was placed in the hands of the General Assembly.

In 1801 the General Assembly adopted the Plan of Union. This action enabled the Presbyterian and the Congregational churches to work together on the frontier mission field. The style of the Assembly's missionary committee was changed in 1816 to that of the "Board of Missions" The members of the Board were to be elected annually by the Assembly, but they had the power to appoint and remunerate missionaries at their discretion.

In the cause of learning the General Assembly made some important decisions:

The committee appointed by the last Assembly to dispose of the interest of certain monies in the funds of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey, appropriated to the education of poor and pious youth, reported, that they met and disposed of the same, amounting to \$67 61½ (being the interest of two years) agreeable to order. Mr. George S. Woodhull and Mr. Comfort were appointed to meet with the Trustees of New Jersey College, on the last Wednesday in September next, to dispose of the interest, that may then be due on the monies in the hands of said Trustees.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Educational Agencies

The requirement for all candidates for the ministry in the Presbyterian Church was that they must have a diploma of bachelor or master of arts from some college or university, or at least testimonials of having completed a

. . . . .

1. Presbyterian Church in U.S.A. Minutes of General Assembly, 1803-1811, Vol. II, P. 157

regular course of learning. Many of the early preachers on the frontier were graduates of the College of Princeton:<sup>1</sup>

Thus Presbyterianism was responsible for sending to the frontier the first body of college-trained men, and in the very nature of the case, the vast educational need about them, as well as the necessity of increasing their means of livelihood, would naturally lead the average college-trained minister to become also a school master.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Colleges

### a. William Tennent's "Log College"

The reason for the name of "Log College" is that the edifice was made of logs. The place where it was erected was in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, about twenty miles north of Philadelphia. The site of the Log College was about a mile from the part of Neshaminy Creek where the Presbyterian church stood.<sup>3</sup>

The founder of the Log College was William Tennent, Sr. He was a native of Ireland. He arrived in America in 1718. Mr. Tennent applied to the Synod of Philadelphia and after some time was received as a member of their body. He preached a while in New York and then he served in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, until 1726, when he moved to Neshaminy. He remained here the rest of his life. Among the early students of the College were his sons, Gilbert, John, and William, Jr.<sup>4</sup>

This school was the precursor of Princeton. It

. . . . .

1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., p. 70
2. Ibid.
3. Cf., Archibald Alexander: The Log College, p. 9
4. Cf., Ibid., p. 13-17

also was the seed which produced a large number of other log colleges, as her alumni went West. Other log colleges were, Samuel Blair's at Fagg's Manor in Pennsylvania; John McMillan's in Redstone County, Pennsylvania; and Samuel Finley's at Nottingham, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup>

b. Hampden-Sydney Academy

Princeton was too far away for the men in Virginia. So the policy was set to found institutions more accessible. Two academies were established. One was Liberty Hall and the other Hampden-Sydney. The first president of Hampden-Sydney was the Reverend Samuel Stanhope Smith. W.H. Foote says:

The Reverend Samuel Stanhope Smith, . . . , may be looked upon as the projector of Hampden-Sydney College. Visiting Virginia as a missionary he both saw the necessity of literary institutions in Virginia, and sympathized with the Presbytery of Hanover in her effects to call them into being.<sup>2</sup>

From this Academy hundreds of young men went out as missionaries in Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

Other schools which were established under Presbyterian influence, were, the University of Tennessee and Ohio as well as the University of Miami in Ohio.

2. Seminaries

In the early years of the nineteenth century there was an urgent demand for an increase of ministers because of the large number of new churches established during the

. . . . .

1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., pp. 70-71

2. W. H. Foote: Sketches of Virginia, p. 393

revivals. To meet the need for educated ministers the Presbyterian church established seminaries.

a. Princeton Theological Seminary

...The trustees of the College of New Jersey offered generous provision for the support and instruction of theological students. They might study at Princeton "at the moderate charge of a dollar a week for board and enjoy the assistance of the president and professor of theology without any fee for instruction." This was the beginning of Princeton Theological Seminary. Two years later Dr. Alexander broached the idea of such a seminary in the General Assembly. The next year Dr. Ashbel Green brought in an overture on the subject and in 1810 steps were taken which two years later resulted in the organization of the seminary and its location at Princeton. . .<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of Princeton Theological Seminary and Auburn Theological Seminary, which was opened in 1818, was to train a ministry for the churches in central and western New York. Moreover, the westward expansion caused the establishment of seminaries by the synods and presbyteries of the west.

b. Western Theological Seminary

This seminary grew out of General Assembly action. This action was taken in 1825 and a board of directors were elected. Thirteen locations were proposed for the Seminary but they finally decided to put it in Alleghany-Town, opposite Pittsburgh, because of the large financial inducement. The doors were opened for students in 1827.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of this seminary caused much

. . . . .

1. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 147-148
2. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., pp. 78-79

disapproval among some of the western synods. As a result other seminaries were established. In 1829 a seminary in connection with the Academy at South Hanover was established by the Synod of Indiana. This was later called Indiana Theological Seminary. In 1839 it moved to New Albany, Indiana, and in 1859 to Chicago going by the following names; Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the North West, in 1866 McCormick Theological Seminary and more recently Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Chicago. Other seminaries were established for the training of ministers at Danville, Kentucky, in 1828; at Maryville, Tennessee; and in West Tennessee at Nashville.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Christian Literature

The Presbyterians put great stress on an educated ministry. The normal result of educated ministers would be to have them crave good literature:

#### a. The Bible Society

G. P. Hays says:

...In 1789 the General Assembly, at its first meeting, endorsed the project of "Mr. Collins, printer to the State of New Jersey, who proposed to make an impression of the Old and New Testaments, and declared the scheme worthy of the countenance and support of all denominations of Christians."...This same project was recommended in 1790 and 1791. The American Bible Society was organized in 1816,..the Bible Society has always been an organization to which all assemblies, synods, and presbyteries have given their most cordial endorsement. ...<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., pp. 79-80

2. G. P. Hays: Presbyterians, p. 314



b. Newspapers

Weekly religious newspapers began in America around the opening of the nineteenth century. On July 5, 1814 at Chillicothe, Ohio "The Recorder" was published. In 1822 this paper was moved to Pittsburgh where it has been issued ever since under various names. It has been called "The Spectator," "The Christian Herald," "The Presbyterian Advocate" and "The Presbyterian Banner." Another weekly religious newspaper was the Boston Recorder which was first issued in 1816.<sup>1</sup>

D. The Growth and Expansion of Presbyterianism on the Frontier

The moral and religious situation in the nation at the end of the Revolution was at a low ebb. The problem which the churches faced was this: If the moral and religious conditions were bad in the older and settled sections of the nation, what would be the conditions in the new settlements on the frontier?<sup>2</sup>

Dr. William W. Sweet says:

The greatest single task which the American churches faced at the beginning of the national period of our history was that of following the westward moving population over the Alleghenies into the Mississippi or northward into the Great Lakes, and southward into the Gulf of Mexico. ...Like the common people of the colonial period, the nineteenth century frontiersmen were largely unchurched; many had left their church membership behind in the older communities from which they had migrated.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. Cf., Hays, op. cit., pp. 345-346
2. Cf., W.W. Sweet: Religion of the American Frontier, Vol. II, The Presbyterians, p. 55
3. Ibid., p. 56

## 1. The Frontier Missions

"From the earliest period the Presbyterian Church in this country assumed the character of a missionary church."<sup>1</sup> One method which the church used was sending educated men out into the regions of the country where the white man had just moved. Some of these regions were the Carolinas, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

### a. In the Carolinas 1789-1800

Among the first missionaries in this field were James Templeton, Robert Hall, Robert Archibald, and John Bowman. The first two men were to work in the lower parts of South Carolina and in Georgia, while the other two men were to labor in the lower parts of North Carolina:

The most important rule which was given to them was, "not to tarry longer than three weeks at the same time in the bounds of twenty miles, except peculiar circumstances may appear to make it necessary!"<sup>2</sup>

Although his congregations were Haw River and Stone Creek, James McGready did not limit his preaching to these two points. He made abiding impressions on the minds of people for many miles in the surrounding region. Revivals commenced in different places, and the tide of overflowing iniquity was arrested as a result of his preaching.

John Makemie Wilson resided and labored for several years in Burke County. "Many new churches had been

. . . . .

1. Gillett, op. cit., p. 276
2. Ibid., p. 351

gathered by his efforts, and those which before were weak had been strengthened."1

b. In Kentucky 1775-1800

The hardy backwoodsman of Kentucky required a new type of preacher. He had to be one "who could shoulder axe or musket with his congregation, preach in shirt-sleeves, and take the stump for a pulpit."2

David Rice, better known as "Father Rice," was the first Presbyterian minister to be settled in Kentucky. He was a native of Virginia and a graduate of Princeton. He had labored as a missionary in South Virginia and North Carolina, and settled as pastor of the church at the Peaks of Oeter.

Reverend David Rice came to Kentucky in 1783 in search of land for his children. He did not believe in wasting his opportunities to preach the Gospel, for while he was on this trip through Kentucky he preached to the settlers. They received him with great joy and urged him to stay with them. Rice said that he would come and stay in Kentucky only if he should receive a written invitation from the settlers.

R. H. Bishop says:

...After a few months a call, subscribed by three hundred men, was forwarded to him; but from the face of it he had

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1. Gillett, op. cit., p. 365
2. Ibid., p. 403-404

strong suspicions, that his request, respecting the situation of subscribers, had not been attended to. However, he, upon the whole, resolved to remove to this new country, which he did in October 1783.<sup>1</sup>

Father Rice did much for the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, both in establishing churches and in the matter of education. At the age of eighty-three he was forced to lay down his tools but the work he had done brought forth a great harvest.

Two more early missionaries to this region were Robert Marshall, a graduate of Liberty Hall, and Carey H. Allen, who was educated at Hampden-Sidney. On arriving in Kentucky they immediately entered upon their work among the settlers. Marshall collected a congregation and was settled over the Bethel and Blue Spring Churches. Allen travelled for six months preaching almost daily and sometimes at night. As a result of his work seeds were planted which would be harvested in later years.

On his second trip into Kentucky Allen was accompanied by William Calhoun, a graduate of Hampden-Sidney. They travelled extensively among the scattered settlements of Kentucky. "Dividing their labors between Kentucky and Virginia, they accomplished, each in his sphere, a vast amount of labor."<sup>2</sup>

In 1791, Reverend James Blythe came to Kentucky as a missionary. Two years later he was ordained pastor of

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1. R.H. Bishop: An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky, p. 67
2. Gillett, op. cit., p. 409

Pisgah and Clear Creek Churches. For fear of hostile attack from the Indians, pastor and people had to come to church carrying their rifles. Reverend Blythe labored for nearly forty years in Kentucky, mainly at the Pisgah Church.

c. In Tennessee 1775-1800

Reverend Charles Cummings received a call in 1773 from a hundred and thirty heads of families to be the pastor of the Ebbing Springs and Sinking Springs congregations. He accepted the call and for thirty years labored in Eastern Tennessee laying the foundations of Presbyterianism in that territory.

One of the hardships the frontier missionaries had to face was the Indians. Reverend Cummings had his troubles with the Indians in Tennessee, as may be seen from the following:

...The Indians were very troublesome, and during the summer months the families were compelled, for safety, to collect together in forts. Once (1776) Mr. Cummings himself came near losing his life from a hostile attack. The men never went to church except fully armed and taking their families with them. Mr. Cummings did not fail to set an example of precaution. On Sabbath morning he was wont "to put on his shot-pouch, shoulder his rifle, mount his dun stallion, and ride off to church." For more than thirty years this pioneer of Presbyterianism in Tennessee was known and revered as an exemplary Christian and a faithful pastor. ...<sup>1</sup>

Another pioneer Presbyterian preacher in Tennessee was Samuel Doak, who had received his education at Princeton.

