


1991

James McGready: Son of Thunder, Father of the Great Revival

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Scott, John Thomas, Ph.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1991

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JAMES MCGREADY
SON OF THUNDER, FATHER OF THE GREAT REVIVAL

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
John Thomas Scott

1991

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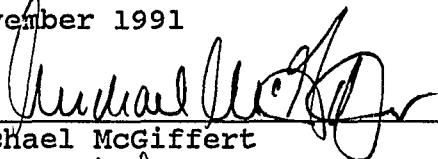
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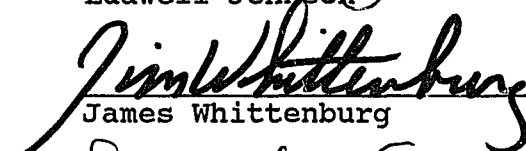
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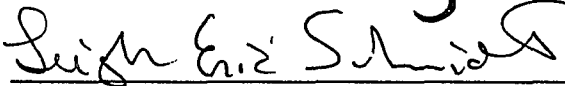
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Preface

Arguing an historical thesis is in many respects similar to constructing a building of brick or stone. To build the building a mason lays one stone on top of another, connecting each with mortar until individual stones come together to form the whole. Some stones, like cornerstones and foundation stones, are crucial to the endeavor, but for the integrity of the building each stone must fit into the overall scheme. In the same way, a historian lays his or her arguments out, building one on top of another, some holding crucial significance to the overall work, others simply embellishing the work or filling in otherwise empty sections of the building.

Historical biographers attempt not to build buildings, but to rebuild a person's life in the past, using the actions, activities, and writings of that person, as well as the events of the day, to construct an understanding on paper of the subject's life and place in history. For some subjects that task can be difficult because of the numerous activities they undertook and the voluminous writings that they left; Thomas Jefferson and Jonathan Edwards spring to mind. Other subjects, such as James McGready, fall into the opposite camp. The immediate problem that one faces

upon undertaking a study of James McGready is the relative paucity of sources, especially sources of a personal nature. As best we know, no diary or journal is extant, no family papers exist, and fewer than a dozen letters from his entire life have been preserved. Unfortunately, they all were generated after 1800 so that there is no personal record of his early life and career except for secondary anecdotal histories. Fortunately, there are other ways of getting at McGready. Presbyterians kept very good minutes of their meetings, although the presbytery minutes for the last decade of his life have been lost or destroyed. Many other ministers and revivalists of the day who worked with McGready mention him in their personal accounts, but their accounts are often colored by their own prejudices and assumptions. Then there are the sermons.

First in 1831 and again in several largely identical editions until 1837, James Smith published a set of over forty sermons in the Posthumous Works of James McGready. Smith was apparently a convert and great admirer of McGready. At some point after McGready's death in 1817 the manuscripts of these sermons fell into his hands. Smith wrote in the 1837 edition that he published them so that the "intellectual labors" of McGready would not be "lost to the world." Smith also indicated that he had many other sermons of McGready's, but he gave no reason for not publishing those. He furthermore asserted that McGready did not intend

these for publication and therefore did not spruce them up or refine them. Beyond that, Smith gave no information about the editing process.

The sermons constitute an invaluable but imperfect record of McGready. They provide extensive information about his theological orientation and doctrinal beliefs. They also give a picture of how he constructed his sermons and what topics he thought were important. Additionally, McGready from time to time provided brief snippets of personal history and feelings and displayed his educational depth.

The sermons as a historical tool, however, must be received with caution because there is much we do not know about them. For instance, there is no way to date the sermons, except to say that they came after 1800, so it is impossible to discuss any development of McGready's thought over time. What the sermons present is a frozen picture of McGready's theology sometime after 1800. Additionally, we do not know how much editing, if any, Smith did. He apologized at one point to his Cumberland Presbyterian readers that McGready's sermons contained doctrines odious to them, but that he felt they were of sufficient religious merit to publish anyway. His statement there hints that he probably did not do much editing despite the opportunity and motive for doing so. Finally, it is difficult to know how reflective the sermons are of McGready in the pulpit. They

are, after all, printed and not spoken sermons. Which sections of a sermon McGready vocally emphasized and how he delivered them are known only generally. Furthermore, it is impossible to know how much of any given sermon is printed since McGready and Smith both indicated that the "application" section of each sermon was normally not included in the written sermon. In sum, this historian, like every other who has dealt with McGready, is largely forced to take these sermons at face value and assume that they collectively provide a reasonably accurate picture of McGready's theology and homiletic style.

If all we knew about McGready came from the sermons, it would be difficult to draw many concrete conclusions about him and his life. Fortunately, there is enough other information to provide a reasonably coherent reconstruction of the man and his ideas. That is, the sermons, when taken in conjunction with other information, fit into his life in an understandable and orderly way, providing a unified picture of the man.

I would like to thank a number of people for their help in this project. Specifically, I owe great thanks to my parents and to my father-in-law for their assistance in purchasing a word processor. Additionally, I would like to thank Tom Goddard for getting me started and keeping me going in the computer age. As for the content of the paper itself the greatest thanks goes to my advisor, Mike

McGiffert, who saw the potential in the project from the very beginning and who continually encouraged me to take my analysis and understanding of McGready just one step farther. I would also like to thank the members of the committee for participating in this dissertation. The most thanks, however, must go to my wife, Holly, who gently prodded and sometimes forcefully nudged my back to my studies when my mind and heart wandered. Without her love and support this project would have never been finished, and to her I dedicate it.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a biography of James McGready (c.1760-1817), a Presbyterian revivalist minister who lived and worked primarily in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Indiana. He is best known as the Father of the Great Revival, an evangelical revival that spread throughout the southeastern United States between 1800 and 1805, and the creator of the camp meeting, which soon became an institutional part of American revivalism. Historians have generally described McGready as an innovator in matters of doctrine and revivalist methodology. This study argues that McGready is better understood as a traditionalist. This interpretation follows several recent works that have outlined a Scottish and Scotch-Irish Presbyterian revivalist tradition dating from the 1620s.

The study traces McGready's educational background, outlines a variety of his theological positions, describes his intense homiletical style, and details his professional career. Research revealed that McGready was educated in several small Presbyterian-run schools that had direct links to the Presbyterian revivalism mentioned above. In doctrine, an examination of such varied topics as the process of conversion, limited atonement and predestination, and millennialism, showed McGready to be a firm Presbyterian Calvinist at every turn. In his homiletical style McGready followed a one hundred and fifty year old pattern of preaching known as the plain style and avoided the unstructured, extemporaneous preaching increasingly favored by revivalists in the nineteenth century. During his professional career, and especially during the Cumberland controversy of 1805-1809, McGready sided with the mainline church and eschewed those with schismatic inclinations.

The reinterpretation of McGready as a traditionalist casts doubt on much of the historiography of American revivalism. Historians have generally argued that revivalism arose in America and especially on the frontier. Understanding McGready, one of the foremost revivalists of the period, as a traditionalist tends to undermine that position. Additionally, this work re-emphasizes the transference of European forms to the New World, even past the American Revolution. Finally, McGready's professional struggles point up the remarkable fluidity in American religion during the early national period.

JAMES MCGREADY
SON OF THUNDER, FATHER OF THE GREAT REVIVAL

Prologue--The Problem of James McGready

"He was a hard man to comprehend."¹ When Bernard Weisberger wrote those words about James McGready in 1958 he probably had little or no idea how true they were. James McGready has been a hard man to understand--for his contemporaries and for historians. From the time McGready first started preaching to the present day, confusion rather than consensus has reigned on the person, work, and theology of James McGready. Sorting out that confusion is the primary purpose of this work.

One of the first problems for modern students of history is not understanding McGready but finding him. Of five of the most recent survey textbooks on American history, only one makes any mention of McGready, and that one gives no real interpretation of him.² McGready's historiographical career in monographs has not always been better. Neither Donald Mathews nor Anne C. Loveland made any specific reference to McGready in their treatments of Southern antebellum religion and evangelicalism.³ Similarly, Richard Carwardine's study of transatlantic revivalism between 1790 and 1865 included no mention of McGready.⁴ Nathan Hatch has recently produced one of the most sweeping and innovative works on popular religion in

the early national period; McGready, sometimes styled the Father of the Great Revival and the creator of the camp meeting, merits one seventeen-word sentence.⁵ Jon Butler's important work, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People, gives McGready not a notice.⁶

The reasons for this obscurity are not particularly difficult to understand. McGready hurt his own cause by leaving no personal manuscripts, no diary, and only about a dozen letters located in various places. With so many of McGready's contemporaries having left diaries, caches of letters, or autobiographies, it is not surprising that historians have shied away from McGready. A longstanding, though now largely defunct, New England historiographical bias against the west and the common folk may also have contributed to his obscurity. Perry Miller best typified this attitude in his posthumously published The Life of the Mind in America. In that book Miller hoped to trace strands of American thought from the Revolution to the Civil War. He devoted his section on religion almost entirely to the person and work of Charles Grandison Finney. Of the western revivalists--Miller mentioned McGready by name--he wrote: "The powerful truth about these protagonists is that, in relation to the accumulated wisdom of Protestant theology, they had few ideas and were little capable of cerebration."⁷ Finally, McGready's obscurity may well be due to his having been, for lack of a better term, "a

loser." McGready formed no new denomination; he developed no uniquely American theology; he led no personal crusade. Historians seemingly have a natural tendency to be attracted to the winners.⁸ For whatever the reasons, McGready has been sometimes obscure and often invisible in modern American history surveys as well as the most recent synthetic treatments of early American religion.

Historical works dealing specifically with early American revivalism or Presbyterianism have, of course, made much greater mention of McGready. Nineteenth-century church histories mentioned him often but are of little interpretive use today because of their denominational bias.⁹ In these works, the particular religious goals and assumptions of the author often tended to skew historical characterizations. James McGready always came out either hero or villain.

Until fairly recently, twentieth-century historians have argued two basic points about McGready's revivalism and theology. Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis laid out the path for historians particularly concerned with McGready's revivalistic methodology. First Catharine Cleveland in The Great Revival in the West and then Peter G. Mode in The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity cast the frontier as the primary force shaping McGready and his theology. While Mode did not mention McGready by name, his interpretation of American revivals strongly influenced those who later wrote about McGready. About McGready's

brand of revivalism that centered in the camp meeting Mode wrote, "In the lengthy career of European Christianity, nothing appears corresponding to the revivalistic emphasis of America," and that "as characteristic and distinctive of American religious life, revivalism must be traceable to certain features peculiar to the environment in which the American church has been called upon to function."¹⁰ Mode emphasized the newness of revivalism and the innovations of the revivalists who practiced it, including (one supposes anyway) McGready. Mode's interpretation set the tone for much subsequent work on McGready.

Following in Mode's footsteps with similar interpretations came William Warren Sweet in the 1930s and 1940s, Charles A. Johnson and Bernard A. Weisberger in the 1940s and 1950s, and Dickson Bruce in the 1970s. All of these historians pictured Kentucky revivalism as a product of the frontier and McGready as one of the most proficient practitioners of that revivalism.¹¹ Weisberger, for instance, argued that the his revivalism was "hewed out of native timber" and that it had its birthplace "in the West."¹² These historians put McGready in the camp of innovators and changers, picturing him as one who threw off the liturgical and methodological shackles of the Old World for the New World of the American frontier.

Historians more interested in McGready's theology than methodology have likewise put him in the category of

innovator and changer. Frederick M. Davenport, a political scientist, set the basic early line of interpretation of McGready's theology when he described it as "modified Calvinism."¹³ No less than three subsequent historians employed that exact phrase to characterize his thought.¹⁴ Although Catharine Cleveland provided no detailed interpretation or explanation of his theology, she did quote Davenport at length.¹⁵ Grover C. Loud a decade later agreed with this characterization of McGready's theology, writing that "to those quailing under his invective and imagery he would offer a Wesleyan way of escape . . ." and that his thinking was a "composite Calvinistic hell and Methodistic regeneration."¹⁶ Weisberger described Presbyterian doctrines such as limited atonement as millstones around a revivalist's neck.¹⁷ In a study of Cumberland Presbyterians Ben Barrus not only repeated Davenport's phrase "modified Calvinism" but further described McGready's theology as a departure from the "traditional presbyterian concept of election."¹⁸ L. C. Rudolph pictured him as "not orthodox" on the topic of man's nature.¹⁹ John Boles, who has written the most recent work specifically on the Great Revival, followed this general train of thought. He argued that "the orthodox Presbyterian interpretation of election had little meaning for McGready" and that he had only limited interest in "constructing a formal creed."²⁰ Hatch likewise, implicitly anyway, put

McGready in with theological groundbreakers like Lorenzo Dow and Barton W. Stone, although for Hatch the driving force behind this change was not the frontier but American democratic egalitarianism.²¹ In sum, then, the bulk of historians looking either at McGready's methodology or theology have described his work as innovative and new.

Within the last three decades historians have developed another line of thinking about McGready, his theology, and his work. They took their cue, perhaps, from James Smith, McGready's editor. In his preface Smith apologized to any readers, especially Cumberland Presbyterians, who objected to Smith (a Cumberland Presbyterian himself) editing a set of sermons which "in a few particulars, the doctrines exhibited differ from those taught in the Confession of Faith of the church of which he [Smith] was a member." The double negative there implies that since McGready's theology differed from Cumberland's unorthodox confession, he probably was orthodox, meaning he fell in line with the older Presbyterian church's doctrines.²²

James Opie staked out this position in a 1965 article on McGready's theology that remains the only scholarly work devoted specifically to him. Opie argued that McGready and his career had been "severely distorted and obscured" by the interpretations of historians like Mode, Sweet, and Cleveland.²³ McGready, he wrote, was "neither the model nor the advocate" for the frontier-driven Arminian

revivalism that had been attributed to him. Rather, his revivalism "depended upon a full and orthodox theological structure" that Opie believed McGready inherited primarily from Jonathan Edwards.²⁴ Opie flatly rejected the interpretation that pictured McGready as a theological innovator.

Louis B. Weeks in a study of Kentucky Presbyterians undertaken in the 1980s similarly cast McGready and his theology in a conservative, Edwardsian light. He argued that McGready proved an "acceptable colleague" to the Transylvania Presbytery in Kentucky, and Weeks pictured his theology as simply a "continuation of the New Side dependence on the Solid Calvinism of Edwards."²⁵

In 1989 Leigh Eric Schmidt produced the most recent work that addresses McGready and his revivalism in any significant way. Schmidt agreed and expanded the argument McGready was following a long-established form of revivalism. He parted company with Opie and Weeks at that point, however. Where Opie and Weeks looked to Edwards and the revivalist tradition of New England, Schmidt directed his attention to Scotland and the revivalist tradition of that country (or at least a part of it) since the sixteenth century. Schmidt argued that McGready was among the last of a long line of Scottish and Scotch-Irish revivalists all operating with largely the same theology and using the same rituals.²⁶ Schmidt's work directly contradicts the first

group's interpretation of McGready and his revivalism. Schmidt's study, furthermore, placed McGready in the middle of the ongoing historical debate over the ability of Old World forms to survive in the New World.

Such, then, is the historiographical record. Conflict and contradiction rather than consensus have been the dominant themes. By devoting for the first time an entire monograph to McGready, this author hopes clarify some of the contradictions and to provide a fuller look at McGready than has been previously attempted. Hopefully this work will be a starting point for further studies on a period that Gordon S. Wood called "the time of greatest religious chaos and originality in American history," but whose history is, as Nathan Hatch wrote, often "elusive and uncharted."²⁷

NOTES TO THE PROLOGUE

1. Bernard Weisberger, They Gathered at the River (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1958), 42.

2. Survey texts, of course, are not generally noted for well-developed interpretations of events or people. The one reference comes from George Brown Tindall, A Narrative History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 469, 472. The other four texts all mention Kentucky revivalism, but none mentions McGready specifically. See Mary Beth Norton et. al. A People and a Nation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990); Paul S. Boyer et. al. The Enduring Vision (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990); Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy, The American Pageant, 9th ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990); John Blum et. al. The National Experience, 4th ed., (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1977).

3. Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977). Anne C. Loveland, Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

4. Richard Carwardine, Transatlantic Revivalism (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978).

5. Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 134.

6. Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). Butler does devote two pages to post-revolutionary revivalism, but mentions only briefly a "so called Second Great Awakening that allegedly began in Kentucky in 1805" See pp. 221-223.

7. Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965), 7.

8. For a similar assessment see Elizabeth I. Nybakken, "New Light on the Old Side: Irish Influences on Colonial Presbyterianism," The Journal of American History 68 (March 1982):813-814.

9. See, for example, Robert Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), E.H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1864), and, B.W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888). These works often contain otherwise unobtainable biographical or narrative information on a variety of topics.

10. Peter G. Mode, The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 45, 48. See also Catharine Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1916).

11. See William Warren Sweet, The Presbyterians, vol. 13 of Religion on the American Frontier (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1936), and idem, Revivalism in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting (1955; reprint, Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, and Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., And They All Sang Hallelujah (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1974).

12. Weisberger, They Gathered, 19, 40.

13. Frederick M. Davenport, Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals (1905; reprint, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 67. Davenport seems to have taken at least some of his clues from Theodore Roosevelt who wrote that the Scotch-Irish "long before the first Continental Congress had lost all remembrance of Europe and all sympathy with things European, and had become Americans in speech, thought, and character." Quoted in Davenport, Primitive Traits, 62.

14. See Walter Brownlow Posey, The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838 (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1952), 24, Ben Barrus, "A Study in the Origins of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church: 1800-1813," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt, 1964), 136, and Johnson, Camp Meeting, 32.

15. Cleveland, Great Revival, 45n.

16. Grover C. Loud, Evangelized America (1928; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1978), 97. Loud's book is, admittedly, of limited use to the professional historian because Loud provided no notes and only a limited bibliography. He did not, curiously enough,

include McGready's sermons in that bibliography; see p. 371.

17. Weisberger, They Gathered, 40.

18. Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 136.

19. L.C. Rudolph, Hoosier Zion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 150.

20. John Boles, The Great Revival, 1787-1805 (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 40-41.

21. Hatch, Democratization, see especially, 5-11.

22. James Smith, "Preface," in James McGready, The Posthumous Works of the Reverend James M'Gready, ed. James Smith (Nashville: Lowry and Smith, 1833), iv.

23. John Opie, Jr., "James McGready: Theologian of Frontier Revivalism," Church History 34 (December 1965):445.

24. *Ibid.*, 445-446.

25. Louis B. Weeks, Kentucky Presbyterians (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 38.

26. Leigh Eric Schmidt, Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 11-68, especially. Schmidt's work built on the scholarship of Marilyn J. Westerkamp, who traced Scottish and Scotch-Irish revivalism from 1625 to 1760. She did not, therefore, deal with McGready's era. See Marilyn J. Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also Paul Conkin, Cane Ridge (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

27. Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," New York History 61 (1980):362. Hatch, Democratization, 221.

Chapter One--The Contextual Years

The story of a human life begins before birth. The opportunities humans encounter and the careers they pursue would be impossible without the efforts and failures of those who came before them. Lives, like works of art, are only understandable in the context of their crafting. Human biography simply can never begin with a birth date. The strands of a life may wind tens, even hundreds, of years back into history. The life story of James McGready is no exception. His life as a frontier preacher, theologian, and Presbyterian revivalist grew out of the history of two continents over more than two centuries. Ideas and practices born in Europe and passed to McGready shaped his life as much as his own experiences or the experiences of the country in which he ministered, the United States of America.

Historians have not always thought it so. For most of this century McGready and his revivalism have been pictured as the product of America in general and the American frontier specifically.¹ Some historians have acknowledged a link between McGready and the Presbyterian revivalism of the Great Awakening, but the line almost always ended there.² Leonard J. Trinterud's work on colonial

Presbyterianism, The Forming of an American Tradition, provided the backdrop for this interpretation of McGready.

Trinterud's book dominated historical writing and thinking on early American Presbyterianism for nearly half a century after its publication in 1946. Trinterud sought to explain what he perceived to be the newness of the American Presbyterian church, especially its emphasis during the Great Awakening on revivalism. In doing so he focused his attention on the Tennents--the family of Pennsylvania ministers that formed the heart of Presbyterian revivals during the Great Awakening. Trinterud acknowledged briefly the influence on the Tennents of Dutch Reformed revivalism in the person of Theodore Frelinghuysen, of Methodism in the figures of George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers, and even the Tennents' own Scottish past, but for Trinterud the colonial frontier and New England Puritanism were the decisive factors in producing the dynamic evangelical revivalism of the Tennents.³

Puritanism and the frontier, Trinterud wrote, changed an often dead and dry Presbyterianism into a vibrant American church. The Tennents, he argued, were "definitely English Puritans in spirit," and their followers, he claimed, had been "thoroughly imbued with the piety and views of English Puritanism."⁴ The piety of English Puritanism, however, could never have overtaken Scottish Presbyterian coldness without the freedom of the frontier.

Wrote Trinterud, the "old traditions, mores, conventions, and customs of the homeland" were "sloughed off at the frontier." The frontier, he contended, forced "the creation of new forms and new orders adequate for preaching the gospel in the frontier situation."⁵ Trinterud's interpretation of the development of colonial Presbyterianism held sway over the historical field from the 1940s to the 1980s.⁶

Marilyn J. Westerkamp offered a work in 1988 that finally began to put McGready's evangelical heritage in its proper context. Trinterud had mentioned a tradition of Scottish and Scotch-Irish revivalism but quickly passed over it in two paragraphs and proceeded to New England Puritanism. Westerkamp devoted an entire book to Scottish and Scotch-Irish revivalism, or piety, from 1625 to 1760. Although others have disputed her contention that the laity played the dominant role in the development of this revivalism, Westerkamp's tracing of that revivalist heritage is crucial for understanding McGready.⁷

Westerkamp revealed in more detail than ever before the series of revivals which took place in southwest Scotland and Northern Ireland between 1625 and the 1760s. Out of this heritage, she argued, came the revivalism of the Great Awakening--at least that of the Tennents. Beginning with the Six-Mile-Water, Shotts, and Stewarton revivals of the 1620s, Westerkamp described large outdoor meetings attended

by thousands of communicants that lasted several days. The preaching at these meetings, or conventicles as they later came to be called, was dynamic and expressive. James Glendinning preached at these early revivals and was described by contemporaries in terms strikingly similar to those later used of McGready. A colleague reported that Glendinning "fell upon a thundering way of preaching and exceedingly terrified his hearers" and that he could preach nothing but "law, wrath, and the terrors of God for sin."⁸ Meetings and preachers such as these continued in southwest Scotland and Ulster throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, despite Scottish Presbyterian and Anglican disapprobation. These revivals, Westerkamp related, reached their highest eighteenth-century expressions in the 1740s at Cambuslang when George Whitefield toured Scotland as he previously had the colonies.⁹

Westerkamp did not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of where the Scottish and Ulster revivalism of the 1620s came from. Leigh Eric Schmidt offered an answer to that question in 1989. Schmidt, like Westerkamp, argued for a tradition of Scottish and Ulster revivalism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but went beyond Westerkamp in two respects: he extended the story backward and forward in time, and he examined a central ritual around which this revivalism grew up and flourished in both the Old

World and the New.

Schmidt argued that Scottish revivalism, ironically enough, grew out of a desire by many in Scotland to retain a portion of the medieval rhythm of life established by the holy days of the Roman Catholic church. When the Knoxian reformation swept through Scotland in the late sixteenth century, it disrupted not only religious life, but also the sense of community and time familiar to Scotland's medieval and early modern folk. Medieval Catholic holidays had provided a certainty to one's calendar, a yearly sameness that helped promote social stability. In addition, these holy days provided a sense of community by uniting the people several times a year in one common endeavor. The Knoxian reformation, with its intense disdain for Catholic ritual, threatened all that and attempted to replace seasonal and communal piety with an increasingly individualized and perpetual form of piety. A subset of Scottish Presbyterians, not willing to see the older rhythm go, had developed by the early seventeenth century a protestant festival around the Eucharist but based on Knoxian liturgy and theology--the sacramental occasion.¹⁰ These sacramental occasions first appeared in the 1620s at places like Stewarton and Shotts in southwest Scotland and at the Six Mile Water Church in Ulster.