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1. Gillett, op. cit., p. 425-426

Dr. Sweet says, "Doak was possessed of the true pioneering spirit and determined to cast in his lot with the frontier folk."<sup>1</sup>

Doak founded the Salem Church and Washington College. They both had humble beginnings:

...As he was riding through the forest near Limestone Creek in 1780, he met with some settlers who were felling trees. Finding that he was a minister, they requested that he would preach a sermon to as many as could be immediately called together. This he did, using his horse as a pulpit and the shady grove as a sanctuary. The sermon pleased them. They entreated him to tarry longer, and he consented. He purchased a farm, and built log houses in the woods, one for his dwelling, and the other for his church and school. ...<sup>2</sup>

Doak remained in Tennessee and became a powerful influence for good.

#### d. The Plan of Union

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the American Presbyterian Church opened a new era of history. Its missionary spirit was revived and was given an enlarged scope and increased energy to its operations. This missionary zeal was not confined to the Presbyterian church but other denominations began to put forth new effort in their missionary program. The result of this zeal on the part of different denominations was that of fraternal feeling and hearty cooperation between them.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 34
2. Program Suggestions and Collateral Material on the Historical Map., p. 13
3. Cf., Gillett, op. cit., p. 436-437

The demands of the mission fields in New York and Ohio were more than the Presbyterians and Congregationalists could handle alone. The two churches started relations between them in trying to solve the missionary demands in the above mentioned fields. Thompson describes this as follows:

The missionary relations of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, took definite shape in 1801 when regulations promotive of harmony and cooperation were adopted by the Assembly. Missionaries are enjoined "to promote a spirit of accommodation between those inhabitants of the new settlements who hold the Presbyterian and those who hold the Congregational form of church government." This action was the first draft of "The Plan of Union" which went into effect soon after and which continued for more than a generation as a happy arrangement for advancing the gospel in the rapidly developing parts of the country. It provided in brief that Congregational churches might settle Presbyterian ministers and the reverse, and if a congregation consisted partly of Congregationalists and partly of Presbyterians this fact should be no obstacle to their uniting in one church and settling a minister, and that in such case a standing committee of the communicants should be the spiritual leaders of the congregation.<sup>1</sup>

When the Plan was put into operation it seemed to favor the Presbyterian more than the Congregational. The Presbyterian system seemed to work better on the frontier than did the Congregational system of government. Again the Presbyterian ministers held to their form of policy while the Congregationalists seemed willing to give in to keep harmony under the Plan:<sup>2</sup>

The net result of the working of the Plan of Union throughout central and western New York, northern Ohio,

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1. C.L. Thompson: The Story of the Churches, The Presbyterian, pp. 127-128
2. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., p. 46-47

southern Michigan and northern Illinois, especially was the formation of many Presbyterian churches in which strong Congregational elements were present. These churches were sometimes described as "Presbygational," and as the century wore on this New England influence in American Presbyterianism was to have far-reaching effects."<sup>1</sup>

#### e. Missionary Agencies

The period from 1802 until 1829 could be classified as a period of organization in regards to missionary work:

In 1802 a standing committee was established on home missions; in 1816 it was constituted into a Board. This was later merged with the Western Missionary Society of the Synod of Pittsburgh in 1829.<sup>2</sup>

With the changing in the organization of the mission work also came the changes in the methods used by the missionaries sent out under these different boards:

The missionaries appointed by the General Assembly or its Board of Missions, were, up to the year 1829, itinerant missionaries, each covering an extensive territory, remaining but a short time in any one place, and receiving their entire support from the Assembly funds. In 1830 this mode of conducting missions was changed, the missionary being usually appointed to remain in one region for at least a year, serving as a pastor or as a stated supply over one, two or three congregations, and receiving his support, or a large share of it, from the people to whom he ministered.<sup>3</sup>

#### f. Indian Missions

Gideon Blackburn is best known for his work among the Cherokee Indians of Tennessee. He was appointed to this work in 1803 and he continued until 1810, when local disagreements and broken health caused him to resign:

...The object of Mr. Blackburn's mission, stated in his commission, was to carry to that benighted people the

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 47
2. A.C. Zenos: Presbyterianism in America, p. 76
3. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 57-58



gospel and the arts of civilized life. This tribe consisted of about 15,000. Mr. Blackburn opened a school the next year. ...He regarded his three most important contributions to have been in drawing their attention to the right of property, the religious observance of the Sabbath and the solemnization of marriage by a significant ceremony, and rendering the marriage connection binding till death.<sup>1</sup>

The work in which Blackburn and other ministers of Tennessee had taken such deep interest had been frustrated by the influence of the War of 1812 and the removal of Blackburn to Nashville. In 1817 the work began among the Cherokees under the leadership of Mr. Kingsburg and his co-laborers, among them Ard Hoyt, William Chamberlain and Daniel S. Butrick. The name of the mission station was "Brainerd."

The work at Brainerd grew until in 1822 they had to divide the establishment and distribute its members throughout the bounds of the tribe:

Already in September of the same year the churches at Brainerd, Carmel, and Hightower had been received; so that on the list of the Presbytery were four churches within the limits of the Cherokee Mission. ...<sup>2</sup>

The great aim of the Pittsburgh Synod, assuming the name of "The Western Missionary Society," was to evangelize the Indians and to supply gospel privileges to the people in the Ohio Territory.<sup>3</sup>

One group of Indians, who received aid from the Synod of Pittsburgh, was the Wyandot Indians living in the

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1. Program Suggestions, op. cit., p. 13
2. Gillett, Vol II, op. cit., p. 322
3. Cf., Thompson, op. cit., p. 134

neighborhood of Sandusky, Ohio, These Indians received repeated visits by members of the Synod and in the summer of 1805 three missionaries were sent out to them. They stayed for two months and then returned. The field demanded a permanent mission work and in 1806 Joseph Badger was sent by the Synod for this purpose. The Indians who were brought under the influence of the missionaries did not know what intoxication was and many of the Indians had been induced to attend regularly the preaching services and some showed evidence of genuine conversion. The work among the Wyandot Indians continued until the War of 1812 when the buildings were burned.

## 2. Revivals and Camp Meetings

### a. In Kentucky

The revivals which spread over western and central New York, Virginia, and the Carolinas had their beginning in the little frontier churches under the care of James McGready in Logan County, Kentucky, in the year 1797.

James McGready was born of Scottish-Irish parents in Pennsylvania, but when he was young they moved to North Carolina. James' uncle noticed the interest that his nephew had in religion and he encouraged James to think about the ministry as his life's work. McGready studied under John McMillan at Joseph Smith's Academy in western Pennsylvania. After being licensed to preach by the Redstone Presbytery, James McGready decided to return to North Carolina. On his

way to North Carolina he spent some time at Hampden-Sydney College then in the midst of a revival. The value of evangelical preaching made a deep impression on McGready. In North Carolina he was a pastor at a church in Orange County but partly because of the threats of his enemies and partly because he wanted to follow his converts over the mountain he left Orange County and came to Kentucky. His preaching was so effective that soon revivals were in progress in each of his congregations, which proved to be the beginning of the Great Revival of 1800.<sup>1</sup>

The meetings reached such proportions that they could no longer hold them in the churches so they had to be held out of doors. People came from great distances and stayed for several days. Some came in wagons loaded with provisions and filled up for temporary lodging. Others had to build temporary shelters. This was the beginning of the Camp Meetings:<sup>2</sup>

The plan of camp-meetings spread like wildfire. They were held, one after another in rapid succession. Crowds assembled from every direction. "The laborer quitted his task; age snatched his crutch; youth forgot his pastime; the plough was left in the furrow; business of all kinds was suspended." Young and old, the farmer and the hunter, white and black, flocked to the centre of attraction. The paths leading through the forest were alive with people...<sup>3</sup>

Richard MacNemar gives the following account of what went on at these camp meetings:

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1. Cf., Sweet, op.cit., pp. 84-85
2. Cf., G.P. Hays: Presbyterians, pp. 454-455
3. Gillett, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 164

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 emphatical 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 on 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.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the bodily manifestations which went on at the camp meetings were the falling, jerking, rolling, running, dancing and barking exercises and visions and trances. The most common was the falling exercise which affected both old and young as well as men and women. Sometimes individuals were seized by these exercises in spite of studied resistance and while the jest or open blasphemy was on their lips. Some fell as if a bullet had struck them and others were seized with a bodily tremor before falling. Some fell shrieking while others lay motionless as dead.<sup>2</sup>

Another characteristic of the camp meeting was the noise and confusion. It was impossible to handle the great crowds of people which came to these meetings. There would be people walking about and talking during the service.

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1. R. MacNemar: The Kentucky Revival, p. 23
2. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., p. 88

Many times there would be a dozen songs sung at the same time. Often as many prayers were being offered at the same time. Preachers were interrupted in the middle of their sermons by bursts of singing, praying, wild shrieks, whoops, outcries, and hysterical laughter.<sup>1</sup>

b. In the Carolinas

The features of the great Kentucky revival were largely reproduced in sections of the field occupied by the Synod of the Carolinas, especially within the Orange and Concord Presbyteries.

In August of 1801 a communion-season was held at Cross-Roads under the ministrations of Reverend William Parsley. On the closing day of the communion season the pastor arose to dismiss the large congregation which had gathered for the meetings. Overcome by his emotions, Parsley found it impossible to speak and sat down. In a few minutes he arose again but before he could speak a young man who had just returned from the scenes of the Tennessee revivals arose and raising his hand said, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." In a few minutes the house was filled with sobs, groans, and cries. The meeting lasted until midnight as people prayed, exhorted, and experienced personal conversion.<sup>2</sup>

At Hawfields, the other congregation under Mr. Parsley's charge, another revival was started during the

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1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., pp. 88-89
2. Cf., Gillett, op. cit., pp. 76-77

communion service.

W. H. Foote says:

...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 praying, 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. This was the first camp meeting in North Carolina. They soon became all over the South and West. ..<sup>1</sup>

The revival movement which began in North Carolina spread southward into South Carolina where meetings of similar description were held.

c. In Virginia

Gillett says, "The Great Revival in Kentucky in 1801 exerted a powerful influence throughout portions of the Synod of Virginia."<sup>2</sup> The revival spread through western Virginia in the Presbyterian settlements along the head waters of the Kanawha. This territory had no settled pastors but missionaries made occasional visits. The revival in this region was started at a prayer meeting of private Christians.

The churches under the care of Messrs Mitchel and Turner were greatly revived in the later part of 1801. There were many conversions and many were subject to bodily agitations. In the spring of 1802 the work was more powerful.

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1. W.H. Foote: Sketches of North Carolina, p. 379
2. Gillett, op. cit., p. 42

Crowds gathered at a meeting at Bethel. There were some bodily exercises, but no noise or disorderly manifestations of feeling. The revival spread to congregations at Albemarle, in Prince Edward, in Charlotte, and Baxter's congregation became deeply interested.<sup>1</sup>

For several years the effects of the revival continued to be witnessed in different parts of the State, sometimes in parts where there was no church or stated number.

#### E. Revivalism and Controversy

The revivals of the nineteenth century had both a good and a bad effect upon the Presbyterian church in America. The good effect was that the Church had spread the Gospel into many places where it had not been heard and it awakened the churches which had had the zeal but had lost it. The bad effect upon the church was the controversies which arose as a result of the revivals. Dr. Sweet says:

In devising adequate frontier techniques Presbyterianism was handicapped by the rigidity of both its creed and polity. The numerous frontier controversies and divisions were largely the result of the lack of elasticity in Presbyterianism...The fact that the Presbyterians believed that there was a definitely prescribed form of church government to be found in Scripture meant that any suggestion of change in polity to meet new situations would, in the very nature of the case, meet with resistance. These facts must be kept in mind if we are to understand the controversies and schisms which wrought such havoc in frontier Presbyterianism during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the revivals there were two parties

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1. Cf., Gillett, op. cit., pp. 42-43
2. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 82-83

among the Presbyterian ministers. On the one side there were the men who favored and defended the revival. These were called "Revival Men." The other party was called "Anti-Revival Men" because of their opposition towards the revival. From these two groups there developed three distinct schisms: the Cumberland Presbyterian Schism; the New Light Schism; and the Shaker Schism.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. The Cumberland Presbyterian Schism

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was an indirect result of the powerful revival in Kentucky. It came about through a demand for an increase in the number of ministers to meet the new opportunities which the revival spirit had opened throughout the southern mountains. The church could not furnish the needed supply of educated men. Uneducated men were pressed into the service. They were zealous but often ill-balanced. Excesses in methods and unsoundness in doctrine appeared on every side. The Synod of Kentucky appealed to the Assembly for counsel. The Synod however was divided as to the best course to pursue. So was the Assembly. On the one hand was a desire to maintain strict ecclesiastical procedure, while at the same time favoring the revival. On the other hand, was the imperative need of more preachers and the desire to subordinate education and orthodoxy to the urgent demands which the revivals had made. The discussions in Synod and Assembly went on with increasing heat from 1804 to 1814.<sup>2</sup>

After all efforts at reconciliation had failed, the Synod formally desolved the Cumberland Presbytery in 1806. The Assembly continued to correspond with the Presbytery but without avail. In 1810, the independent Cumberland Presbytery was organized. This was the origin of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. From this beginning the church had

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1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., p. 90
2. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 138-139



grown into a thoroughly organized denomination with a large home and foreign mission work.