Schmidt spent much of the rest of the book describing the sacramental occasion in great detail, explaining the

theology, symbolism, and ritual of the event and linking it directly first with the Great Awakening of the Tennents and then especially with the camp meetings of James McGready's day.¹¹ Schmidt argued that what has appeared to so many historians as a uniquely American event--the camp meeting--"looks decidedly less distinctive, less exceptionally American" from the Scottish viewpoint that he had taken.¹² Throughout the Great Revival period, "the traditional pattern of the sacramental season would provide the guiding form. These frontier revivals, famed as the first camp meetings, were also the latest communion seasons."¹³

The purpose of this dissertation is not to trace the history of American revivalism in general or the camp meeting in particular but to understand James McGready and the paths he took during the Great Revival. McGready, though, is not comprehensible outside of the tradition of Scottish revivalism that Westerkamp and Schmidt have so eloquently described. From this perspective McGready does not look so much like one of the "clear innovators within Presbyterianism" or American religion but rather more like one of the "tradition-minded."¹⁴ The question remains: How did McGready, who was raised in the Carolina Piedmont, become imbued with this Scottish revivalism born two centuries and a continent away? To answer that question, one must turn back to the Great Awakening and to a family that started a process that made possible McGready's

introduction to and acceptance of Scottish revivalism.

The Tennent family--father William and his four sons, Gilbert, John, William Jr., and Charles--were among the "best-known ministerial families in the colonies" in the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Around that family, and especially around Gilbert, revolved the Presbyterian revivalism of the Great Awakening.¹⁶ In many ways McGready's style and theology were quite reminiscent of Gilbert Tennent.¹⁷ Yet not only the preaching of Gilbert but also the educational efforts of his father made possible McGready's eventual education in Scottish piety and revivalism. McGready's educational opportunities can be traced directly back to William Tennent's Log College of the 1720s and 1730s.

William Tennent began life in northern Ireland in 1673 and grew up in the Church of England, in which he was ordained as a priest in 1706.¹⁸ Tennent's life as a Presbyterian began with his marriage in 1702 to Katherine Kennedy, daughter of the Reverend Gilbert Kennedy, a minister in the Scottish Kirk.¹⁹ Kennedy had a long line of Presbyterian ministers and revivalists in his background. His father had been expelled from the national church in 1662 for nonconformity, but he "continued to preach in the glens by starlight where the children of the neighborhood were brought to him to be baptized."²⁰ Kennedy's father's activities would have fit the revival events known as conventicles that went on continuously in southwestern

Scotland and Northern Ireland during the Restoration period.²¹ Tennent brought his wife and children to America in 1716, settling first in New York, and soon after arrival he applied for admission to the recently formed Presbyterian Synod, having previously separated himself from the Anglican Church on questions of doctrine and conscience.²² Tennent served the church in Bensalem, Pennsylvania, from 1721 until 1726 when he took a call to Neshaminy.²³

Not long after arriving in Neshaminy, Tennent grew concerned over the education of his four sons, who were approaching the age of maturity. The only formal educational opportunities for young men who were "inclined toward the gospel ministry" were provided by the two schools in New England, Harvard and Yale, the one in Virginia, William and Mary, and a number of Scottish universities. There were in the 1720s "no colleges or advanced schools" anywhere in the Middle Atlantic colonies.²⁴ The first three schools were less expensive ones but still out of the financial reach of many, and were, besides, not Presbyterian. The Scottish universities were even more expensive and had fallen into a "deplorable state" in the view of many evangelicals. Most important for Tennent, Scottish universities also tended to be quite conservative and anti-revivalist.²⁵ Faced with these unappealing alternatives, Tennent built a small log house and began his own school in Neshaminy with his four sons and a half-a-

dozen other young men as students. This institution quickly became known, first derisively and later proudly, as the "Log College."

Tennent never intended his school to be on par with a college. He realized he did not have the resources to cover all the topics a student might meet at an established college or university. His goal was to run "a private Seminary, in which the purpose was to train men for the gospel ministry."²⁶ The curriculum included study of Latin and Greek, theology, and classical literature. Despite its small size (the building was only twenty feet by twenty feet)²⁷ and limited resources, the school produced students with a thorough knowledge of Presbyterian doctrine and Christian theology and, equally important, with a commitment to revive the flagging souls in the American Presbyterian church. William Tennent never achieved renown for his preaching or theological treatises, but he proved through the educational work he performed at Neshaminy to be one who "accomplish[ed] much more by those whom they educate, than by their own personal labors."²⁸

The Log College and its alumni profoundly affected the course of both American Presbyterianism and the life of James McGready, yet unborn, in three essential ways. First, the preaching and teaching of the Log College men helped solidify and perpetuate the Presbyterian portion of the Great Awakening which spread through many of the colonies in

the 1730s and 1740s. The Great Awakening was a remarkable confluence of several revivalist strains of religious thought and action. One strain came from New England Puritanism and was embodied in Jonathan Edwards and his work in Northampton, Massachusetts, in the 1730s. Edwards, in turn, looked back to earlier Puritan revivalists, most especially his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. Another strain came via Theodore Frelinghuysen and the Dutch Reformed Church. German Pietism also figured into the mix, as did Wesleyan Methodism, predominantly in the figure of George Whitefield, who came to preach Wesleyan Arminianism throughout the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s but was quickly "converted" to Calvinism. Depending on the specific local and regional conditions, the revivalism of the Great Awakening might vary widely in both theology and form. In the middle colonies the Scottish revivalism of the Tennents held sway largely because of the presence of large number of settlers of Scottish and Ulster descent.²⁹ The revivalistic successes of the Tennents and their followers during the Great Awakening gave later Presbyterian revivalists, such as McGready, a concrete example to look back to--one that they continually hoped to recreate.

Secondly, the efforts of the Tennents created a split within the Presbyterian church that would continue throughout the eighteenth century and be recreated on the Kentucky frontier in the first decade of the nineteenth

century.³⁰ The division, both in the 1740s and later, was between revivalists and anti-revivalists; it had four main aspects.

The anti-revivalists objected to the Tennents' emphasis on experiential religion, and they charged revivalists with the abandonment of right doctrine. Gilbert Tennent struck back hard at this charge in 1740 with a sermon that attacked his opponents as "pharisee-teachers, having no experience of a special work of the Holy Ghost, upon their own souls, [who] are therefore neither inclined to, nor fitted for, discoursing frequently, clearly, and pathetically upon such important subjects" as salvation.³¹ In Tennent's mind, the hard hearts of the anti-revivalists posed a much greater threat to the church than any supposed heterodoxy on the part of the revivalists.

The anti-revivalists also objected to the itinerancy of the Log College men, who were confined for the most part to the New Brunswick Presbytery of Pennsylvania. To spread the revival geographically the New Brunswick men felt compelled to go out among the different congregations of the church and even into different presbyteries. The anti-revival men objected to these "intrusions" by one minister into the bounds of another, and in 1737 the synod passed a rule prohibiting intrusions on the ground that they prevented a presbytery from maintaining discipline among the ministers in their given area. This rule was "especially obnoxious"

to the Log College men, who, while acknowledging the need for presbyterial discipline, recognized this move as a bald attempt to contain the revival within the confines of the New Brunswick Presbytery.³²

In addition to the questions of religious experience and itinerancy, the two parties split on the location of final authority over the qualifications for and administration of ministerial ordination. The revivalists held firm to the contention that the smaller bodies, presbyteries, had final say in the matter. Anti-revivalists claimed superior authority on this point for the synod, the higher judicatory body. The division here was probably born not so much out of theology as out of practical politics. The revivalists held a majority in only a handful of presbyteries, primarily the New Brunswick, while the anti-revivalists usually held a firm majority in the synod.³³

Finally, the anti-revival party objected to the New Brunswick men on the point of educational training. Many complained that William Tennent's school had produced scholars "remarkably deficient [sic]" in some parts of learning.³⁴ They countered Tennent's efforts by insisting in the 1730s on either a collegiate diploma or a synod certificate as a prerequisite for licensing and ordination.³⁵ Once again Gilbert Tennent led the opposition to this measure, not so much from a "dislike of the ecclesiastical principle on which it was founded" as

from "dislike of the object at which he thought it aimed." Convinced that its purpose was to "keep evangelical men out of the ministry," he saw it as a direct attack on the revival in general and his father's work at Neshaminy in particular.³⁶

The tensions between the two parties in the 1730s developed into irreconcilable differences in the 1740s, and in 1741 the two groups split into separate synods: the revivalistic Synod of New York and the anti-revivalist Synod of Philadelphia. Gilbert Tennent and the New Brunswick men felt they could no longer minister in a church "containing too many dead bones and not enough of the spirit of God."³⁷ The two stayed separate until reconciliation in 1758. Despite the official reunion in 1758, however, deep differences remained within the American Presbyterian church, differences which eventually resurfaced in Kentucky after 1800.

In the short run, then, the Log College men had helped spark a revival and split a church, and both outcomes later played a role in McGready's career. The third, and in some respects the most direct way in which the revivalists of the Great Awakening shaped McGready's life, came not through preaching and not through denominational squabbles, but through education. Many Log College alumni replicated William Tennent's pedagogical efforts at Neshaminy and opened in their own parishes academies "for the training of

likely young men as candidates for the ministry, in order that ministers might be raised up to meet the crying demands of shepherdless flocks all over the country."³⁸ The educational work of a series of ministers through succeeding generations made the life and career of McGready possible. The efforts of one minister training the next who trained the next eventually reached across fifty years and several states to pass New Light Scottish revivalism from William Tennent to James McGready.

The first link in that chain from Tennent to McGready was Samuel Blair. Born in Ireland in 1712, Blair came to the colonies as a youth in 1722 and studied at the Log College between 1730 and 1734.³⁹ Blair was "intimately associated with Mr. Gilbert Tennent in all his controversies with the Synod of Philadelphia" and "concurred in all the proceedings of the New Brunswick Presbytery."⁴⁰ Upon his graduation in 1734 he first preached at Shrewsbury, New Jersey, before taking the church of New Londonderry, also called Fagg's Manor, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1739.⁴¹ The church there consisted almost entirely of Scotch-Irish immigrants and had existed for many years, although Blair was its first official pastor.⁴² Almost immediately after his arrival at Fagg's Manor, Blair's congregation "was blessed with a powerful revival of religion, in which a large number were awakened and hopefully converted, and the frivolity and carelessness

about divine things, which had characterized the place before, gave way to solemnity and deep thoughts upon the concerns of eternity."⁴³ Two visits from Whitefield in the summer of 1739 increased the revival.⁴⁴

Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Blair "instituted a classical school, similar in its purpose to that of Mr. Tennent in Neshaminy."⁴⁵ Under Blair, and later his brother John, also an alumnus of the Log College, the school at Fagg's Manor had three main purposes: to be a "grammar or elementary school" for younger children, a preparatory school for college for older boys, and a finishing theological school for those preparing to enter the ministry.⁴⁶ Out of the school came the next generation of ministers crucial to the education and development of McGready.

The next link in the chain from Tennent to McGready was Robert Smith. Smith, born in Londonderry, Ireland, in 1723, emigrated to the colonies in 1730 and had been converted under the preaching of Whitefield during the Great Awakening. He studied under Blair at Fagg's Manor in the 1740s and eventually married one of Blair's sisters in 1750.⁴⁷ Installed in 1751 at Pequea, Pennsylvania, in Lancaster County, Smith began a school of his own the very next year.⁴⁸ Smith's school, which "afforded an excellent classical education," had a two-fold purpose: to prepare young men for college and older men for the ministry. Smith

employed teachers from abroad and was very strict in his students' use of Latin at school. It was "the only language allowed to be spoken . . . and whoever uttered a word in the mother tongue was marked as a delinquent."⁴⁹ The curriculum, in addition to the usual theology, included a "careful and attentive" reading of the Latin and Greek classics. On Saturdays the students even conducted contests lasting several hours on knowledge of the classics.⁵⁰ Despite a severe lack of resources, Robert Smith taught for over forty years at Pequea and in that time produced many scholars, ministers, and statesmen. Most important for McGready, out of Smith's school came three men--John McMillan, David Caldwell, and Smith's own son, John Blair Smith--who would contribute directly to his own upbringing, education, conversion, and career.