In doctrine the Cumberland Church held to "a modified Calvinism, retaining the principal elements of the Calvinistic system but rejecting such doctrines as a limited atonement and special grace."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The New Light Schism

While the Cumberland controversy was going on in southern Kentucky and north central Tennessee, the New Light Schism was developing in northern Kentucky. The revivalists in northern Kentucky had developed an anti-Calvinistic emphasis. Richard McNemar and John Dunlovy were condemned by their presbytery for holding unorthodox views. The presbytery also proposed to hold an examination and a trial of these two men. This proposed action was protested by five of the revival men, Robert Marshall, John Dunlovy, Richard McNemar, Barton W. Stone and John Thompson. They also declared their withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the synod.<sup>2</sup>

The synod appointed a committee to persuade the five men to come back to the doctrine of the church. The five agreed to answer any questions on doctrine before the synod but the next day the seceders announced to the synod their withdrawal and the formation of a new presbytery. The

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1. Thompson, op. cit., p. 141

2. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., pp. 94-95

synod suspended them from the ministry and declared that their pulpits were vacant.<sup>1</sup>

By 1804 there were fifteen societies under their direction in the region of Kentucky and Ohio. In the spring of the same year Stone and his followers decided that the Presbytery of Springfield was not needed any longer so they disbanded it. They also did away with the title of Reverend and salaries by subscription. They affirmed the independence of each congregation and decided that there was no other confession of faith except the Bible. In 1804 they adopted the name Christian for their new formed organization. Their successes were short lived because of the defection of several of their most important leaders.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Shaker Schism

The Shakers were a small communistic sect which had been established in several communities in New England and New York. Their founder, Ann Lee, came to America from England in 1774. The actual church was not formed until 1783 after Ann Lee's death. They believed in the second coming of Christ. They also believed in celibacy and direct divine revelation.

The revivals in Kentucky caused them to send three missionaries out into the West. On their way west they caused the following Presbyterian ministers to join

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1. Cf., Sweet., op. cit., pp. 95-96

2. Ibid., p. 96-97

them; Richard McNemar, who became the outstanding leader for the Shakers in the West, Matthew Houston and John Dunlovy.

Sweet says:

Stone and his associates were naturally greatly stirred by the large Shaker defection and were soon denouncing the Shakers as wolves in sheep's clothing. But in the long run perhaps the Shakers performed a real service for the Christians in that the more fanatical element in the Stone movement were drained off into the Shaker colonies.<sup>1</sup>

#### F. Summary

The methods used by the Presbyterians on the American frontier can be divided into three main divisions. The organizational methods, educational agencies, and the evangelistic methods. The Presbyterian church recognizes three governing bodies above the local church; the Presbytery, the Synod and the General Assembly. During the westward expansion of the church it has been seen how these three bodies discussed and passed legislation which would speed up the sending of men with the Gospel to the people living on the frontier. The Church felt that these men should be well prepared before they entered the ministry. So the Church provided as soon as possible proper colleges and seminaries for their training. The schools not only educated the ministry but made available education to the laity in the south and the west.

The method of evangelism used by the Presbyterians

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 98

were frontier missionaries, revivals, and camp-meetings closely connected with the revivals. One method of the missionaries was to go into a new settlement and gather a congregation, build a church and sometimes a school and work there for the rest of their lives. Another method used by the missionaries was to travel over a given territory for a period of time before they settled down to work in one or two congregations.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century revivals broke out along the frontier and spread back into established churches along the Atlantic coast. The revivals in the Carolinas and Kentucky began as a result of the soul-searching messages of Reverend James McGready and his co-laborers. Many times the revivals started during the sacramental season when large groups were gathered. The crowds became too large for the churches. So people gathered in the woods, living in wagons, tents and other temporary settlements. This was the beginning of the camp meetings which spread across the frontier. The use of uneducated men in the new congregations and in some cases the fanaticism and disorder which accompanied the revival caused controversies. These controversies grew into three schisms, the Cumberland Presbyterian Schism, the New Light Schism and the Shaker Schism. In the case of the first two new religious groups were formed, and in the third case men joined an established religious group.

These are some of the ways that Presbyterianism tried to meet the challenge of the frontier. They reached many souls, established many churches and schools which have had a lasting influence on the moral and religious conditions of the areas they touched.

CHAPTER II

THE METHODS USED BY THE METHODISTS ON THE FRONTIER

## CHAPTER II

### THE METHODS USED BY THE METHODISTS ON THE FRONTIER

#### A. Introduction

The history of the Methodist church in America is like the mustard seed of which Jesus spoke. It had a very small beginning but now is a great church in numbers and influence in America. At the close of the American Revolution the Methodists were the most insignificant of all the religious bodies, both in numbers and influence.<sup>1</sup>

Some ten years before the Declaration of Independence the first Methodists arrived on the American soil. They came without any backing from the English Methodists. The three volunteers were Robert Strawbridge, Philip Embury, and Captain Thomas Webb. Webb was an officer in the British army and a recent convert of John Wesley. The news of the work of these three men returned to England. The cry for help soon came from the colonies and the first official missionaries were sent to America. These were Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. Altogether Wesley sent eight missionaries to this country.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how and why the Methodist church grew so rapidly in numbers and influence. The first consideration will be the organizational

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1. Cf., W.W. Sweet; Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV, The Methodists, p. 3

set-up which the Methodists used to cope with pioneer problems. Under this section a study of the Annual and General Conferences will be made. An important factor in the rapid growth of Methodism was the circuit system with the traveling and local ministry. The educational activities will be considered next. Included in this section are the colleges, seminaries and Christian literature. The third part of the chapter will deal with the growth and expansion of Methodism on the frontier. Under this heading the following subjects are discussed: the frontier missions in different territories; the revivals and camp meetings which swept across the frontier during the early years of the nineteenth century; and the controversies which arose on the frontier.

#### B. The Methodist Organization

##### 1. The Conferences and Their Authority

Dr. William W. Sweet says:

It was a fortunate circumstance, from the standpoint of the propagation of Methodism in America, that the movement was not handicapped by rigid views in regard to church government. This fact enabled the Methodists readily to adjust their system of organization to meet the needs of a changing frontier situation. ...<sup>1</sup>

The little business that the American Methodists had was conducted in quarterly meetings until 1773. Thomas Rankin, the newly appointed general assistant, called the first Conference in 1773. This Conference was modeled after the Conferences Wesley held in England. They were only

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 32



advisory in nature. Until 1784 this type of Conference was held every year.<sup>1</sup>

The Conference held at Baltimore in 1784 was a new kind of Conference. It was no longer an advisory body for it had power to take definite action on what Methodism was going to do in an independent America. All matters were decided by a majority vote. The Conference had the power to elect deacons and elders and to admit men into the ranks of the ministry and into Conference membership.

The Conference grew soon in territory and numbers so that the members had to be divided into sections. Finally a further step to meet the growth was taken in November, 1792 when the first General Conference was held at Baltimore.

a. Annual Conference

The Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church passed many rules concerning the missionary and educational activities on the American frontier.

(1) Educational Action

In 1829 the Illinois Conference with the cooperation of the Missouri Conference adopted a motion to establish a "seminary of learning:"

Resolved, therefore that the Illinois Conference do approve of a union, and by and with the consent of the Missouri Annual Conference, through their committee now present, do unite both Conferences, for the purpose of establishing a seminary of learning under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Which being read was

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1. Cf., Sweet, op. cit., p. 35

adopted; and on motion the committee was instructed to proceed to locate the site for said seminary. ...<sup>1</sup>

(2) Missionary Action

The Illinois Conference was missionary minded as well as being interested in the learning of their young men, for they took the following action:

...On motion resolved that in the opinion of this Conference it is expedient to establish a mission in the country north and west of Crawfordsville Circuit and north of the Vermillion Circuit on the Wabash River to be denominated the Logan Port Mission and the same is hereby declared to be a missionary station. ...<sup>2</sup>

b. General Conference

The General Conferences, like the Annual Conferences, tried to promote the educational and missionary programs of the Methodist church.

(1) Educational Action

The Methodists schools played an important part in supplying young men to serve the church. Their soul need was primary in their training as may be seen in the following account. Dr. Wade Crawford Barclay relates the objectives of the Methodist schools as given by the General Conference of 1796:

The first object we recommend is to form the minds of the youth through divine aid, to wisdom and holiness, instilling into their tender minds the principles of true religion speculative, experimental, and practical, and training them in the ancient way, that they may be rational, scriptural Christians.<sup>3</sup>

(2) Missionary Action

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 329
2. Ibid., p. 332
3. W.C. Barclay: Early American Methodism 1769-1884, Vol. II, To Reform the Nation, p. 403

Much of the land on the frontier was occupied by Indian tribes. The General Conference realized the need of taking the gospel to these people. Dr. Barclay gives the following action of the General Conference of 1832:

The General Conference of 1832 asked the Bishops "to extend, with all practicable despatch, the aboriginal missions on our Western and Northwestern frontiers," appointing a "Superintendent of Indian Missions, who shall explore the country as extensively as possible," and to notify the missionary society of the state of the Indian tribes generally, together with the prospects of introducing the Gospel among them, the number of missionaries, and amount of money needed to carry forward the work.<sup>1</sup>

The action of the General Conferences broadened the scope in the fields of education and missions on the frontier.

## 2. The Traveling Ministry

The circuit rider was an important factor in the spreading of Methodism on the frontier. Dr. Sweet says:

More than any other single factor, "itinerary" was responsible for the rapid spread of Methodism throughout the United States in the frontier period. ...<sup>2</sup>

In an address given at the General Conference in Washington, D.C., in May, 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt gave the following tribute to the early Methodist Circuit Rider:

The whole country is under a debt of gratitude to the Methodist circuit riders,..., whose movement westward kept pace with the movement of the frontier, who shared all the hardships in the life of the frontiersman, while at the same time ministering to that frontiersman's spiritual needs, and seeing that his pressing material cares and the hard and grinding poverty of his life did not wholly

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1. Barclay, op. cit., p. 201

2. Sweet: Religion on American Frontier, Vol. IV, p. 42

extinguish the divine fire within his soul.<sup>1</sup>

The missionary spirit of the circuit rider was exemplified by early Methodism. They were like the seventy that Jesus sent out "into every city and place," carrying "neither purse, nor scrip." The circuit riders would go on long and hazardous journeys without money for clothes, food or lodging.<sup>2</sup>

Jacob Young described his situation as he was going to the Limestone Circuit, Kentucky, as follows:

On examining my clothing, I found that my shoes were nearly worn out; they would neither keep my feet warm nor dry. My old cloak was too thin for that very cold winter. Having got but little quarterage the preceding year, my money was exhausted. I was at a loss to know what to do. But man's distress is God's opportunity. A strange lady came at the right time, and handed me a dollar, Solomon Goss gave me four or five dollars. Some other friends, unknown to me, sent a few dollars more. I went and bought me a pair of shoes, a piece of heavy cloth, and employed a Miss Thankful West to make an overcoat for one dollar. By the time my garments were all in order, my money was all gone.<sup>3</sup>

The circuit riders were known as "horsemen." Most of them knew no other way of travel. In those days the best ways of travel were by water via the ocean, rivers, and lakes, or on land by stage coach. These ways did not serve the purpose of the circuit riders. They were under the necessity of conforming to a fixed schedule. So there was no alternative to horseback travel over the rough trails and through uncharted forests.<sup>4</sup>

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1. An address by Theodore Roosevelt to the General Conference at American University, Washington, D.C., May, 1908
2. Cf., Barclay, op. cit., p. 289
3. Jacob Young; Autobiography of a Pioneer, p. 154
4. Cf., Barclay, op. cit., p. 288

The circuit riders were noted for their preaching to all classes of people. Barclay says:

...Everywhere the circuit riders sought out the neglected and the destitute--those for whom none other cared. They were constrained by the love of Christ, filled with the missionary spirit and passion. No man, woman, or child was so ignorant, so miserable and forsaken, or so sinful and degraded as to be beneath their notice. ...<sup>1</sup>

Many of the frontier towns were miles away from the services of the medical doctor. The circuit rider often found himself called upon to render first aid and to give medical counsel in serious illness. The circuit riders were expected to know Wesley's "Primitive Physic" and have a copy with them on the rounds of their circuits.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Local Ministry

An important part of nourishing the Christians in the frontier days was done by three groups of men: the class leader, the local preacher, and the exhorter. The burden of the work fell upon them because the circuit rider was able to visit each society only a few times a year.