The Scottish, Ulster, and American experience of the Presbyterian church from the Reformation to the Great Awakening set the historical context for James McGready. When he began his work first in North Carolina and then Kentucky, he had longstanding and powerful Presbyterian traditions on which to draw--the sacramental occasion, a two-hundred-year-old history of Scottish and Ulster revivalism, and the revivalism of the Tennents during the Great Awakening. These ideas and practices were communicated and transmitted to McGready through a series of like-minded ministers operating small schools on the

frontier. Context and tradition, of course, do not necessarily determine the course of one's life. Some of history's greatest actors have been those who rejected their heritage and tradition and forged a new path for themselves and their followers. The dynamic fabric of history is formed by individuals making choices. One of those choices is what to do with tradition and heritage. McGready will eventually have to make such a decision, and on that decision will hang the balance of his career. Such a choice would have never been possible without the long history of Scottish, Ulster, and American revivalism that preceded him and the efforts of individual ministers who relayed that heritage to him.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. See above, 3-6.

2. Ben Barrus, for example, traced the exact line of McGready's theological descent from the Great Awakening to McGready and the Great Revival. See Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 247.

3. Leon J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 56-57, 86, 170. Other scholars have argued that Frelinghuysen's revivalism came through an association with German pietism, but Trinterud rejected that assertion. See Charles H. Maxson, The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies (1920; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958).

4. Trinterud, American Tradition, 54, 122.

5. Ibid., 36-37.

6. For a comment on comment on the position and influence of Trinterud's work see Nybakken, "New Light," 815.

7. Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity. For an opposing viewpoint on the question of the role of the laity, see Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 124-125.

8. Quoted in Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, 24.

9. Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, passim. For more specific works on individual Scottish or Ulster revivals see such works as W.D. Baillie, The Six Mile Water Revival of 1625 (Newcastle, Co. Down: Mourne Observer Press, 1976), and Arthur Fawcett, The Cambuslang Revival (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971.) For biographical information about some of the leaders of these early revivals see such works as John Livingstone, A Brief Historical Relation of the Life of Mr. John Livingstone . . . Written by Himself, ed. Thomas Houston (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1848), and Robert Blair, The Life of Mr. Robert Blair . . . His Autobiography from 1593 to 1636, ed. Thomas McCrie (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1848).

- 10.Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 11-21.
- 11.Ibid., 50-68.
- 12.Ibid., 65.
- 13.Ibid., 63.
- 14.Ibid., 65.
- 15.Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 182.
- 16.Despite its interpretive difficulties, Trinterud's work remains one of the best accounts of the role the Tennents played in the Presbyterian portion of the Great Awakening. See Trinterud, American Tradition, 53-121. See also Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, 167-169.
- 17.Interestingly, McGready and Tennent both had the same nickname--Son of Thunder.
- 18.D.K. Turner, History of Neshaminy Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Culbertson and Bache, Printers, 1876), 8, and Archibald Alexander, Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1851), 13.
- 19.Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 14; George H. Ingram, "Biographies of the Alumni of the Log College," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society 14 (March 1930): 3.
- 20.Ingram, "Biographies," 4.
- 21.Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, 43-73.
- 22.Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 14.
- 23.Ibid., 16.
- 24.Frederick W. Brink, "Gilbert Tennent, Dynamic Preacher," Journal of Presbyterian Historical Society 32 (June 1954): 92,94.
- 25.Trinterud, American Tradition, 64.
- 26.Thomas Clinton Pears, Jr., "Colonial Education Among Presbyterians," Journal of Presbyterian Historical Society 30 (June 1952): 166-167.

27. George Whitefield, George Whitefield's Journals (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 354.
28. Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 23.
29. Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 178-179.
Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, 165-194.
30. Barrus argues that the issues and divisions are exactly the same in Kentucky as they were in the colonies, see Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterians," 247ff.
31. Quoted in Trinterud, American Tradition, 89-91.
32. Gillett, Presbyterian Church, 68ff.
33. Trinterud, American Tradition, 80-85.
34. Pears, "Colonial Education," 165.
35. Gillett, Presbyterian Church, 68.
36. Charles Hodge, The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1839), 1: 255n.
37. Brink, "Gilbert Tennent," 96.
38. Ingram, "Biographies," 13.
39. J.D. Emiston Turner, "Reverend Samuel Blair, 1712-1751," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society 29 (1951): 230; D.K. Turner, Neshaminy Presbyterian Church, 33.
40. Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 193-194.
41. Ibid., 171.
42. Ibid., 172.
43. D.K. Turner, Neshaminy Presbyterian Church, 33.
44. J.D.E. Turner, "Samuel Blair," 231.
45. Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 171.
46. Ibid., 192; D.K. Turner, Neshaminy Presbyterian Church, 38ff; Guy Soulliard Klett, Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 96-97.

47. Jacob Newton Beam, "Dr. Robert Smith's Academy at Pequea, Pennsylvania," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society 8 (December 1915): 154.

48. Ibid., 149.

49. Klett, Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania, 112.

50. Beam, "Dr. Robert Smith's Academy," 151.

Chapter Two--The Formative Years, 1760-1788

The first thirty or so years of James McGready's life were ones of significant geographical and spiritual movement. Like thousands of other Scotch-Irish, his family seems to have settled first in the Pennsylvania countryside, where McGready was born sometime around 1760. They soon followed many of their countrymen down the valleys of Virginia to the Carolina Piedmont. McGready did not remain forever in North Carolina but returned to Pennsylvania for his education before finally heading back to North Carolina to begin his ministry. Both in Carolina and in Pennsylvania he was integrated into the Presbyterian evangelical educational chain begun by the Tennents. This geographical movement paralleled an equally substantial theological movement into the fervent revivalism of his Scottish and Ulster heritage.

The Scotch-Irish came to British colonial America in the early eighteenth century by the tens of thousands largely to seek economic survival. Earlier Scots, especially those of southwestern Scotland, had previously sought economic relief in Ulster but found little prosperity in the wilds of Northern Ireland.¹ Increased economic problems following the Woolens Act of 1699 convinced

thousands of Scotch-Irish to leave their Ulster homes and head to the New World.² Benjamin Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette gave a succinct explanation for this migration: "Poverty, Wretchedness, Misery and Want are almost universal" among those coming from Ulster. Agriculture and commerce there had been "cramp'd and discourag'd." No bread could be purchased, taxes were high, money scarce, and "their griping, avaricious Landlords exercise over them the most merciless Racking Tyranny and Oppression. Hence it is that such Swarms of them are driven over into America."³ Most of this swarm landed in Pennsylvania and formed the Presbyterian communities and churches out of which McGready eventually came.

A distinctive aspect of the Scotch-Irish was their dual emphasis on the Presbyterian faith and on education. Church-going was serious business for most Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, who established a kirk in their community almost immediately after building their homes.⁴ The first churches in a community were often in private homes or in the open air. People traveled far by horse or by foot to church on Sundays. Services, which normally began around ten in the morning and lasted long into the afternoon, included prayers, psalm- and hymn-singing, readings of Scripture, administration of the sacraments, and of course the sermons, normally two of one-to-two hours duration, which were the "chief attention of a congregation."⁵ In

such a culture it would have been easy for a young boy to be quite meticulous about the activities of the church.

McGready later described himself as such a boy. He recalled that as a youth he displayed a profound "punctuality in religious duties," relating that he "never omitted private prayer from the time he was seven years old."⁶ Conscientiousness bred complacency, McGready later believed. "Having been preserved from outbreaking sins, from profane swearing, from intoxication and sabbath breaking, and other excesses," young James believed himself to have been "sanctified from birth."⁷ That youthful assumption would return to haunt him.

Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were hardly less intent about the promotion of education. John Knox had proposed a system for the "complete education of the people" as far back as 1560.⁸ Anywhere the Scotch-Irish went they established schools, since not being able to read and write was "considered a disgrace" as well as a threat to Bible-based religion.⁹ The local churches normally ran the elementary schools, and besides the catechism the curriculum focused on the rudiments of reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling.¹⁰ Despite limited facilities, these small, crude schools provided the start for many clerics and non-clerics alike. Had the opportunity presented itself, McGready would certainly have jumped at the chance to go to such a school. As a youth, one church chronicler related,

McGready displayed a strong desire for "mental improvement."¹¹ Whether young James had such opportunities is unknown; perhaps he had to wait for his family's move to North Carolina before experiencing formal education. There he would get his chance.

The McGready family settled in Guilford County, North Carolina, sometime in the late 1770s.¹² The first permanent white settlers had reached Guilford County around 1749; the first major Scotch-Irish immigration came in 1753.¹³ In that year a group of settlers from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, formed the Nottingham Company and purchased a parcel of land along the North Buffalo and Reedy Creeks containing some 21,120 acres, part of which the company designated for the erection of a church.¹⁴ The Nottingham settlers established the Buffalo Presbyterian Church in 1758 along the lines of Old Light or conservative Presbyterianism. Two years later a group from South Carolina founded Alamance Presbyterian Church in south Guilford County as a New Light alternative. The same man, however, pastored both churches--David Caldwell, of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.¹⁵

For religious, economic, or some other unknown reason, James McGready, Sr., and his wife Jean chose to settle in northern Guilford County, within the bounds of the Buffalo congregation. McGready bought 353 acres along Brush Creek and Dillon's road from David Caldwell in 1784.¹⁶ That

amount of land was probably about an average-sized farm for the time and locale.¹⁷ Like many others in the fertile region, the McGready's must have quickly prospered. By 1785 William McGready, the oldest of nine sons, was able to purchase his own plot of 40 acres, to which he added several hundred more only two years later.¹⁸ With so many sons the McGreadys probably had no need for slaves and did not own any.¹⁹ On their Guilford farm they would spend the rest of their lives.²⁰

Young James and his family quickly settled into both Guilford County and Buffalo Church. He joined the church at age 17 and soon fell under the influence of Pastor Caldwell.²¹ Caldwell proved to be McGready's first link with the efforts of the evangelical Pennsylvania preachers described above. Born in Drumore Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1725 into a four-son farming family of "comfortable circumstances," Caldwell was initially apprenticed as a carpenter and practiced that trade until his middle twenties.²² At twenty-five he underwent a conversion experience and soon heard the call to preach.²³

Since education preceded ordination in the Presbyterian church Caldwell enrolled himself, with the financial support of his family, at Robert Smith's school at Pequea. Within a few years he had advanced in his studies enough to matriculate at the College of New Jersey, from which he

graduated in 1761.²⁴ Caldwell was described as an "exceedingly studious man" whose "prominent characteristic" was "the power to acquire knowledge and to retain it, and the power to apply it to useful and practical purposes."²⁵ In his latter years he reflected that as a college student "it was his practice to study at a table by the window, with the sash raised, until a late hour, then cross his arms on the table, lay his head on them, and sleep in that position till morning."²⁶ Caldwell was apparently not "exceedingly emotional in his personal worship," but his ties to the evangelicals no doubt strengthened with his marriage to a daughter of Alexander Craighead, a Presbyterian minister of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and a convert and follower of George Whitefield.²⁷

Caldwell's next few years led him back to Pennsylvania for a time and eventually to North Carolina. Immediately after his graduation from Princeton he taught school at Pequea and Princeton.²⁸ The New Brunswick Presbytery (the revivalist presbytery during the 1741 schism) licensed him to preach in June 1763, allowing him to fulfill a previously made bargain with the Buffalo Church congregation to become their pastor after graduation. Caldwell traveled south to Guilford County in 1764 and began full time work in 1765. In 1768 he was formally installed at both the Buffalo and Alamance churches.²⁹ Soon after his arrival in Guilford County he opened his own classical school on the