#### a. The Class Leader

The Class was regarded as an essential part of every American Methodist society. The class had a three-fold purpose, that of supplying Christian fellowship, of giving the Christians an opportunity of witnessing by personal testimony, and of collecting contributions. Each

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1. Barclay, op. cit., p. 3
2. Cf., Ibid., pp. 11-12

member was required to attend the class meeting regularly, and if he did not attend the meetings he could be expelled from the society. The class met at frequent intervals, generally once a week, and on the frontier in the homes of its members.

The duties of the class leaders were the duties which pastors today perform. They are described as follows:

...They were virtually sub-pastors, not only meeting their classes in weekly session but visiting the sick and those who absented themselves, accepting the office as a sacred trust and devoting themselves with fidelity to the nurture and the cure of souls...<sup>1</sup>

H.E. Luccock and Paul Hutchinson in their book, The Story of Methodism described the duties of the class leaders as follows:

..it became the business of the leader to conduct a public examination into the manner of life of each member of the class, to praise those who were living well, to admonish those who were falling before temptation, and to exhort all to go on in the way of holiness. Raising finances became a very minor although never neglected-feature of such a gathering. Rightly conducted it was a spiritual clinic, and within it was much of the secret of the persistence and stability of the Methodist movement.<sup>2</sup>

Another value of the class meeting to the church was that it served as a door of entrance to the ministry.

Dr. Barclay says:

...Class meetings often served as a first door of entrance to the ministry. Young men who evidenced an

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1. Barclay, op. cit., p. 340
2. H.E. Luccock and Paul Hutchinson: The Story of Methodism, p. 168

especial aptitude for prayer, fervent testimony or exhortation were discovered and invited to use their gifts in a larger way.<sup>1</sup>

#### b. The Exhorter

The next step above the class leader in the Methodist society was the exhorter. He was a man licensed by the quarterly conference to speak under ministerial direction. It was a requirement that licenses be renewed each year. His duties were to conduct religious services of a more or less informal character, to exercise their gifts in hortatory discourse, and to advance the interests of the kingdom of God.

#### c. Local Preachers

The third step in the local ministry of the Methodist Church was the local preacher. Sweet says:

The local preacher was a factor of immense importance to the development of frontier Methodism. Frequently among the early settlers of a new region were to be found local preachers, and as soon as their cabins were built and a few acres cleared for a crop the next year, the local preacher invited his neighbors to his cabin for religious services. In many localities the first Methodist classes were formed by the local ministry, and when the regular circuit preacher came on the scene, he found Methodism already planted. In both Kentucky and Ohio the first classes were formed in this way, and in hundreds of communities across the land this story was repeated. ...<sup>2</sup>

### C. Educational Agencies

The two main educational agencies employed by the Methodists on the frontier were the colleges and Christian literature.

#### 1. Colleges

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1. Barclay, op. cit., p. 340

2. W.W. Sweet: Methodism in American History, pp. 147-148

## a. Cokesbury

Cokesbury College at Abingdon, Maryland was named for Bishop Asbury and Bishop Coke. These two men were very influential in the early history of the college. When the subject of schools was brought up, Bishop Asbury preferred a school after the plan of Kingswood in England, while Bishop Coke preferred a college. A.W. Cumming says:

The General Conference was made the umpire. The venerable men composing that grave Congress of the Church favored Bishop Coke's preferences. ...From that hour Cokesbury College became an important interest with all Methodists.

Abingdon, on the Chesapeake, twenty-five miles from Baltimore, was selected as its seat. The Bishops undertook to raise the funds for its establishment. When they had secured five thousand dollars the edifice was commenced.<sup>1</sup>

In a circular letter sent out by Bishop Asbury and Bishop Coke the object and plan of the college was stated:

...It is to receive, for education and board, the sons of the elders and preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, poor orphans, and the sons of the subscribers and other friends. ...The institution is also intended for the benefit of our young men who are called to preach, that they may received a measure of that improvement which is highly expedient as a preparation for public service. ...<sup>2</sup>

On December 6, 1787, the college was opened with twenty-five students enrolled. In 1795 the college was destroyed by fire.

The second Cokesbury was started by some noble Baltimore Methodists. But one year after the destruction

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1. A.W. Cumming: The Early Schools of Methodism, p. 21

2. Ibid., p. 22



of the first, this second Methodist college was destroyed by fire due to the carelessness of some sport-loving boys.

b. Randolph-Macon College

Although earlier enterprises in the field of education had failed, the Methodists of the Virginia Conference felt that it was necessary to establish a college where they felt safe in sending their young men.

Reverend Hezekiah Leigh and Gabriel Disosway have been conceded the honor of being the two men responsible for planning and founding Randolph-Macon College.<sup>1</sup>

Howell Taylor, Honorable William Goode, and Colonel William Townes helped Hezekiah Leigh in locating the college near or at Boydton.<sup>2</sup>

The General Assembly of Virginia granted a charter to the school on February 3, 1830, and it opened its classes on October 9, 1832.

It was the custom to name colleges and universities after influential people in history at that time. For example, William and Mary was named for a king and queen and Washington College was named for George Washington. In the case of Randolph-Macon College it was named for two important men in politics in the territory near the school. John Randolph was from Roanoke and Nathaniel Macon was from North Carolina. Neither man so far as is known showed any

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1. Cf., Richard Irby: History of Randolph-Macon College, p. 10
2. Cf., Ibid., p. 14

preference or kindly interest for the Methodist church.<sup>1</sup>

Randolph-Macon College had a great influence on Methodist education in the south. Richard Irby says:

...It was to be indeed alma mater to many sons, and daughters, too, and a mother of many other Methodist colleges, blessing every state in the south, some of them surpassing in outfit and endowment the mother. As a loving mother rejoices with and in her daughters, so does Randolph-Macon rejoice in the colleges of the church she has lived to see grow and flourish.<sup>2</sup>

c. Indiana Asbury -- DePauw University

Among the early committees appointed at the Indiana Conference in 1832 was a committee to consider the building of a conference seminary. At Lafayette in 1835 the committee made the following report:

..the Committee on Education reported an elaborate plan for the establishment of a Methodist university to be known as Indiana Asbury University. A capital stock of an indefinite number of shares of \$100 each was to be raised, each purchaser of a share to have the privilege of sending one student for six years to the University. ...The presiding elders and preachers were to be the agents in carrying out this program of money-getting. Provision was also made for finding a suitable location for the new university, the plan being to start a competition between two or more towns in bidding for the institution, and a committee of nine representing Indianapolis, Madison, and Terre Haute was appointed to see that the competition be got under way.<sup>3</sup>

It was voted in 1836 to make the town of Greencastle the site of the new Methodist University in Indiana. The charter was granted to the new university on January 10, 1837.

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1. Cf. Irby, op. cit., p. 16
2. Ibid., p. 44
3. W.W. Sweet: Indiana Asbury -- DePauw University 1837-1937, p. 31

Although the building was not completed until 1842, the university took possession in the fall of 1840, and the inauguration of the first president and the graduation of the first college class took place within its halls on September 13th of that year.

## 2. Seminaries

The Methodist church had not established any seminaries during the period of this study. The young men studying for the ministry received their Bible training in the religious departments of the Methodist colleges and institutes.

The early Methodists had many objections to seminaries. In an article entitled, "Methodism and Theological Education," Dr. Ezra Tepple gives some of the objections:

...There is no necessity for theological schools, the Methodist ministry is as efficient as any. Seminaries will cool devotion and general zeal. What benefit will come from the "manufacture of preachers of uncertain value?" The present plan issue; let well enough alone. Theological schools will create caste. Such institutions would reflect on our aged and departed denominationalism. Young men should be fully trained in theological Methodism alone and follow the fathers in their sublime faith. ...<sup>1</sup>

Those and many other objections were given by the Methodists in the Christian Advocate for three decades after 1826.

## 3. Christian Literature

John Wesley laid great emphasis upon the reading

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1. Christian Advocate, 1926, p. 69

of good Christian literature by his ministers and laymen. When Methodism came to America, Christian literature was one of the important items on the agenda of the early Conferences. Whitlock says:

In the Discipline of 1787, the following minute occurs: "As it has been frequently recommended by the preachers and people that such books as are wanted be printed in this country, we therefore propose: first, that the advice of the Conference be desired concerning any valuable impressions, and their consent be obtained before any steps be taken for the printing thereof. And second, that the profits of the books, after all necessary expenses are defrayed, shall be applied, according to the direction of the Conference, to the college, the preachers fund, the deficiencies of our preachers in the district mission, or the debt of our churches.<sup>1</sup>

a. Methodist Book Concern

At the Conference in John Street Church, New York, the Methodist Book Concern was organized in May, 1789<sup>2</sup>. The new enterprise was located in Philadelphia. John Dickins was the first book steward and then pastor of the church in Philadelphia. The Book Concern remained in Philadelphia until 1804 when General Conference voted to move it to New York City. "The insistent call of the West for a better service of the books compelled the General Conference of 1820 to establish a branch at Cincinnati."<sup>3</sup> Reverend Martin Ruter was commissioned "Assistant Agent" in 1820 and sent to Cincinnati, where he established a Methodist Book Room.

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1. W.F. Whitlock: The Story of the Book Concern, p. 15
2. Cf., H.C. Jennings: The Methodist Book Concern, p. 17
3. James R. Joy: The Making of the Book Concern, p. 18

The first publications of the Book Concern were few. They were the "Christian's Pattern," the hymn book, "Methodist Discipline," "Saints' Everlasting Rest," "Primitive Physic," prepared by Wesley, and the "Arminean Magazine."

The Book Concern played an important role in the success of the Methodist on the frontier. Doctor Joy says:

When the romantic history of the Western circuit-rider shall be adequately written the Methodist Book Concern will come in for a great share in the winning of the West for civilization. When cities were far, posts rare, and libraries unknown, the preacher's saddlebags brought good books into every community. ...<sup>1</sup>

#### b. The Preacher as Book Agent

Among the many duties of the circuit rider was service as agent for the Book Concern. Even before the establishment of the Book Concern the preachers were responsible for seeing that the people in their circuit were well supplied with John Wesley's books. They felt that it was important enough to have Conference pass rules on this subject:

In the Christmas Conference of 1784, among the rules of ministerial life we find the following, "Be active in dispersing Mr. Wesley's books," "Every system may beg money of the rich to buy books for the poor!"<sup>2</sup>

The General Conference in 1800 passed the ruling; "...It shall be the duty of every preacher who has charge of a circuit to see that his circuit is duly supplied with books. ..."<sup>3</sup>

#### c. Church Periodicals

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1. Joy, op. cit., p. 19
2. Whitlock, op. cit., p. 14
3. Sweet, Methodism in American History, op.cit., p. 150

The Methodist Book Concern did not spend all its efforts on the printing of books. They also printed some religious magazines. Among the magazines they printed were "Christian Advocate," "Western Christian Advocate," and "The Ladies' Repository and Gatherings of the West."

(1) "The Christian Advocate"

The Annual Conference of Baltimore on March 18, 1826 passed a motion to start a weekly paper to be published from the press of the Book Concern; the Conference would take the responsibility to promote the circulation of such a paper:<sup>1</sup>

The first official weekly authorized by the General Conference and issued by the Book Concern was the Christian Advocate. Its first number appeared on September 9, 1826.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of this paper can be seen by the articles that were printed in it. The first paper carried as a running headline the legend: "Devoted to Religion, Morality, Science, Domestic Economy and General Intelligence."

In 1828 the scope of the news was enlarged to include the following:

...Summaries of domestic and foreign events were given and the appointments of all annual conferences were printed in full. Long letters from correspondents throughout the country narrated many things not strictly ecclesiastical, making the columns a valuable source for social historians. In 1829 weekly "Bible Class Lessons" began, a forerunner of the Sunday School Lessons of today. ...<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf., Christian Advocate of 1926, p. 6
2. Jennings, op. cit., p. 141
3. Christian Advocate, op. cit., p. 6

The amazing growth, with a circulation of 30,000 in 1830, was abruptly checked by the rise of other Methodist weeklies.

(2) "The Western Christian Advocate"

The General Conference in 1832 authorized the printing of the "Western Christian Advocate". It was begun in 1834 at Cincinnati and it has been continued in its publication at the Cincinnati Book Concern through all succeeding years. Because of the rapid increase in the population in the middle west and through its editorial strength and the loyalty of the people, the "Western Christian Advocate" came almost immediately into a large circulation.

(3) "The Ladies Repository and Gatherings of the West"

The General Conference of 1840 authorized the printing of a new magazine called "The Ladies Repository and Gatherings of the West." The first number of the magazine was printed in January 1841. It started with thirty-two pages and was enlarged finally to sixty-four pages. It contained steel engravings and other illustrations. Jennings says:

...The Ladies' Repository was for many years regarded as "Queen of the Monthlies." It was also known as the art journal of America. There was nothing like it in existence as the later line of popular magazines had not yet come into being. At one time, the Ladies' Repository reached a circulation of forty thousand copies. ...<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jennings, op. cit., p. 138

#### D. The Growth and Expansion of Methodism on the Frontier

The Methodist, like the other denominations, turned their attention toward the rapidly growing population on the frontier. It was on the frontier that the romantic history of the circuit rider was made.

##### 1. Frontier Missions

Some of the regions where the Methodists sent their men during the formulative years of both the nation and the Church were in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

##### a. In Kentucky.

James Haw and Benjamin Ogden arrived in the District of Kentucky in the latter part of the summer of 1786. The term, "District of Kentucky," meant any place in the state of Kentucky where they felt led to go. W. E. Arnold says:

When James Haw and Benjamin Ogden were assigned to Kentucky it meant that they were turned loose in this vast territory, and were at liberty to go anywhere in the District, preaching and organizing classes wherever they could. To search out the few scattered Methodists who had at that time come to Kentucky; to get them together in societies whenever possible; to get sinners saved--these were the tasks to which they applied themselves. This they did with zeal and faithfulness, and their efforts were rewarded with reasonable success. ..they preached in cabins, in forts, in the open air; in bar-rooms, in any places that were open to them; had a goodly number of conversions, and, at the end of the year, they reported ninety members in society. ....<sup>1</sup>

Another great name in Methodist history in connection with the frontier and especially in Kentucky was Peter Cartwright. Reverend Arnold speaks of him as "One

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1. W.E. Arnold: History of Methodism in Kentucky, Vol. I, p. 46



of the most unique characters ever in the Methodist ministry."<sup>1</sup>  
 The circuit riders made the most of every situation. Cartwright was called upon to hold a funeral in an abandoned Baptist Church in Stockton Valley. As the result of his preaching at the funeral a revival broke out and there were twenty-three very clear and sound conversions.<sup>2</sup>

b. In Tennessee

Jacob Young was an outstanding Methodist preacher who travelled the circuits of Tennessee. John McFerrin gives an account of Young's travels on the Clinch Circuit:

"I made my way, as best I could, to Russell Court-House, preaching in several neighborhoods as I passed along; found many pleasant people, and had delightful meetings. Within about five miles of the Court-House, I found a large society of intelligent and pious people. I could have taken up my abode here with great pleasure, but duty called me, and I must go. I found no society at the Court-House and very few people lived there. From this place I went to Henry Dickenson's who was a distinguished man in that country. ...From Dickenson's I rode to a place called Elk Garden, where I found a very large society of Methodists of the very best sort. ..I spent several days here, and moved toward Tazewill Court-House. I preached several times on my way, among the Garrisons, Higgenbothams, and Youngs. ..I passed over the dividing ridge between the waters of the Tennessee and the Ohio. I went down a stream called Blue Stone, formed severel societies, and saw some happy days. I recrossed the dividing ridge, went down the valley of Clinch about a hundred miles, preaching in a great many places as I went along, night and day, till I came to my starting place, Rye Cove. ..."<sup>3</sup>

c. In Virginia

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1. Arnold, op. cit., p. 273
2. Cf., Ibid., p. 276
3. John B. McFerrin: Methodism in Tennessee, Vol. I, p. 499-503

Doctor Coke visited the State of Virginia in the Spring of 1785. He was hailed everywhere with joy as the messenger of peace when he confined himself to preaching Christ. But when his zeal against slavery was carried beyond the bounds of prudence he found himself in trouble. One time as he was preaching to a large crowd in a barn, he took occasion to denounce slavery in unmeasured terms. A number of people withdrew from the barn and determined how they could punish him when he came out. No harm befell him as some of his friends led him to safety.<sup>1</sup>

Jesse Lee worked for some time in the Virginia Conference as the presiding elder of the Norfolk District. He entered this work with his characteristic zeal. William Bennett relates the following description of Jesse Lee's life:

...He attended in one year "twenty-five quarterly meetings, was present at twenty-seven love feasts, and preached two-hundred and ninety-four sermons." In addition to the regular quarterly meeting appointments he made it a rule "to preach at every regular preaching place in the bounds of his district at least once a year."<sup>2</sup>

d. In the Carolinas

Methodism entered the State of North Carolina in a revival which had started on the Brunswick Circuit in Virginia. It had entered Halifax County from which it spread over all that part of North Carolina. Three of the early preachers to the Carolinas were Edward Dramgoole,

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1. Cf., William Bennett: Memorials of Methodism in Virginia, pp. 220-221
2. Ibid., p. 392

Francis Poythress, and Isham Tatum.

Francis Poythress was appointed to the Carolina Circuit in 1776. Reverend W.L. Grissom says:

"Our pioneer work called out no one probably more remarkable than Francis Poythress. From the many prominent appointments he filled, he must have occupied a high position in the esteem and affections of the pioneer church." He travelled on circuits in North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland until 1786, when he was appointed a presiding elder. He travelled on large districts until 1797, when it became necessary, "from excessive labors, occasioned by the most fatiguing travel and hardships, for him to take a supernumerary relation. ..."<sup>1</sup>

e. Missionary Agencies

The different denominations in America were organizing missionary societies during the early years of the nineteenth century. No doubt the Methodists were influenced by this movement to form a society wholly devoted to the support and expansion of activities distinctively missionary. The General Conference of 1820 authorized the Methodist Missionary Society. This society was interested in both the domestic and foreign fields. Dr. Barclay says:

That the founders had domestic missions primarily in view is quite evident. ...The objectives of the Society, however, contemplated more than a program of domestic missions. The unoccupied and unexplored areas of the vast American continent and regions and people beyond were definitely included. ...<sup>2</sup>

The Methodist churches had organized or were in the process of organizing some local missionary societies

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1. W.L. Grissom: History of Methodism in North Carolina, Vol. I, p. 52
2. Barclay: Missionary Motivation and Expansion, Vol. I, p. 208

at the time when the Missionary Society of the Methodist church was formed. An example of local society was the one in Philadelphia which existed previous to April 1819.<sup>1</sup>

f. Indian Missions

One of the most civilized tribes of Indians were the Cherokees. Their territory covered parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. Bishop Asbury, Kendree, Roberts, George, and many other circuit riders travelled this territory. But there was no real effort to establish a mission among the Cherokees until 1822 when Richard Riley, a half-breed Cherokee, took the initiative. He urged Richard Neely, a junior preacher on the Point Rock Circuit, Tennessee Conference, to preach at his home. Through the efforts of Reverend Neely a Methodist Society of thirty-three members was formed with Richard Riley appointed class leader:

...Andrew J. Crawford was appointed to the Mission and on the seventh of December, 1822, arrived at Riley's home. ...In July, 1823, a well attended camp meeting was held at Riley's, some of the Indians coming from a distance of sixty miles. As a result of this meeting a second Society was organized and at the close of the year a membership of more than one hundred was reported.<sup>2</sup>

In 1819 the Ohio Conference appointed James Montgomery as missionary to the Wyandot Indians. He had been there only a few weeks when he received a government appointment as sub-agent for the Senecas.

James Finley was appointed to the Wyandot Mission

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1. Cf., Barclay, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 206
2. Barclay, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 128

in 1821. After conducting weekly services for about three months Finley proceeded to organize a church. Thirty joined the Church and they were divided into two classes and soon the numbers began to increase.

In 1822 Charles Elliott was appointed missionary and teacher by the Ohio Conference to the Wyandot Indians.

## 2. Revivals and Camp Meetings

At the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth revivals swept over the frontier like a wind-blown fire. The Methodists, along with other denominations, participated in these great meetings, in Kentucky, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

### a. In Kentucky

Under the labors of Jacob Luston a revival sprang up on the Cumberland Circuit which extended across the state line into Logan County, Kentucky. This revival was the beginning of the Great Revival which swept over the western country in 1799 to 1805.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest meeting was at Cane Ridge, in August of 1801:

The number of souls converted at this great meeting was estimated at not fewer than five hundred,--possibly many more--while many others who were brought under deep conviction there, were converted while on the way, or after reaching their homes. ...<sup>2</sup>

### b. In the Carolinas

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1. Cf., Arnold, op. cit., p. 194

2. Ibid., p. 206-207

The quarterly meeting was one way of promoting revivals. Grissom says:

The quarterly meeting was a great agency for promoting revivals. ...The love feast, the sermons by the presiding elders and others, the exhortations, and the other services, together with the throngs in attendance, gave a striking impressiveness to such occasions.<sup>1</sup>

Reverend James Douthet, in 1802, was on the Salisbury District when a revival broke out. He gives this account of the meeting:

I am now at the quarterly meetings in the Yadkin. Brother McKendree is with us. The Lord has been powerfully present this day, and we are looking for greater times tomorrow and the next day; the Lord is doing wonders throughout the district; the holy flame has caught and is going on very considerably in all the circuits. I suppose at the several quarterly meetings, the second time I went around the district, not less than five hundred souls professed to find the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

In June, 1802, there was a camp meeting held at the Jersey settlement in what is now Davidson County. About three thousand people attended, with about three hundred professions:

...Samuel McCorkle 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 this state she continued with intervals for three hours. Mr. McCorkle 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. ...At intervals she cried, 'Oh, for mercy! But what have I to do with mercy? No mercy

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1. Grissom, op. cit., p. 318
2. Ibid., pp. 318-319

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. ...<sup>1</sup>

The camp meetings and the revivals swept over North Carolina. Large congregations attended the meetings helping to stir public interest in religion. Thousands were brought into the Church during the great revival period. There were times when multitudes would be assembled in the woods, singing and praying, preaching and exhorting, for days and nights without cessation. Pine torches here and there in the grove lighted the encampments. Sometimes the groans of the penitents agonizing for pardon and the shouts of the saints could be heard all night.<sup>2</sup>

c. In Virginia.

The Methodist revival which began about 1785 was most pronounced in the southern counties of Virginia. The circuits which experienced much of the revival were Brunswick, Sussex, and Amelia.