Pennsylvania model to train young men in the faith and to supplement his meager income.³⁰

Caldwell's school educated many of the young men of the county, including McGready, whom one historian has described as a "product of the Buffalo Community and the teachings of David Caldwell."³¹ Like Tennent's Log College, Caldwell's school was not pretentious. A log structure with a 20' by 20' cellar, the school had a simple brick fireplace and was probably no larger than 20' by 35-40'. Out of the structure came a tunnel paved with cobblestones that emerged from under the ground some 120' from the house and may have been used for quick escapes from the British during the Revolution.³² The fifty to sixty students who attended Caldwell's school had no library to draw on and only a handful of books to read, mostly Latin or Greek classics and none on history or literature. The course on moral philosophy came largely from a syllabus prepared by Dr. Witherspoon at Princeton.³³ Yet despite all these difficulties, Caldwell managed to put together a school such that "to have passed through the course of study given [there], with the approbation of the teacher, was a sufficient recommendation for scholarship in any section in the South."³⁴ McGready was not destined to the higher schools of the South but to the evangelical schools of Pennsylvania which had now crossed the Allegheny Mountains into western Pennsylvania. Sometime in the early 1780s,

McGready's uncle, while on a visit from Pennsylvania, noticed James and requested his parents to let their son return to Pennsylvania with him to further his education. His parents assented, and McGready left with his uncle for Washington County on the Pennsylvania frontier, ready to build on the basic education David Caldwell had already provided.³⁵

With the end of the American Revolution in 1783, migration across the Appalachian Mountains, both north and south, became a very real possibility. The region around the forks of the Ohio River had been targeted for expansion since the 1750s. Americans began moving into the area as early as the 1770s, defying George III's Proclamation Line of 1763. As was often the case, preachers went with or closely followed the settlers to "plant the seeds of some future churches." For the Presbyterians, Charles Beatty and George Duffield led the way in the 1760s and were joined by some New England Congregationalists in the early 1770s.³⁶ Not until the late 1770s did a Presbyterian minister come to western Pennsylvania to stay for good. John McMillan was that man.

McMillan was the son of Scotch-Irish parents who had emigrated from County Antrim in 1742 and settled in Chester County, Pennsylvania, near Samuel Blair's church at Fagg's Manor.³⁷ McMillan attended the academy at Fagg's Manor, by then under the directorship of John Blair, until he reached

the age of 15 in 1767.³⁸ At that point he enrolled in Robert Smith's school at Pequea, in the next county over. While at Pequea McMillan experienced the first stirrings of religious awakening. During his three-year stay at Pequea the school and church underwent a local revival that converted "most of the pupils in the school." McMillan's own conversion may have been at least partially prompted by the grief he felt at the passing of his mother in 1768.³⁹ By the spring of 1770 McMillan had attained an education sufficient to proceed to the next level, and so he packed up and trundled off to the College of New Jersey. There, too, he experienced some profound religious stirrings, later relating that he "got some discoveries of divine things which I had never had before." He recalled that he had felt a "calm and serenity of mind to which I had hitherto been a stranger."⁴⁰ Following his graduation and later licensing to preach, McMillan undertook a long missionary journey to the valleys of Virginia before finally arriving in Washington County, Pennsylvania, in 1775. The next year, Chartiers Church in Washington County called him to be their pastor and he accepted. Two years later he moved his family there to start a new life, a new church, and a new school.⁴¹

McMillan's entry into western Pennsylvania was a modest one at first, but he quickly established his home and school. In 1778 he brought his wife and child to the east

branch of Chartiers Creek, where the people of the region had already begun to build him a cabin. When the McMillans arrived, the cabin had "no roof on it, nor chimney, nor floor," and the young couple had little to put in it-- "neither bedstead, nor table, nor chair, nor stool, nor pail, nor basket."⁴² Partly to supplement his income and partly to fulfill the charge of his mentor, Robert Smith, McMillan soon set up a school, first in his home and later in a log house built nearby for that purpose.

McMillan modeled his school on Smith's school in Pequea. Upon his departure from Lancaster County to the west, Smith had charged McMillan to "look out for some pious young men and educate them for the ministry" in much the same way that he and the Blairs and Tennents had done before.⁴³ Following that advice, McMillan later wrote that he "collected a few with evidence of piety and instructed them in the knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages."⁴⁴ Thus McMillan's school, like Smith's, mixed elementary, classical, and theological studies.⁴⁵ Students "generally lodge[d] in the minister's family," and McMillan noted that he boarded most of the boys "without compensation."⁴⁶ McMillan's experiences at educating the young were not all positive; his first log house was destroyed by fire, after which classes were held in his kitchen until a new structure could be built.⁴⁷

McMillan did not labor alone in Washington County for

very long. Within a few years of his arrival, two other Presbyterian ministers opened their own schools. Thaddeus Dod permanently settled in Washington County in 1777 but did not open his school until 1781 or 1782.⁴⁸ Dod was descended from Puritans who settled in Connecticut in 1645. His parents were part of a group of "conscientious Connecticut Puritans" who moved to New Jersey in the middle of the eighteenth century. Dod grew up in Mendham, New Jersey, in Morris County. He attended Princeton simultaneously with McMillan and graduated from that school in 1773. While there he excelled at mathematics and poetry as well as classical languages, music, and theology.⁴⁹ On his farm in western Pennsylvania he established a classical and mathematical school in a building that was "much larger than any dwelling house in the settlement. It was furnished with sometimes three, at other times four, beds for students in attendance."⁵⁰ Dod's health did not long last, however, and by 1785 he had sold his farm, forcing his students to transfer to the school of another new Presbyterian minister--Joseph Smith.⁵¹

Smith held as distinguished evangelical bloodlines as McMillan. He grew up in Cecil County, Maryland, where as a boy he attended the Nottingham Presbyterian Church pastored by Samuel Finley. An alumnus of the Log College and one of the New Brunswick men, Finley ran a local school at Nottingham (just across the border from Lancaster County

Pennsylvania, and Pequea) on the Tennent model from 1744. Joseph Smith studied at this school until his departure for Princeton and a college education.⁵²

Although he graduated from Princeton in 1764, Smith did not arrive in Washington County until 1779.⁵³ From 1769 to 1778 he pastored two churches in Delaware but was forced to leave when the war's disruptions proved too great. In 1779 he accepted a call to the Upper Buffalo and Cross Creek churches located just to the west of McMillan's two at Chartiers and Pigeon Creek.⁵⁴ No later than 1785, but perhaps as early as 1780, Smith opened a school "with a special view to the training of young men for the sacred office."⁵⁵ Making use of the resources available to him, Smith held his school in a building originally built as a kitchen and wash house.⁵⁶

Joseph Smith and Thaddeus Dod did not compete with McMillan; on the contrary, the three "worked in harmony like a brotherhood." Their schools "were in no sense rival schools," and their students "moved from one school to the other in a kind of friendly sharing of the training needed to raise up good men for the church."⁵⁷ None intended or expected that their schools would grow into formal academies and colleges. Their efforts were simply "temporary expedients" which they undertook to pass on the evangelical faith they had each received from their own educational and theological fathers. Later generations looked fondly back

at these humble schools as a "fortress between the frontier and the spiritual and cultural pattern they had brought into the wilderness."⁵⁸ A fortress, though, is the wrong metaphor. In reality the schools acted as bridges that connected McGready to the long history of Presbyterian revivalism and brought it to the American frontier.

Into Washington County McGready came sometime in the early 1780s.⁵⁹ He first settled with John McMillan and worked for a season as a farm hand.⁶⁰ In 1785 when Smith opened his school he "immediately repaired to that school."⁶¹ His teachers in western Pennsylvania impressed McGready with three particulars of New Light Presbyterianism: Calvinistic theology, the importance of a conversion experience, and a distinctive preaching style.

With an explication of McGready's theology to follow, suffice it to say here that given his three teachers in Pennsylvania--McMillan, Dod, and Smith (not forgetting Caldwell from North Carolina)--and their ties to Presbyterian New Light theology, it is not surprising that McGready accepted that theology as his own. Intellectual acceptance of New Light theology, however, is something of an oxymoron. New Lights always insisted on "experimental" knowledge rather than intellectual knowledge as the crucial factor in becoming a Christian. For evangelicals, the Christian life always started with a conversion experience. McGready's conversion came while he resided in Pennsylvania

and, when combined with the theological system in place behind it, colored his entire understanding of the process of conversion, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the role and purpose of the minister.

The exact circumstances that prompted McGready's evangelical conversion are in dispute. Two accounts exist; neither necessarily excludes the other. The first has McGready as a worker at McMillan's farm. While there, he contracted smallpox and came quite close to death. This brush with eternity apparently awoke McGready to the dangers of spending that eternity in hell, separated from God. The Sunday after he recovered, he attended church at the Mingo Creek settlement where McMillan led the service and Smith preached. Smith's sermon caused McGready to seek Christ in a way previously unknown to him, and he quickly enrolled in Smith's school and began his long career as a revivalist preacher.⁶²

The second rendering of McGready's conversion is the better-known one. It finds him resting in bed at the place of his boarding (McMillan's farm), when he overheard a conversation between his landlord and a neighbor concerning the state of McGready's soul. "Do you think," asked the neighbor, "that this young man you have studying here has got any religion?" "No," replied McMillan, "not a spark." By this McMillan meant he believed McGready to be unconverted in the heart despite his head knowledge and

outward works. Such a vote of no confidence by his teacher provoked great anguish and turmoil in him. At first offended, he determined to quit his boardings but soon thereafter decided to examine McMillan's assessment to see if there might be any truth in it.

To accomplish this he examined his "principles of belief, his practice, and his feelings." His principles of belief he assumed correct because he subscribed to the doctrines affirmed by generations before him. His practice, too, he believed acceptable to God, for he closely followed what the Scriptures allowed and commanded and assiduously avoided what they forbade. When he examined his heart, however, and compared it to such passages as those which spoke of being "filled with the spirit; filled with joy; filled with the Holy Ghost" and having the "joy of the Holy Ghost" whereby the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace," McGready found it sorely lacking in experimental understanding of these things. He did not easily or quickly resolve this "conflict in his soul." Eventually, however, "the sin of his whole life stood up before him in awful array." With no other escape possible, McGready "had no rest in his soul till he believed Christ gave him peace in believing, and his heart tasted some of the joys of the Holy Ghost."⁶³

Both stories probably contain some true aspects of the events surrounding McGready's conversion. No matter the

specific circumstances, sometime during his stay in Pennsylvania McGready underwent a profound conversion experience that altered the way he approached eternity as well as his ministry on earth. Conversion was the most important theological topic to McGready, and his understanding of conversion and how it worked shaped his entire career. To McGready's understanding, Christian conversion was the most important event that could ever happen to a person because only full conversion held eternal promise for the individual. Conversion was necessary because of the sinful condition in which humanity found itself.