The most famous meetings were the quarterly meetings held at Mabry's Chapel on Brunswick Circuit, July 25 and 26, 1787, and at Jones' Chapel on Sussex Circuit, July 27 and 28 of the same year:

...Jesse Lee says that thousands attended and above one

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1. Grissom, op. cit., p. 312
2. Cf., Ibid., p. 344

hundred souls were awakened in two days, which Philip Cox wrote to Bishop Coke at the very time of the meeting that "hundreds were in loud cries for mercy. The second day was much greater: it is thought above a hundred whites found peace with God, besides as many Negroes on that day."<sup>1</sup>

The meetings had no bounds in regards to time or place. W. M. Gewehr says:

...It was nothing for meetings to continue for six or seven hours at a time and last until midnight. ...Many who came to oppose the work, swearing bitter things against the Methodists, were unexpectedly stricken and went home shouting praises for what God had wrought. It was not uncommon for people to cease work in the fields in order to hold prayer meetings, and conversions usually followed. ..people everywhere were reached in prayer meetings, in class meetings, in houses and fields until hundreds were added to the church in the course of the year. The presence of a preacher, we have seen, was by no means necessary for the continuation of the work; once under way, it gathered force of its own momentum. Young converts, as John Lee, commonly began to exhort and hold meetings immediately, and, no doubt, their zeal was a great factor in the spread of the revival.<sup>2</sup>

In 1803 the first camp meeting was held in Virginia, in the county of Brunswick. The exercises began on May 27 and closed on May 30. During this time thirty people were converted.

Bennett gives the following description of the organization of a Methodist camp meeting:

As camp meetings became highly popular in Virginia from the time of their introduction, and were held with great success all over the state, it may be interesting to the reader to look on the picture of a camp meeting in the olden time, drawn by Jesse Lee.

"1. With regard to the laying out of the ground; we

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1. W. M. Gewehr: The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790, p. 169
2. Ibid., pp. 171-172



have two, three, or four acres of land cleared of the undergrowth, in an oblong square sufficient to hold as many tents as will be erected. ...Back of the tents we have a place cleared for the carriages to stand. ... Just back of the carriages we have the horses tied and feed. Before the tents we generally have the fires for cooking, and to help in giving light at night to those who are walking about. But when it is not convenient to have the fire in front of the tent, it is placed behind it. 2. We have one or two stages erected; if we have two, one in near the one end of the ground, and the other near the opposite end; ..at each stage we have a sufficient number of seats to contain the principal part of the attentive hearers, who are requested to sit according to our form, the men on one side and the women on the other. The stages are placed at such a distance from each other, that if necessity should require it, we might preach at each stage at the same time. Or in case there should be a great degree of life and power among the people at one stage, we might, without interrupting their devotion in singing and praying, withdraw to the other stage, and preach to as many as might wish to hear. 3. We have the ground within the tents illuminated at night by candles which we fix to the stage, the trees, and other places prepared for the purpose. These candles with the light of the fires, keep the whole ground sufficiently illuminated. ...4. We generally appoint a guard or watch, of a sufficient number of men, and request them by turn to walk all night through and around the encampment, to prevent disorderly persons from doing mischief either in disturbing the people, or their property. 5. We proceed in our religious exercises as follows: soon after the first dawn of day, a person walks all around the ground, in front of the tents, blowing a trumpet as he passes, which is to give the people notice to rise; about ten minutes after, the trumpet is blown again with only one long blast, upon which the people in all their tents begin to sing and pray, either in their tents or at the doors of them as is most convenient. At the rising of the sun a sermon is preached, after which we eat breakfast. We have preaching again at ten o'clock and dine about one. We preach again at three, eat supper about the setting of the sun, and have preaching again at candle light.<sup>1</sup>

d. Camp Meeting Hymnbooks

Carl Price in an article in the "Christian Advocate"

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1. Bennett, op. cit., pp. 436-438

says:

...This predominant use of the Wesley hymns, according to some historians, explains the fact that the institution of the camp meeting, begun by the Presbyterians, became so early in its history permeated with Methodist ideas, and developed largely, though not exclusively, into a Methodist movement.

As the camp meetings progressed, the Wesley hymns were found to lack the emotional intensity suitable to camp meeting excitements. A new type of song appeared, not overburdened with thought or poetical qualities, sometimes mere doggerel, and usually employing a rousing chorus with repeated lines, easily memorized, set to music of a lively rhythm, stimulating the greatest excitement of the feelings. Those earlier camp meeting songs were akin to the negro spirituals in spirit, if not in origin.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the names of the camp meeting song books were "Social and Camp Meeting Songs for the Pious" by John J. Harrod (1817), "The Camp Meeting Chorister" (1827), "A New and Improved Camp Meeting Hymn Book" (1830), and "The Golden Harp of Camp Meeting Hymns" (1848):

Some of these books contained a few older hymns of the church; others were compiled from "hymns never before published." They were intensely individualistic, dwelt much upon the joys of heaven; and many bore conviction to the heart of the sinner. ...<sup>2</sup>

Here is an example of a camp meeting song:

When shall thy lovely face be seen?  
When shall our eyes behold our God?  
When lengthless of distance be between:  
And hills of guilt! a heavy load.

Ye heavenly gates, loose all your chains,  
Let the eternal pillars bow;  
Blest Saviour, cleave the starry plains,  
And make the crystal fountains flow.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Carl F. Price: A Century of Methodist Song, Christian Advocate, of 1926, p. 52
2. Ibid.
3. The Zion Songster, compiled by Peter D. Myers, p. 48

## E. Schismatic Tendencies

### 1. O'Kelly Schism

This schism developed over the governmental procedures of the Methodist church. James O'Kelly introduced an amendment which was aimed at the annihilation of the itinerant system by the destruction of the episcopal power in making the appointment. After a long debate the motion lost by a large majority. Mr. O'Kelly with a few of his adherents sent a letter to the Conference stating that since their resolution had been rejected, they could no longer attend the Conference. At first this was not considered a secession, but it soon assumed that character. James O'Kelly's plan was:

..to have "a republican, no-slavery, glorious church." Bishop Asbury was pope; the General Conference was a revolutionizing body; the bishop and his creatures were working the ruin of the church to gratify their pride and ambition.<sup>1</sup>

In 1793 James O'Kelly, Rice Haggard, John Allen, and John Robertson withdrew from the Conference and began to decide upon a plan of operation. They gave the new church the name of "The Republican Methodists." This name was changed to "Christian" in 1794.

...They renounced all rules of church government, and took the New Testament for their guide. In the ministry there were to be no grades; all were to stand on an equal footing. ...<sup>2</sup>

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1. Grissom, op. cit., p. 185
2. Ibid., pp. 187-188

While the church had some success in portions of North Carolina and Virginia, no doubt O'Kelly was disappointed and humiliated when he saw all but one of the itinerants return and again rally around the standard of Methodism

## 2. The Primitive Methodists

William Hammett had been a Methodist preacher in the West Indies. He had not been in Charleston long before he endeavored to lay his plan for a separation, and use his influence to divide the Methodist society. His purpose was to make the people believe that he was on the plan that Methodists set out with at the beginning. His party was called the "Primitive Methodists." Churches were built in Charleston, Georgetown, Savannah and Wilmington, North Carolina. Here he collected a large congregation of colored people. Several pamphlets were written by Mr. Hammett against the Methodists. Some of them were answered by Thomas Morrill and Dr. Coke. The society did not last long:

...After his death the society became greatly scattered. His church in Georgetown was turned over to the Methodists and the one in Savannah was seldom used. The one in Wilmington was finally turned over to the Methodists."<sup>1</sup>

## F. Summary

The methods used by the Methodists on the American frontier can be divided into three main divisions. The organizational methods, the educational agencies, and the

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1. Grissom, op. cit., p. 193

evangelistic methods. During the westward expansion of church and country two organizational bodies passed legislation, enabling missionaries to reach and develop the lands to the west. The General and Annual Conferences also put into motion the building of colleges and publication enterprises, giving both ministers and laymen the opportunity for higher education. The Methodist Book Concern and the Cincinnati Book Room made it possible for many books and periodicals to reach the people on the frontier informing them of church and secular news.

The local ministry played an important role in the spread of Methodism in this country. The class leader, exhorter and local preacher carried the burden of the society when the circuit rider was not in attendance. This gave the circuit rider more opportunity to push farther west with the Good News of salvation.

The frontier missionaries, revivals and camp meetings were used by the Methodists in meeting the challenge of the rapidly growing west. The frontier missionaries were for the most part the circuit riders who were sent out by Conference in the vast wilderness to establish new churches and find the Methodists who had moved west. They reached all classes of people with the gospel as well as being a traveling library and a doctor.

The revivals and camp meetings which the Presbyterians held on the frontier were not confined to that

denomination alone. The Methodists reaped great results from these revivals and camp meetings, which started in Kentucky and spread to other territories. The Presbyterians started the camp meeting, but the Methodists developed them in matter of both organization and methods.

James O'Kelly and William Hammett felt that the Methodists had removed the ancient landmarks. So they organized societies of their own, calling them "The Republican Methodists" and the "Primitive Methodist." But these societies met with a limited success.

These are some of the methods used by the Methodists on the frontier which enabled the church to grow from a small beginning to one of the largest denominations in America.

CHAPTER III

THE COMPARISON OF METHODS USED  
BY THE  
PRESBYTERIANS AND METHODISTS ON THE FRONTIER

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A. Introduction

The first two chapters in this study gave the methods used by the Presbyterians and Methodists during the early years of this country. The presentation included a discussion of their organizations, their educational agencies, and their growth and expansion on the frontier. Their methods used in connection with these points will now be compared to see wherein they are similar and wherein they are different.

The Presbyterians organizational set-up includes the General Assembly, Synod and Presbytery while the Methodists organization includes the General Conference, Annual Conference and the Circuits. These three bodies of each denomination will be compared on matters of educational and missionary action. The colleges, seminaries, and Christian literature of both denominations will be compared under the section entitled "Educational Agencies." The work on the frontier was carried on by missionaries from both the Presbyterian and the Methodist churches. A comparison of their methods will be considered in the section on "Methods of Evangelism." The revivals and camp meetings held by these two denominations during the early years of the nineteenth century spread across the frontier. The organization, methods and



results of these revivals and camp meetings will be compared. With this comparison the study will be concluded.

### B. A Comparison of Organizations

The Presbyterians and the Methodists held opposite opinions in regard to church government. The Presbyterians believed that their government could be found in the Scripture and therefore the government should not be changed.<sup>1</sup> The Methodists did not hold to such rigid views in regard to church government. This enabled them to adjust their system of organization to meet the needs of the frontier.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Governmental Bodies

The three groups which formulated the policies of the Presbyterians were the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly. The governmental bodies of the Methodists were the circuit, annual Conference and General Conference.

##### a. General Assembly and General Conference Compared

The General Assembly and the General Conference were interested in matters of education and missionary enterprises of their respective churches. The General Assembly of 1789 took an active interest in mission work in Western Pennsylvania and in parts of New York. This Assembly provided for the support of missionaries by directing annual collections to be taken and the money was placed in the hands of the General Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ante, p.2.
2. Cf. Ante, p. 35
3. Cf. Ante, p. 8

The highest governing body of the Presbyterian Church took important action to promote the educational interests of the church. The General Assembly appointed a committee "to dispose of the interest of certain monies" appropriated to the education of the "poor and pious youth" at the College of New Jersey.<sup>1</sup>

Like the General Assembly, the General Conference of the Methodist Church took definite action with regard to education and missions. The General Conference of 1832 was interested in the Indians on the western and northwestern frontiers. This body asked the bishops to investigate the possibilities of introducing the Gospel among them.<sup>2</sup>

In 1796 the General Conference stated the objectives which the Methodist schools should have. One of these objectives was to instill in the minds of the youth principles of speculative, experimental, and practical religion.<sup>3</sup>

b. Synods and Annual Conferences Compared

The synods and the annual conferences also took an active part in promoting education and missions in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. One of the most active synods in regard to missions was the Synod of Pittsburgh. In 1804 this synod sent out missionaries into the Michigan territory and to the Wyandot Indians in Ohio.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 8
2. Cf. Ante, p. 38
3. Cf. Ante, p. 37
4. Cf. Ante, p. 7

The Synod of Virginia supervised the adding of a theological department of Liberty Hall.<sup>1</sup>

In 1829 the Illinois and Missouri Conference joined forces to establish a seminary of learning. At the same time a committee was appointed to proceed to locate a place for the institution of learning.<sup>2</sup>

Concerning missions the Annual Conference of Illinois took action to establish a mission in the country north and west of the Crawfordsville Circuit.<sup>3</sup>

Although the two denominations differed in their ideas about governmental origins and changes they acted on similar subjects concerning the progress of their church on the frontier.

#### c. Presbyteries and Circuits Compared

With the consideration of the presbytery and the circuit a marked change in governmental set-up of the Presbyterians and the Methodists is to be noticed. The presbytery and the circuit are small groups of churches. The difference lies in the fact that the presbytery is a small group of churches with each church having a minister in charge while the circuit is a group of churches with one minister traveling from church to church. Another difference between these groups of churches is their governmental power. The presbytery passed

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 6
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 36-37
3. Cf. Ante, p. 37

legislation which affected the educational and missionary interests of the Church as well as conducted the examination of prospective ministers. This body also had the power to bring ministers to trial for action against the doctrine and polity of the church.<sup>1</sup> The main emphases of the circuits were spiritual and social. Although no definite legislative action was taken by the circuit, the circuit riders, class leaders and local preachers felt it their responsibility to see that the educational and missionary interests were taken care of on the circuit. The circuit rider was a missionary, medical doctor, and a traveling colporteur. These men would go into the far reaches of the wilderness taking the Word of God to the men and women, and poor and rich. Many of the frontier towns were miles away from the services of the medical doctor. The circuit rider often was called upon to render first aid and to give medical counsel in serious illness.<sup>2</sup> Another duty of the circuit rider was to see that the people on their circuits were well supplied with John Wesley's books.<sup>3</sup>

The class leader and local preacher took the place of the regular preacher when the traveling preacher was at another place on the circuit. They visited the sick and devoted themselves to the nurture and the care of souls.<sup>4</sup>

The circuit system performed a great service for

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 3-5
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 39-40
3. Cf. Ante, p. 48
4. Cf. Ante, pp. 41-42

the Methodists in reaching the unchurched on the frontier.

## 2. Educational Agencies

Education was an important item in the minds of the Presbyterians. Early in the history of the church in America the business of establishing colleges, seminaries and publishing agencies came before the presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly. The Methodists did not put as much stress on colleges and seminaries in the early days of their history in America as did the Presbyterians, although they established colleges in some newly settled areas of the United States.

### a. Requirements of Ministers

The importance of an educated ministry to the Presbyterians can be seen in the requirements that the church had for all their candidates for the ministry. The prospective ministers must have a diploma of bachelor or master of arts from some college or university, or at least testimonials of having completed a regular course of learning. Thus most of the early preachers on the frontier were college graduates.<sup>1</sup>

The Methodists did not have as rigid requirements for their candidates for the ministry. They did not have to be graduates of a college to enter the ministry, although many of the outstanding preachers in the Methodist Church were educated men.

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 8-9

b. Colleges

The methods of establishing educational institutions on the frontier by the Presbyterians and Methodists were similar in many respects. In the case of the Presbyterian, the graduates of William Tennent's "Log College" went west and established other log colleges. Samuel Blair founded one at Fagg's Manor in Pennsylvania; John McMillan founded a log college in Redstone County, Pennsylvania; and Samuel Finley started a school at Nottingham, Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup>

Hampden-Sydney and Liberty Hall were two academies in Virginia which were responsible for sending many missionaries into Tennessee and Kentucky. These men were influential in starting schools and universities in these frontier states.<sup>2</sup>

The Methodist college which had a great influence upon Methodist education in the south was Randolph-Macon College located at Boydton, Virginia. The graduates of this school were influential in promoting education in every state in the south. Many of these schools surpassed in equipment and endowment, their mother school.<sup>3</sup>

Cokesbury College at Abingdon, Maryland, and Indiana-Asbury at Greencastle, Indiana, were two more Methodist schools which influenced the educational advancement of the Methodists on the frontier.

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 9-10
2. Cf. Ante, p. 10
3. Cf. Ante, p. 45

### c. Seminaries

The Presbyterians and the Methodists felt the need for colleges to train their young men for the ministry, but the Presbyterians, early in their history, felt that seminaries also were needed to meet urgent demands for an increase of ministers caused by the revivals of early nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Some of the seminaries were Princeton Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary and those established at Danville, Kentucky; Maryville, Tennessee; and in western Tennessee at Nashville.<sup>2</sup>

During the early years of the Methodist Church no seminaries were founded. Young men studying for the ministry received their training in the religious departments of the Methodist colleges and institutes. Many objections to seminaries were expressed by the men of this period. They felt that seminaries would cool the devotion and zeal of their ministers. They also said that seminaries produced a manufactured preacher and would create a caste in the church. The only training that young men should have was to follow the fathers in their sublime faith. For more than three decades after 1826 objections were given by the Methodists in their church periodicals.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Presbyterians were years ahead of the Methodists in this sphere of Christian education.

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 10-11
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 11-12
3. Ante, p. 46

#### d. Christian Literature

The main emphasis of the colleges and seminaries of these two denominations in early years of their history was to provide an education to young men who were training for the ministry. The Presbyterians and the Methodists were interested in reaching the laity of their church with Christian literature. The Presbyterians tried to supply their people with good literature by endorsing the American Bible Society which was organized in 1816. The weekly religious newspaper was another method used to get good reading into the early American home. Two of the first religious newspapers were "The Recorder" published in 1814 and the "Boston Recorder" published in 1816.<sup>1</sup>

In the field of Christian literature the Methodists surpassed the Presbyterians in output of books and periodicals during the years 1783 to 1840. John Wesley instilled in the minds of early Methodists the importance of good Christian literature, and when they came to this country the subject of good reading was one of the important items on the agenda of the early Conferences.<sup>2</sup>

In May, 1789 the Methodist Book Concern was organized and located in Philadelphia. It later was moved to New York City. The Cincinnati Book Room was established in 1820. From these publishing houses a constant stream of books and

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 12-13

2. Ante, pp. 46-47



periodicals flowed into the homes of the early Methodists in America. Among the first books printed were the "Christian's Pattern," a hymn book, and the "Methodist Discipline." Three of the important periodicals of this period were "The Christian Advocate," "The Western Christian Advocate," and "The Ladies Repository and Gatherings of the West."<sup>1</sup>

The circuit rider and the distribution of Christian literature were two reasons why Methodism spread as rapidly as it did on the frontier.<sup>2</sup> The opposite may be said in the case of the Presbyterians. They did not reach as many people for Christ on the frontier because of the rigid system of government and their failure to get Christian books and magazines into the hands of the people on the western fringe of civilization.

### C. A Comparison of Methods of Evangelism

At the close of the American Revolution the moral and religious situation in the nation was at a low ebb. Many of the inhabitants in the new settlements in the west were unchurched.<sup>3</sup> The Presbyterians and the Methodists attempted to meet this challenge by various methods of evangelism. A comparison of these methods will now be considered.

#### 1. Mission Work

The mission work of these two denominations included the frontier missions, missionary agencies, and Indian missions. In addition to these methods the Presbyterians

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 48
2. Cf. Ante, p. 48
3. Cf. Ante, p. 13

worked out a plan of Union with the Congregationalists to promote the missionary work on the frontier.

a. Frontier Missions

The territories considered in this study are Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

The men that went out under the direction of the Presbyterian Church followed one of two methods. One method was to travel from place to place preaching whenever an opportunity arose. The other method was to go to one place, gather a congregation, build a church and school, and remain there for many years. An example of the traveling missionary was Carey Allen, who travelled in the territories of Kentucky and Virginia where he did a vast amount of work planting seeds which were harvested in later years.<sup>1</sup>

An example of the missionary who went to one place and settled there for a long period of time was Reverend Charles Cummings. In 1773 he received a call from a hundred and thirty heads of families to be the pastor of Ebbing Spring and Sinking Springs Congregations in Tennessee. He accepted the call and for thirty years labored in eastern Tennessee laying the foundations of Presbyterianism in that territory.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Doak was an example of the Presbyterian pioneer preacher who built a church and a school. He founded

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 16

2. Ante, p. 17

the Salem Church and Washington College in Tennessee.<sup>1</sup>

The missionary work carried on by the Methodists on the frontier was done mostly by the circuit riders. Like the traveling missionary of the Presbyterians the circuit riders would go from place to place establishing societies. The great difference between the Presbyterians and the Methodists was the local ministry as has been mentioned before in this chapter.<sup>2</sup> The circuit riders continued to travel the circuit leaving the main pastoral duties in the hands of the class leaders or local preachers. The Presbyterian pioneer preacher would travel for a while and then either take one of the churches and settle there or would move on to another territory. Thus the church would have to fill the pulpits with other ministers.

Both the Presbyterians and the Methodists took an active interest in the mission work among the Cherokee and Wyandot Indians. Gideon Blackburn, a Presbyterian preacher, is best known for his work among the Cherokee Indians in Tennessee.<sup>3</sup> The Methodists work among the Cherokees was established when Richard Riley, a half-breed Cherokee, took the initiative. He urged Richard Neely to preach at his home and through his efforts a Methodist society was formed with Richard as class leader.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 17-18

2. Cf. Ante, pp. 69-70

3. Cf. Ante, p. 20

4. Ante, p. 55

The work among the Wyandot Indians of both denominations was carried on under the supervision of the Synod and Conference. The Synod of Pittsburgh sent out three missionaries in 1805 who stayed with the Wyandots for a few months and then returned. In 1806 the Synod sent Joseph Badger to start a permanent mission work.<sup>1</sup>

The Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church appointed James Montgomery as missionary to the Wyandot Indians in 1819. Two years later James Finley was appointed to the mission. In 1822 Charles Elliott was appointed missionary and teacher by the Ohio Conference to the Wyandot Indians.<sup>2</sup>

The mission work among the Cherokees was started in both cases by an individual, one by a Presbyterian preacher and the other by an Indian who later became a Methodist class leader. The Wyandot Indian project was carried on by a governing body of the Presbyterians, the Synod of Pittsburgh, and in the case of the Methodists by the Ohio Conference.

#### b. Agencies and Cooperation

At the beginning of the nineteenth century several denominations in America were organizing missionary societies. The Presbyterians and the Methodists were no exception. The Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church was established in 1816 and in 1829 it merged with the Western Missionary Society.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 22
2. Ante, pp. 55-56
3. Cf. Ante, p. 20

The Methodists also felt the need of having their missionary program organized. The General Conference of 1820 authorized the Methodist Missionary Society. This society was interested in both the domestic and foreign fields.<sup>1</sup>

At this same time local missionary societies had been or were in process of being organized by the Methodist churches.<sup>2</sup>

The Presbyterians and the Congregationalists combined their missionary efforts in New York and Ohio in 1801. This action was called the Plan of Union. It provided that Congregational churches might settle Presbyterian ministers and vice versa. The Plan seemed to favor the Presbyterians more than the Congregationalists, resulting in the formation of many Presbyterian churches in which strong Congregational elements were present.<sup>3</sup>

During the period of this study the Methodists did not officially form any unions with other denominations. They however, worked together with the Presbyterians and Baptists in the great revivals in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia.

## 2. Revivals and Camp Meetings

The revivals, which spread over many parts of the frontier at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had

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1. Ante, p. 54
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 54-55
3. Cf. Ante, pp. 19-20

their beginning in Logan County, Kentucky. Both the Presbyterians and the Methodists were affected by these meetings. A comparison of the organization and methods used by these two denominations will now be considered. The results which each denomination saw in connection with the revivals and camp meetings will also be studied in this section.

a. Organization

As it has been stated before the Presbyterians were the ones who started the camp meetings.<sup>1</sup> One of the characteristics of these early camp meetings was the noise and confusion. People walked about and talked during the services. Many times a dozen songs were sung and as many prayers were offered at the same time. Preachers were interrupted in the middle of their sermons by bursts of singing, praying, wild shrieks, whoops, outcries, and hysterical laughter.<sup>2</sup> There seemed to be no organization in these early meetings. This was one of the reasons that the Presbyterians abandoned the camp meetings as a means of spiritual advancement.