To McGready, the effect of sin on humanity in general and individuals in particular was devastating, for sin was not simply making wrong choices but consisted of acts of rebellion that seek to "unhinge the divine law, to destroy the moral government of the universe, and to introduce disorder and ruin through all the works of God." That is, when a person committed a sin, either by omission or by commission, that individual undertook an act which aimed at "nothing less than to extinguish the divine glory, to undeify the Deity, to deprive him of his being, and finally, to annihilate the source and essence of all happiness."⁶⁴ "Every sin," he wrote, "contains in it the most glaring injustice, robbery and villainy" and is the "highest species of treason against the Sovereign of the Universe."⁶⁵

Additionally and unfortunately, all of "Adam's race" have been tainted with this evil, for "all mankind by nature are fallen creatures" and all continually seek to sin against God.⁶⁶

Humankind is sinful, said McGready, because of the actions of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam, humanity's "covenant head," partook in a covenant that God created whereby God promised eternal life in return for perfect obedience from Adam. Had Adam kept that covenant, generally known as the Covenant of Works, eternal life for himself and all humanity would have been "secured." But, by his "breach of the covenant" in eating the forbidden fruit he transmitted not life and obedience to all his seed, but death and sin. Adam stood for mankind as a "public representative; for their eternal life, or eternal death, depended on his performing, or not performing the conditions of that covenant."⁶⁷ That humans are hopelessly sinful and completely rebellious toward God "is a truth which no one can deny, who knows his own heart, and views the depravity and wickedness of mankind in every age and generation of the world, or who consult's God's written word."⁶⁸

The effect of sinfulness is enmity against and separation from God, who cannot have any personal relations with an individual in a sinful state. After Adam's fall humans could not do any works that would be pleasing to God, including even explicitly religious ones. Furthermore,

humans in their sinful state cannot commune with God, either here on earth or in heaven after death.⁶⁹ Finally, if a person dies in such a state he or she is doomed to death--natural, spiritual, and eternal. The nature of the spiritual and eternal death will be discussed in detail below, but McGready summarized it as "an everlasting exclusion from all possible good, and the infliction of all possible evil."⁷⁰ To resolve this desperate situation "God declares that we must be converted, or be forever damned; that we must be born again, or never enter the kingdom of heaven."⁷¹

Being born again was no easy matter. Severe obstacles stood in the way. First, Satan roamed the earth blinding humans to the way to conversion and taking away "every conviction, every serious impression, and every sincere desire after god and religion."⁷² Satan, McGready wrote, was an "intelligent spirit . . . more crafty than all the human race collectively" and therefore was "well provided" with temptations "fitted to every time and circumstance--to every situation of individuals, church or commonwealth." He cunningly and continually used that knowledge to steer humans away from the narrow gate to salvation.⁷³

In his efforts Satan employed a variety of stratagems and weapons. Some souls he dispatched through temptations of the flesh such as lust, alcohol, greed, or ostentation. Others he sidetracked through appeals to vanity, pride, and

human position. Those who managed to avoid these sins often fell prey to his efforts at dissension and discontent within businesses, farms, families, and churches. Contention among churches was "one of the most subtle and effective engines of hell," for when Satan could pit churches against churches and Christians against Christians, the contenders would believe themselves to be fighting for God, when in reality they labored for the Devil.⁷⁴

Satan also used more general stratagems to distract sinners from God's way. He persuaded some to lead prayerless lives and not to exert effort for their salvation. Some minds he filled with a "prejudice against experimental religion," while he convinced others to "put off the work of their soul's salvation until a more convenient season."⁷⁵ Against any who did have some religious stirrings he "strives to make them ashamed" of those thoughts and to be especially embarrassed at the operations of the Holy Spirit upon conversion. If these efforts failed to prevent conversion, Satan might resort to "more violent measures" such as stirring up the anger of one's friends or family to steer individuals away from Christ and directing that anger especially at the ministers of the gospel. Finally, if all such stratagems failed, Satan used the conversion process itself to blind seekers by convincing them of the successful conclusion of salvation and conversion before it actually took place. This delusion

convinced them to "settle down upon a false hope, and rest short of Christ." It continually caused "thousands [to] fall back to sin, and [to] lose their souls."⁷⁶

Not only Satan but the diversions of the world prevented sinners from coming to Christ. Sinners, wrote McGready, had no room in their hearts for Christ. Why? Because their hearts were partially filled with "fashions and customs of the world" such as business ventures and farming profits "which must be attended to."⁷⁷ Many idols of the world also are worshipped: money, property, clothing, and alcohol, to name a few.⁷⁸ A "host of vain, trifling amusements" such as occasional drinking, "balls, parties, merry meetings, vain songs, frothy, unprofitable discourse, Sunday visits and diversions," plus cursing, horseracing, and gambling occupied the reprobate's time and attention.⁷⁹ When an individual is concerned with these, he or she will have no time to seek salvation.

Thirdly, conversion is impeded by one's own self--by the sinful characteristics of the individual heart. In "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," McGready argued that one's own heart could prevent conversion. The heart, "the spring of action to the body," continually deceived the individual. It accomplished this by "forming excuses to hide the horrible malignity of sin" and by "forming excuses to the sinner, which prevent his seeking salvation of his soul."⁸⁰ The heart also puts on the "most favorable

construction" of an individual's situation or case, convincing him or her that the situation is not as desperate as it first appeared. Finally, the heart deceives by "drawing the most favorable conclusion" from past religious exercises which, while showing indications of religious interest, did not result in conversion.⁸¹

The work of Satan, the distractions of the world, and the deceitfulness of the heart mired sinners in a state McGready called unbelief, "the rejecting of truth, and treating it as falsehood." Unbelief treats Christ as a "deceiver and imposter" and God the Father as a "liar."⁸² It could take a variety of forms. It could be rebellious unbelief like that of the Israelites in the Wilderness or prideful unbelief like that of the Jews who rejected Christ because they did not want to submit to his leadership. Deists modeled a form of unbelief that could be called intellectual unbelief, an unbelief that found Christ's way to have no basis in human reason. Other unbelievers were simply "careless and unthinking sinner[s]" who dwell not upon eternal things but simply live for the moment. Still other unbelievers had the "form of godliness without the power"; that is, they professed to believe Christ, but denied that profession in practice. For McGready, the most tragic unbeliever was one who had been awakened to his or her sin but relied for salvation upon a "fig-leaf garment of his own instead of the righteousness of Christ."⁸³

The effect of unbelief on the individual was devastating. It hardened the heart and seared the conscience. It puts any thoughts of eternity or judgment "quite out of view." Unbelief turns rebellious sin into "an innocent, harmless, pleasing thing." It removes "all restraints from the conscience" and "opens ten thousand avenues to every species of sin" so that "every lust, every imagination, and [every] sinful desire," are given a "loose rein." Finally, unbelief "fixes the soul for irrecoverable and everlasting destruction" and closes all possible doors to mercy.⁸⁴ In this hopeless state all mankind finds itself, with no way out and no chance of belief except for the extended hand of God's mercy through the work of Christ and the Spirit.

Like other evangelicals, McGready liked to compare the human condition to the Valley of Dry Bones described in Ezekiel 37. Those dry and dead bones provided an easily communicated "emblem of the miserable and helpless condition of spiritually dead sinners." Humans had no more power to correct their own spiritual deadness than did those bones have the power to correct their own physical deadness. "Nothing less than the breath of the Lord can quicken the dry bones . . . [or] convert the sinner."⁸⁵ One dead in sin "can no more change his heart, than the dry bones in the valley can reanimate themselves and rise from the dead."⁸⁶

McGready echoed this understanding of the human

condition elsewhere in his sermons. The faith that embraces Christ, he wrote, cannot be produced by nature but must be "implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit of God." The sinner "cannot exercise" faith simply by the application and operation of "natural powers upon the truth of God's word and promise, for such a faith devils and damned reprobates may possess." Indeed, to McGready's understanding, the unconverted are no more capable of turning to Christ than "a man born blind is of opening his eyes and beholding the natural light, or as a dead corpse is of performing the works of a living man."⁸⁷

Fortunately, the Spirit of God does call individuals to Christ despite continued human resistance. Even with the work of the Spirit, though, conversion does not easily come. Humans, even those under the call, turn first to the covenant of works to save themselves by appealing to their own goodness.⁸⁸ The Spirit prevents this by flashing upon the "sinner's mind a deep and heart-rending sense of his sin and misery."⁸⁹ When the sinner sees his or her sin, the immediate reaction is to redouble one's efforts at salvation by works by breaking off from "swearing, drinking, Sabbath breaking, gaming, dancing, &c." When the Spirit persists with "greater light and power" and shows the sinner that "this negative righteousness is a bed too short to stretch himself on, and a covering too narrow to wrap himself in," the sinner turns to religious reformations such as praying,

reading the Scriptures, and attending preaching. In effect, McGready said, such a person "makes a Christ of his duties." The Spirit continues to bore in, continually showing the sinner his or her "unclean, polluted and vile" state. Now the sinner tries to "amend his amendments, and to reform his reformations," hoping somehow to please God and relieve his guilt by human exertion. His heart may be affected, causing tears and great emotion, but these are false gods for the sinner takes comfort in them as a sign of conversion. Next the Spirit of God "redoubles the light of conviction" and shows to the sinner "his pride, hypocrisy, atheism, legality and unbelief, his vile affections and filthy imaginations, with ten thousand other abominations he never discovered before." The response is again similar, as the individual under conviction, "like a man using every possible exertion to build a dam across a rapid current, . . . piles up an immense bank of duties, prayers, tears, resolutions and desires." The individual now senses a melting heart and "enlargements" but still cleaves to the old covenant and his own efforts. Soon, however, the feelings fade, and the conviction returns with "redoubled vigor." Still the sinner attempts to "spin a faith out of his own bowels," but unsuccessfully because "he can no more believe or act faith, than he can raise the dead." Only when the sinner is finally "dead to all hope in himself[,] stripped of his own righteousness, [and] as naked as a new-born infant" does

Christ come. In the most "dismal, hopeless, helpless, desperate time" God "shines into his heart" and the sinner "discovers the glory, beauty, preciousness, suitableness, and sufficiency of Christ Jesus."⁹⁰

This point of conversion, the new birth, McGready liked to call the "saving sight." At that instant one gains his or her first view of Christ. What is a view of Christ? It is not an inexplicable thing, for a person with a view of Christ can give a "rational and scriptural account of the matter." It is also not the emotions and feelings that accompany conversion, "for although these things may attend a saving view of Christ, yet they are essentially different from it. It is also not the effect of particular scripture passages brought to mind, for Satan can do this to deceive. It is also not a "visible light or apparition" seen by the eye or heard by the ear. It cannot be "received by the external organs of sense; neither can it be communicated in dreams or visions." These, most likely, are "delusions of the Devil." A saving sight is an ability to "behold the attributes of God" through the "eye of understanding when enlightened by the Spirit of God." Such a view "calms the troubled conscience, melts the hard heart, and transforms the soul into the image of God"; it is not seen by the eye or by imagination but "plainly and conspicuously beheld by the understanding."⁹¹

Conversion was more than a matter of seeing Christ, for

through conversion an individual is "in Christ." Those who are saved, the elect, McGready argued, had always been "virtually in Christ, as their new covenant head, before they had an existence." Reception of Christ at conversion turned that virtual existence into actual existence. Reception of Christ meant that Christ, not Adam, now stood as covenant head, and by "his merits they are pardoned and accepted with God; by his righteousness they stand justified before God; by his Spirit they are sanctified and prepared for their heavenly inheritance."⁹²

Conversion stood at the center of McGready's and most evangelicals' lives. Without conversion, Christian life was not possible. It is difficult to say with exactness how McGready developed his understanding of conversion. Undoubtedly, the teachings of his Pennsylvania and North Carolina tutors played a significant role. His own experience, as well, affected his understanding: his own conversion paralleled exactly the description of the process he gave in his sermons. His education in traditional Presbyterian doctrine, including election and covenant theology, combined with experience that confirmed the doctrine, produced an eighteenth- rather than nineteenth-century understanding of conversion.

McGready's theology of conversion can be put into the eighteenth-century category on two main counts. First, his emphasis on the inability of the individual in the process

of conversion is much more reflective of Calvinist than Arminian thought. If a move from Calvinism to Arminianism marks a basic divide between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century revivalism--and virtually every work on American revivalism agrees that it does--then on the question of the role of the individual in conversion McGready must fall in the former group. His emphasis as well on Adam and Christ as covenant heads reflects a Calvinist orientation. His thinking on these points is much more similar to eighteenth-century revivalists such as Jonathan Edwards, Gilbert Tennent, and even George Whitefield, than to nineteenth-century revivalists like Peter Cartwright, Barton Stone, or Charles Finney.⁹³

Secondly, the degree of difficulty in the conversion process is reflective of eighteenth-, or even seventeenth-century theology moreso than nineteenth. The excruciating spiritual torment described in McGready's sermons reminds one more of Thomas Shepard's conversion narratives, for instance, than the easier, act-of-the-will conversions of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, conversion increasingly became a simple choice of the individual rather than a theological ordeal.⁹⁴ For McGready, conversion could never be a simple thing because of the utterly hopeless and helpless state humans started off in.