The Methodists took over the camp meetings from the Presbyterians and organized them more completely. They worked out a plan for the setting up and the running of the camp meetings. The tents were placed

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1. Ante, p. 23
2. Ante, pp. 24-25

in convenient positions for fires for cooking and the keeping of the horses and carriages. Stages were erected far enough apart so that two meetings could go on at the same time without disturbing each other. Men were appointed to police the grounds to prevent any disorders. Regular schedules were followed giving the time for rising, eating, personal devotions and regular services.<sup>1</sup>

b. Methods

The revivals in Kentucky and the Carolinas began during a communion season. Large crowds had gathered for the meetings. The people would pray, exhort, and experience personal conversion.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the preachers would start to preach but the power of God would fall and the preaching would stop because of the groans and cries of the people convinced of their sins. Another type of meeting in which the revival began in western Virginia was the prayer meeting. A group of Presbyterians were at a prayer meeting when the power of God fell and a revival spread through the Presbyterian settlements along the head waters of the Kanawha.<sup>3</sup> When the crowds became too large for the churches the Presbyterians went out in the woods to hold their services.<sup>4</sup>

A great agency for promoting revivals among the Methodists was the quarterly meeting. These meetings were

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 59-60

2. Cf. Ante, p. 25

3. Cf. Ante, p. 26

4. Cf. Ante, p. 23

attended by great crowds taking part in the love feasts and preaching services,<sup>1</sup> which corresponded in some respects with the communion seasons of the Presbyterians. Like the Presbyterians the Methodist prayer meeting was a source of the nineteenth century revivals on the frontier. Class meetings were held in fields and homes. Preachers were by no means necessary for the continuation of the work, once it had commenced. Hundreds were added to the church.<sup>2</sup>

A factor in the Methodist camp meetings which was not developed in the Presbyterian camp meetings was the hymn books. The camp meeting hymn books published by the Methodists contained songs which were not over burdened with thought or poetical qualities but stimulated the greatest excitement of the feelings. These songs were akin to the Negro spirituals in spirit, if not in origin.<sup>3</sup>

#### c. Results

As the result of the revivals and camp meetings many people were converted and joined either the Presbyterian or the Methodist churches. Churches came into being in many towns on the frontier causing a greater demand for ministers from both churches. To answer this demand the Presbyterians began to lower the educational requirements

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1. Cf. Ante, p. 57
2. Cf. Ante, p. 59
3. Cf. Ante, p. 61



for their ministers. Uneducated men were pressed into the ministry. They were zealous but often ill-balanced. Excesses in methods and unsoundness in doctrine appeared on every side.<sup>1</sup>

This policy caused a split in the Synod of Kentucky. On one side were those who wanted to keep the educational standards of the Church on a high level and on the other side were those who thought that they should lower the standards to meet the urgent demands caused by the revivals. The split widened instead of closing, with the forming of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, as the result. Two other schisms grew out of the revivals. These were the New Light Schism and the Shaker Schism.<sup>2</sup>

The Methodists did not have any schisms as the result of the revivals. However they had two schisms resulting from other causes. The James O'Kelly Schism was the result of a difference of opinion on the governmental procedures of the Methodist Church.<sup>3</sup> The other schism produced the Primitive Methodists under the leadership of William Hammett.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. Summary

The comparative study of the methods used by the Presbyterians and the Methodists on the American frontier

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1. Ante, p. 28
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 28-31
3. Cf. Ante, pp. 62-63
4. Cf. Ante, p. 63

has been divided into two main divisions. The first division considered was the comparison of the organizations of these two denominations. Under this section the governmental and educational agencies were compared. The second main division presented the comparison of the methods of evangelism used by these two churches from 1783 to 1840. The mission work and revivals and camp meetings were compared under the second division.

The General Assembly and synods of the Presbyterian Church and the General Conference and the annual conferences of the Methodist Church took similar action in promoting the mission work and the educational advancement of their respective churches on the frontier. The difference in the governmental bodies of these two churches was noticed when the presbytery and the circuit was compared. The presbytery had more legislative power than the circuit on the policies of their respective denominations in matters of missions and education. The circuit was a group of churches with one traveling minister. The class leader and local preacher took the place of the regular pastor when the traveling minister was at another point on the circuit.

The educational agencies of the Presbyterians were the colleges, seminaries and Christian literature. The Methodist agencies were colleges and Christian literature. The two churches were similar in their interest in establishing colleges. The Presbyterians laid great emphasis on

seminary training for their ministry while the Methodists did not establish any seminaries during the years of this study. The Presbyterians were weak in the field of Christian literature while the Methodists put great stress on this means of reaching the home of the frontiersman.

There were two types of missionaries sent out by the Presbyterians. In one type the missionaries went out on the frontier and travelled from place to place. The other type of missionary went out on the frontier, established a church and sometimes a school, and settled there to preach for a long period of time. The Methodist missionaries on the frontier were the circuit riders. They would establish a church, appoint a class leader and then move on to build another church.

Both the Presbyterians and the Methodists organized missionary societies and boards during the early years of the nineteenth century. The Presbyterians combined their efforts with the Congregationalists in their missionary work in New York and Ohio.

The revivals and camp meetings held by the Presbyterians and the Methodists were in many ways similar in methods and results. The Methodists were stronger in regard to the organization of the camp meetings. The Presbyterians had some bad results from these meetings. They had three schisms, which resulted in splitting the church. The Methodists had two schisms, which were not results of the

revivals and camp meetings, and had no lasting effects.

These were the similarities and differences in the methods used by these two large denominations during the period when both country and churches were reaching out into the western regions of the United States.

CHAPTER IV  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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During the period from 1783 to 1840 the Presbyterians and the Methodists were interested in reaching the unchurched population on the frontier. In this study a comparison of the methods used by these two denominations has been considered. The methods were presented under three main divisions: the organization of the two churches; their educational agencies; and the methods of evangelism. The methods used by the Presbyterian church were considered first. The second part of the study presented the methods used by the Methodists followed by the comparative study of the Presbyterians and Methodists actions on the frontier.

The organizational set-up of the Presbyterians included the General Assembly, synods and presbyteries. These three bodies promoted the church's interests in education and missions by taking definite action on these subjects. The three agencies which the Presbyterians used to educate both the candidates for the ministry and the laity in the Church were colleges, seminaries, and Christian literature. Men who were educated at William Tennent's "Log College" and Hampden-Sydney Academy went out to promote education on the frontier. Many of them started schools after the pattern of their alma mater. Two of the many Presbyterian seminaries which were influential in educating the

frontier ministers were Princeton Theological and Western Theological Seminary. In the field of Christian literature the Presbyterians endorsed the American Bible Society and published two of the first weekly religious newspapers "The Recorder" and "The Boston Recorder."

The growth and expansion of Presbyterianism on the frontier was the result of frontier missions, revivals and camp meetings. The frontier missionaries worked in the Carolinas, Kentucky and Tennessee. There were two types of missionaries. Some missionaries spent most of their lives traveling these territories and establishing churches. The other type were the missionaries who went out on the frontier and established a church and remained there for a long period of time. Another method used by the Presbyterians was the Plan of Union with the Congregationalists. These two churches worked together for a while in Western New York and Ohio. Two other subjects considered under frontier missions were missionary agencies, formed during the early years of the nineteenth century, and the work among the Cherokee and Wyandot Indians.

The Presbyterian churches in Kentucky, Virginia and the Carolinas experienced revivals during the period from 1797 to 1805. These meetings drew such big crowds that they had to leave the churches and hold the meetings in groves. This was the beginning of camp meetings. As a result of these revivals controversies arose between the men favoring

revivals and those who were against revivals. The Cumberland Presbyterian Schism, The New Light Schism and the Shaker Schism developed from this division of the "Revivalists" and "Anti-Revivalists."

The Methodist organizational set-up included the General and Annual Conferences, the traveling ministry and the local ministry. The General and Annual Conferences took definite action to promote education and missions on the frontier. Under the subject of traveling ministry the duties of the circuit rider were considered. As well as being a minister the circuit rider on many occasions played the role of a doctor and traveling colporteur. Because the churches on the circuit were without a minister most of the year the class leader, exhorter and local preacher carried on the duties of a pastor while the circuit rider was not in attendance. The main educational agencies of the Methodists during the years 1783-1840 were the colleges and Christian literature. Three of the colleges of the Methodist Church instrumental in educating the men who filled important positions in the early church were Cokesbury and Randolph-Macon Colleges and Indiana-Asbury--DePauw University. The early Methodists had many objections to sending their prospective ministers to seminaries. The minister received his Bible training in the religious departments of the Methodist colleges and institutes. The Methodist Book Concern at Philadelphia and later in New York, and the



Cincinnati Book Room were responsible for placing many books and magazines in the homes on the frontier. Three of the early magazines published by the Methodists were "The Christian Advocate," "Western Christian Advocate," and the "Ladies Repository and Gatherings of the West."

One cause for the growth and expansion of the Methodist on the frontier was the actions taken by the church in the field of frontier missions. The circuit riders covered much of the area in Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. They established churches and distributed Christian literature in these areas. The Methodist Missionary Society formed in 1820 and the local missionary societies were the agencies that the Church used to promote home and foreign missionary enterprises. The Cherokee and Wyandot Indians received spiritual and educational aid from the Methodist Church during this period in American history.

Another cause for growth on the frontier for the Methodists was the revivals which spread across the territories of Kentucky, Virginia, and the Carolinas. The Methodists took over where the Presbyterians left off in the developing of the camp meeting. One of the contributions that the Methodists made to the camp meetings was the camp meeting hymn book. These songs stimulated excitement of the feelings but lacked the thought and poetical feeling of the hymns.

There were two schisms during 1783-1840 but they

were not caused by the revivals and camp meetings. The James O'Kelly schism was the result of a difference of opinion on disciplinary problems. The other schism was the result of William Hammett's efforts to bring the Methodists back to the ancient landmarks of Methodism.

A comparison of the methods used by the Presbyterians and the Methodists on the frontier showed wherein there were similarities as well as differences between these two denominations. The General Assembly and synods of the Presbyterians and General and Annual conferences took similar action in the fields of education and missions. The first difference noted between these two denominations was the set-up of the presbytery and the circuit. The former was a governmental body made up of several churches; the latter was a group of churches with one minister and a group of local ministers supplementing the circuit riders' efforts. The common point of the two denominations in the field of education was their colleges. The Presbyterians differed from the Methodists in their interest in seminaries while the Methodists surpassed the Presbyterians in the field of Christian literature.

The comparison of the churches' methods of evangelism showed some similarities and differences. The Presbyterians had the traveling missionary and the stationed missionary, while the burden of the missionary work carried on by the Methodists was done by the circuit rider. Both churches

organized agencies to help carry on the mission work. The Presbyterians differed from the Methodists in forming a Plan of Union with the Congregationalists. Although the Methodists did not have any official action with other denominations, they worked together with the Presbyterians and Baptists during the early days of the Great Revivals in Kentucky.

The Presbyterians and Methodists used the same methods in the revivals. The Presbyterian revivals started during the communion season and prayer meetings. The Methodists started at quarterly meetings and prayer meetings. Both churches used the camp meetings to reach the unsaved. The Methodists surpassed the Presbyterians in organization and results of the camp meetings. The Presbyterian Church experienced three schisms as a result of the revivals. The two schisms of the Methodist Church were the results of a disciplinary problem with a few dissatisfied members.

The comparison of the methods used by these two denominations revealed that they agreed on most of the fundamental ways of reaching the unchurched on the frontier. Their organizational bodies promoted education and missions. They both used frontier missionaries and established agencies to strengthen their missionary program. They both encouraged for a while the use of revivals and camp meetings on the frontier. In the field of education they both felt the importance of colleges in training the youth of their day.

Some of the outstanding differences between the

Presbyterians and the Methodists were in the fields of education and polity. The Presbyterians put great stress on an educated ministry. The candidates for the ministry had to have a bachelor or master of arts degree. In aiding their young men in their education the church established seminaries. The Methodists did not put so much stress on an educated ministry and did not at this time in their history establish seminaries.

Because of the stress on high standards of education the Presbyterian Church was split by the Cumberland Presbyterian Schism. The Methodists were stronger in the field of Christian literature than the Presbyterians. This fact plus the circuit system caused the Methodist Church to grow more rapidly than the Presbyterians on the frontier.

These two denominations were important factors in raising the moral and religious conditions in the frontier towns during the years of 1783 to 1840.

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APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

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