It is quite appropriate that McGready's understanding

of conversion be the first theological topic taken up in this dissertation because it is the key to understanding the rest of his theology and life. His approach to other theological subjects such as sanctification, homiletics, and the final judgment all flowed from his understanding of how humanity can escape from its hopelessly sinful situation. Everything that he did as a minister in the Presbyterian church was aimed at the promotion and confirmation of the salvation of his parishioners and anyone else who would listen. He insisted on a "true" conversion always, however, and brooked no compromise with those he believed offered a false salvation; a false conversion was simply no conversion at all. Be they friends or be they enemies, McGready would not tolerate false teaching on the doctrinal point of conversion. Getting this doctrine wrong, he believed, threatened to undermine a revivalist's entire effort.

The exciting part of revivalism for a Calvinist like McGready was that he knew God had and would continue to draw individuals to salvation as long as time continued. As McGready indicated, God did not use visions, apparitions, or other mystical forms to bring sinners to salvation. Instead, God used the power of the Word, especially through preaching. Preaching had long held an important position in Protestantism in general and in Reformed circles in particular.⁹⁵ For revivalists, preaching was the chief

tool employed in spreading the gospel. Developing a preaching style would be a key part of any evangelical's education and progression, and that was certainly true of McGready.

In addition to gaining from his teachers an understanding of conversion, McGready garnered from them the basic elements of his preaching style both in content and in form. Throughout the rest of this work, various aspects of the content of McGready's sermons and the theology they contained will be discussed, but an analysis of the form and style of McGready's sermons likewise proves illuminating.

To contemporaries and historians McGready has always been best known as a "fire and brimstone" preacher who spent his time in the pulpit warning listeners of the judgment to come and the punishment that would follow for all the unsaved. That reputation is not undeserved, but it is also a technique that was not particularly new in McGready's day. Many of the Great Awakening revivalists were well known as fire and brimstone preachers, including Jonathan Edwards and Gilbert Tennent.⁹⁶ As John Boles put it, such preaching was "as old as pietistic religion itself."⁹⁷ Indeed, when McGready's hellfire reputation is mentioned, James Glendinning and the Shotts revivals of the 1620s immediately come to mind, not to mention John Knox. More immediately McGready learned his charismatic style from two of his Pennsylvania teachers--McMillan and Smith.

McMillan did not excel at preaching, but his communicants were "often roused, terrified, and melted to tears" by his efforts in the pulpit. He had a particular ability to "riddle the sinners over Hell" but balanced his preaching on the "terrors of the law" with the "sweet promises and encouraging invitations of the Gospel."⁹⁸

Death and judgement, heaven and hell were realities to him, and he urged men to flee from the wrath to come. He alarmed the careless, encouraged the timid, consoled the afflicted, instructed the ignorant, confuted the skeptic, and reproved the proud and presumptuous, the hypocritical and contentious, the wicked and worldly-minded.⁹⁹

Joseph Smith proved to be the "most fiery and eloquent speaker" among McGready's three teachers.¹⁰⁰ Smith apparently did his "most effective work" as a preacher rather than a teacher and spent most of his pulpit time "preaching on the terrors of the divine law and the horrors of hell."¹⁰¹ He concentrated on those topics so much that he acquired the nickname "Hell Fire Smith" from some of the irreverent locals.¹⁰² One more appreciative communicant described Smith thus: "I never met a man who could so completely unbar the gates of hell, and make me look so far down into the dark bottomless abyss, or like him could so throw open the gates of heaven, and let me glance at the insufferable brightness of the great White Throne."¹⁰³ McGready's vigorous hellfire preaching cannot be considered an innovation of the early national period or something unique to him.

Beyond the frequent emphasis on hell and damnation, McGready's sermons are instructive in the form they took and his method of delivery. Their structure is most reflective of what was widely known in Reformed circles as the "plain style," or what a recent linguist labeled "text-and-context."¹⁰⁴ The characteristic aspects of the plain style were the use of numbered divisions and subdivisions to organize the sermon and give structure to the theological arguments presented in the text and the almost complete absence of illustrations, picture words, analogies, or personal observations. Ministers simply introduced a biblical text and then proceeded to exegete that text as plainly and straightforwardly as possible. Perry Miller described sermons in the plain style as "more like a lawyer's brief than a work of art." The plain style of preaching arose in all the European Reformed churches during the seventeenth century, and was codified in a variety of homiletic manuals.¹⁰⁵

The plain style did not reach McGready's day completely unchanged, however. The Great Awakening had loosened up the stiff formality of the plain style. Although the numbering system and the order which flowed from it continued basically intact, more emphasis was placed on extemporaneous preaching, especially during the closing, or application, section of the sermon. Jonathan Edwards and Gilbert Tennent both followed this pattern. Tennent gave the following

preaching advice to a soon-to-be ordained minister: "After the understanding is informed by a calm and methodical explication of divine truth, doubtless all the other powers of the soul should be pathetically addressed, . . . all the arts of persuasion should be used in order to compel sinners to come in to the gospel feast."¹⁰⁶ Tennent's and Edwards's movement in this direction stopped far short of the largely unordered and freeflowing type of sermon which came into popularity soon after the Revolution and predominated during the nineteenth century, particularly in revivalistic circles.¹⁰⁷

When McGready preached he followed this modified form of the plain style. He apparently never read his sermons or used his sermon notes while preaching, but that does not necessarily imply that he spoke extemporaneously. Rather, he prepared himself so well through two days of intense study and writing that he could deliver his sermon with "fluency and correctness" despite his lack of notes.¹⁰⁸ As for his delivery, he normally began calmly and solemnly but "waxed warmer" as the sermon progressed.¹⁰⁹ During the application McGready could be quite physically expressive. Stone described his manner as "the perfect reverse of elegance."¹¹⁰ George Whitefield had had a similar reputation many years earlier.¹¹¹

The structure of his sermons certainly reflected the plain style. In every instance McGready used the

traditional numerical technique to divide and subdivide his sermons, no matter what the topic. In a sermon on Christ's plan of salvation, for instance, he divided the topic into three main headings and subdivided each of those into eight, six, and five parts, respectively.¹¹² When approaching the topic of the grace of God, he divided his sermon again into three general parts, each with as many as eight subsections, and gave one of the subsections five even smaller divisions.¹¹³ In explaining hypocrites McGready divided one of his two main sections into thirteen subsections.¹¹⁴ He even divided the funeral sermon for his wife into three parts, each with as many as nine sub-parts, and some of those with smaller sections.¹¹⁵ The examples could run endlessly, but all would illustrate that McGready in a sermon normally presented the text and then explicated it by means of divisions and subdivisions and sometimes sub-subdivisions in the same seventeenth- and eighteenth-century style of his Reformed ancestors.

The plain style would largely fade from view in the nineteenth century. The switch began during the early national period but did not take complete hold until well into the nineteenth century. Preaching by the 1850s, especially among revivalists, had become almost fully extemporaneous, and the numerical form virtually extinct.¹¹⁶ Nathan Hatch placed the death of the "classic age of the American sermon" in the early national period,

calling the popular preachers of that era "communication entrepreneurs who stripped the sermon of its doctrinal spine and its rhetorical dress."¹¹⁷ Indeed, Hatch used the new style of "vernacular preaching" as an important proof in his overall thesis of the democratization of American Christianity between 1790 and 1820. Among those who practiced this new style Hatch listed McGready, whom he compared with such preachers as Lorenzo Dow, Elias Smith, and Billy Hibbard.¹¹⁸ On the simple grounds of numerical numbering, McGready cannot have fit in with that group. Instead, on the basis of sermon structure he belongs more with the revivalists of the 1740s rather than the 1790s or 1820s.

McGready's sermons differed from other contemporaries like Dow and Smith in another way--the tone of the language used. Dow and Smith began employing "coarse language, earthy humor, biting sarcasm, and commonsense reasoning" as well as stories and illustrations from everyday life to make their points rather than relying on biblical references and confessional authority alone. These new preachers refused to "abide by traditional theological etiquette"¹¹⁹ but gave the rough frontier audiences exactly what they wanted to hear in the way they wanted to hear it.

Even the closest reading of McGready's sermons will turns up no coarse language, little or no storytelling or humor, and an extensive use of biblical citations to support

his points. He did use picture language and often employed what could be called visualization techniques, but the language level is always dignified and pious. When stories are used they are normally historical rather than illustrative or allegorical in nature, and McGready warned against sermons stuffed with "geography, philosophy,--with new speculations, and curious criticisms in divinity."¹²⁰ In tone as in structure, McGready's sermons are much more reminiscent of Tennent or Edwards than of Dow or Smith.

One final aspect of McGready's sermons deserves attention. Revivalists of McGready's day have often been accused of being ignorant and unknowledgeable, and McGready has sometimes been associated with that charge. Miller pictured them as "little capable of cerebation."¹²¹ Richard Hofstadter described them as "anti-intellectual," a theme taken up subsequently by Sidney Mead and Jon Butler.¹²² Butler argued that post-Revolutionary revivalists showed a "marked tendency toward a reductionism and antitheologicalism, if not anti-intellectualism."¹²³ The general charge is often true, and some revivalists of the period gloried in their lack of education, training, and theological knowledge.¹²⁴

McGready simply does not fit this pattern of an ignorant, anti-theological, and anti-intellectual revivalist. McGready venerated learning and knowledge--not for their own sake but because knowledge, especially

biblical knowledge, prevented error and falsehood from creeping into the church. Human knowledge, if too highly exalted, could become a hindrance to salvation but was not in and of itself evil. McGready did, after all, attend school in two states and later opened two schools himself and taught at a third. Furthermore, clues in his sermons indicate at least a medium level of education, probably far above many other revivalist preachers and even farther above the average person of the day. His sermons make historical references to classical figures such as Socrates, Flavius Josephus, Porphyry, Severus, Cyrus, Alexander, Hannibal, Scipio, and Caesar, as well as more recent ones like Tamerlane, Frederic of Prussia, Gustavus Adolphus, the Duke of Marlborough, William III, Napoleon Bonaparte, Thomas Paine, and Constantin-Francois Volney, a French Revolutionary who corresponded with Thomas Jefferson.¹²⁵ Make no mistake, McGready was no Jefferson or Edwards, or for that matter even a Timothy Dwight. His sermons clearly illustrate, though, that he was at least moderately well read and unafraid to display his knowledge to his listeners. Furthermore, the spelling, syntax, and vocabulary of McGready's sermons point to a sophistication above that of an average frontier lay preacher. His sermons indicate on just these simple levels that his education far exceeded the level of the preachers who Hatch argued heralded the new democratic age of American Christianity.

McGready's understanding of conversion as well as his homiletic style and content point to a minister who is tradition-minded rather than innovative. He could only be so because of the influence of Caldwell, McMillan, and Smith during his formative years. The personal and educational influence of those three men in the young McGready is critical in understanding the rest of his career. Yet the mere reception of a traditional education and theology as a young boy does not guarantee lifelong acceptance. The events of his career will provide many opportunities to confirm or repudiate his heritage.

McGready's apprenticeship came to an end in the late summer of 1788 as he approached his thirtieth year. On August 13 the Old Redstone Presbytery licensed him and another man to preach in the presbyterial bounds, both "having given satisfaction as to their accomplishments in literature, as to their experimental acquaintance with religion, and as to their proficiency in divinity and other studies."¹²⁶ The presbytery assigned McGready to supply a number of the neighboring churches over the next two months.¹²⁷ Soon, however, he grew in the desire to return to his family and home in North Carolina, and late in that year he set forth from Pennsylvania to Orange Presbytery in North Carolina. Before he reached the Tarheel state, he visited for a time in the Old Dominion, tarrying in Prince Edward County, the home of Hampden-Sydney college, then in

the midst of an intense revival. This last experience of his youth sealed McGready's career as a revivalist preacher, for from Prince Edward County he "went on his way with a burning heart" to North Carolina, where he took his first two churches.¹²⁸

Hampden-Sydney College in rural Southside Virginia had been founded in 1775 by Presbyterian ministers with Samuel Smith, son of Robert Smith of Pequea, as its first president. The college had opened with over a hundred students and had been quite successful until disruptions associated with the Revolution caused its temporary demise.¹²⁹ Samuel Smith left the college in 1779 and was succeeded in his post by his brother, John Blair Smith. Under this latter Smith's leadership, the Hampden-Sydney revival flared up.

John Blair Smith had grown up under his father's tutelage and had been greatly affected at age fourteen by a revival in his father's church. John was a serious adolescent who seems to have been driven by his elder brother's talents and successes in the ministry and pulpit. He "drove himself to the limit of his physical endurance to overcome the disparity in their [his and Samuel's] natural abilities," often bringing on dangerous illness. In 1773, at only eighteen, Smith graduated from Princeton and returned home to Pequea to teach in his father's school. When Hampden-Sydney opened in 1775 Samuel invited him to

Virginia to be a tutor at the new college. By 1777 he had become a ministerial candidate and in 1779 was admitted to the presbytery. The next year he succeeded his brother both as president of the college and as pastor of Briery and Cumberland churches in the county.¹³⁰

With the end of the war the college quickly revived as the student population increased "until the rooms were as full as they well could contain."¹³¹ Despite the promising numbers the student population was quite dead to the experimental religion of the Smiths of Pequea. Of all the students "there was not one who was known to be any in way serious and thoughtful upon religion; they were generally very vicious and profane, and treated religion and religious persons with great contempt and ridicule."¹³² A student later recounted how he had hid his Christianity because he believed he was "the only serious boy amongst sixty or eighty students, and was often laughed at on account of [his] religious principles."¹³³

This circumstance began to change in the late 1780s. In 1786 and 1787 the Baptists and the Methodists in the area began their own revivals, but instead of opposing them, Smith determined to "outpreach, outpray, and outlive them."¹³⁴ To that end he formed a prayer-meeting among the elders of his church to pray for revival. This private meeting quickly expanded into prayer circles among members of the congregation.¹³⁵ Apparently simultaneously, four

students at the college took it upon themselves to meet every Saturday afternoon to "sing a hymn, and read a chapter [of the Bible] and pray, in turns." The first meeting they held in the woods, but the second was forced indoors due to inclement weather. When the other students learned what the four were doing, "a noisy mob was raised, which collected in the passage before our door, and began to thump at the door, and whoop, and swear, and threaten vengeance, if we did not forbear and cease all such exercises in College for the future." The mob demanded that Smith put a stop to these students, who were "singing, and praying and carrying on like the Methodists." Much to everyone's surprise, Smith rejoiced at the four students' actions, invited them to his parlor for the next Saturday meeting, and promised, "I will be with you--conduct your meeting for you--and render you all the assistance you may need."¹³⁶

That assistance turned out to be quite formidable. Smith began to "preach with more earnestness."¹³⁷ One participant recalled that Smith "underwent a remarkable change in his own feelings and in the fervency of his preaching, so that he became one of the most powerful preachers I ever heard."¹³⁸ Another student described Smith's preaching as "of the most animating, pungent practical character, feeling close for the conscience and applying truth home to the heart," and another called it "plain, practical and very fervid; but perfectly free from

ranting. The Calvinistic doctrines were conspicuous in his sermons."¹³⁹ Smith now "threw himself" into the revival with preaching, prayer meetings, and counseling to the point of physical collapse.¹⁴⁰

Smith's efforts did not go unrewarded. At the next meeting "nearly the whole of the students came out," and within two weeks they were forced to move to the College Hall as "fully half of the students in College appeared deeply impressed."¹⁴¹ Soon it was "as rare a thing to find one who was not religious, as it had been formerly to find one that was. The frivolities and amusements once so prevalent, were all abandoned, and gave place to singing, serious conversation, and prayer-meetings."¹⁴² The students carried the revival out into the communities in the surrounding counties so that there was "not a word about politics, but all religion in public and private."¹⁴³ "Every other business appeared for a time forgotten in the all-absorbing interests of religion."¹⁴⁴ Wrote Robert Smith who had traveled from Pequea to join his son's work:

I have seen nothing equal to it for extensive spread, power and spiritual glory since the years '40 and '41. The work has spread for an hundred miles, but by far the most powerful and general in John Smith's congregations, which take in part of three counties. . . . The blessed work has spread among people of every description, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, orthodox and heterodox, sober and rude, white and black, young and old; especially the youth, whom it seems to have seized generally."¹⁴⁵

In this highly charged atmosphere James McGready had

his first experiential taste of revival. He undoubtedly had heard stories from his teachers in Pennsylvania about the revivals of old, but until he had traveled to Prince Edward County, he had never experienced one first hand. In Pennsylvania he had been taught and had accepted the evangelical contention that only experimental Christianity led to salvation. Every minister should strive to be the agent whereby the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion took place. Stories of revival were no match for a first-hand experience of one. The impression the Hampden-Sydney revival and the efforts of John Blair Smith made on McGready and the challenge it presented to him to replicate the power of revival must have been immense. More than two hundred years of Presbyterian revivalism came alive for McGready at Hampden-Sydney.

In the first thirty years of his life, James McGready traveled from a young farm-boy in Pennsylvania to a licensed preacher heading to North Carolina. At each stop along his journey he either learned or experienced something which prepared him for his life as a revivalistic preacher. At David Caldwell's school and church in North Carolina he gained a basic education in both elementary skills and Presbyterian doctrine. Back in Pennsylvania he improved his theological knowledge, but more importantly he underwent a conversion experience and acquired the preaching skills and

techniques which he would later use with such effectiveness. On his way home to North Carolina he stayed awhile in Virginia where he experienced first-hand the power and excitement of a full-fledged revival and saw in John Blair Smith just how effective a preacher could be in promoting it. Each stage contributed substantially to his emergence as a Presbyterian revivalist.

No one person dominated his early years. Rather, the efforts of many, some known, others anonymous, combined to produce in James McGready a skilled preacher committed to the experimental New Light doctrines of regeneration and conversion, one who had both experienced conversion and witnessed the conversions of many others. The efforts of the men who shaped McGready's life combined to create a dynamic preacher on a mission to promote Reformed revival wherever he settled. With this background and that vision James McGready arrived in North Carolina sometime around 1790, dissatisfied with the current state of religion in America and determined to change his little corner of the world for the glory of God.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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3. Pennsylvania Gazette, 20 November 1729; quoted in Joseph J. Kelley, Jr., Pennsylvania: The Colonial Years, 1681-1776 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1980), 183.
4. Margaret Adair Hunter, "Education in Pennsylvania Promoted by the Presbyterian Church 1726-1837" (Ph.D. diss., Temple, 1937), 34.
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6. William Henry Foote, Sketches of North Carolina (New York: Robert Carter, 1846), 368.
7. Ibid. It is difficult, of course, to know how much the adult McGready is instilling the young McGready with the perspective of his later years. Indeed, this is a difficult problem not only for such personal insights as this, but for his theology as well. Unfortunately, there is no way to overcome this difficulty, since virtually no personal or theological writings are extant from his youth. These insights are, at the very least, an interesting sidelight into the perspective of the adult McGready.
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25. Arnett, David Caldwell, 7.
26. Charles Lee Smith, The History of Education in North Carolina (Washington: Bureau of Education, 1888), 28.
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28. Arnett, David Caldwell, 1.
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31. Ethel Stephens Arnett, Greensboro, North Carolina (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 120.
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47. Guthrie, John McMillan, 83; Dwight R. Guthrie, "John McMillan," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society 33 (June 1955): 75.
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49. Coleman, Banners, 7; Hunter, "Education in Pennsylvania," 140.
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52. Alexander, Biographical Sketches, 204-207.
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54. History of the Presbytery of Redstone (Washington, Pa.: Observer Book and Job Print, 1889), 5. Hunter, "Education in Pennsylvania," 141-233.
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69.Ibid., 298-303.

70.Ibid., 38-39.

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73.Ibid., 180-183.

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81. Ibid., 269-273.

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83. Ibid., 328-333.

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93. The best historical analysis specifically on the question of conversion in eighteenth and nineteenth century America can be found in John Opie, Jr., "Conversion and Revivalism: An Internal History from Jonathan Edwards through Charles Grandison Finney," (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 1963). See also Opie, "James McGready," 445-455.

94. See Opie, "Conversion and Revivalism," passim.

95. See, for instance, Perry Miller, New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (1939, reprint; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 300-362.

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98. Guthrie, "John McMillan," 71.

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108. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 372. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 261.

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115. Ibid., 409-430.

116. Reynolds, "Pulpit Storytelling," 481-488.

117. Hatch, Democratization, 138.

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137. Wesley M. Gewehr, The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790 (1930, reprint; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 179.

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139. Foote, Sketches of Virginia, 424-425.

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141. Foote, Sketches of Virginia, 418.

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Chapter Three--The Frustrating Years, 1789-1798

The decade of McGready's life that followed the excitement and success of the Hampden-Sydney revival consisted of disappointment heaped upon failure. Between 1789 and 1798 McGready expended immense energy to encourage revival first in North Carolina and later Kentucky. On several occasions he appeared to be on the verge of success, but each time opposition or apathy arose to squelch his efforts. McGready plodded onward, sometimes discouraged but never willing to quit. He understood revivals in much the same way he understood conversions. One could work and strive, but in the end revival would only come when, where, and if God wanted it to. McGready's decade of defeat proved to be the seedtime for eventual success. Among the converts to evangelical Christianity through his preaching and teaching in North Carolina were a body of men who later formed the core of Presbyterian revivalists in Kentucky. These evangelists, McGready's spiritual and theological children, following McGready's lead, turned failure in the 1790s to victory during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Having had his eyes opened to the possibility and fervor of revival at Hampden-Sydney, McGready traveled the

hundred miles or so to Orange County, North Carolina, in late 1789 or early 1790. At the time, the county contained the two present-day counties of Alamance and Orange; McGready settled in the western portion, the section later to become Alamance. Orange County resembled the many other piedmont counties of North and South Carolina. The soil of the piedmont region had over the years proved more difficult to clear than the sandy coastal plain. As a result, farmers there generally held smaller tracts of land than farmers to the east, and small farmers made up the largest socio-economic group of the region.¹ During the second half of the eighteenth century, three-quarters of Orange County farmers held between one hundred and five hundred acres, and only five percent held either below one hundred or above one thousand. In 1790 only fifty-five citizens owned more than one thousand acres, and even in 1800 the largest farm was only 4,417 acres.² Partly because of the predominance of small farms, slaveholding was not as widespread in Orange County as in other parts of North Carolina and the south. The vast majority of residents owned no slaves. In fact, only about nine percent of the county's farmers owned slaves, and of that number, approximately ninety-five percent possessed between one and four, with the other five percent owning fewer than ten.³ As these numbers indicate, the area to which McGready came consisted mostly of small-to-medium-sized farms that contained few or no black slaves.

If Orange County was homogeneous in its economic composition, such was not the case with regard to religious, national, and cultural background. In terms of religious and ethnic demography, piedmont North Carolina resembled the variety of the middle colonies of the late colonial period, which is not surprising since many of Orange's settlers came from that region. McGready's Scotch-Irish countrymen were among the first and most numerous immigrants into the area. Some Scotch-Irish trickled in during the 1740s, but the largest movement entered around 1751 following a series of land grants along the Haw and Little rivers, and in the New Hope area of the Piedmont. Buffalo Presbyterian Church on Buffalo Creek in Guilford County formed in 1756, the first Presbyterian church in the region. Germans followed closely behind the Scotch-Irish, settling after 1752 on the west side of the Haw River. English Virginians settled in the northern reaches of Orange County, stretching out along the Hico River and accompanying smaller numbers of Irish and Welsh.

National diversity brought religious diversity. Presbyterians, Anglicans, Moravians, and Quakers--the latter group constituting a significant portion of the northern North Carolina Piedmont population--counted the most members.⁴ A Presbyterian minister did not normally concern himself with those outside his denominational fold but concentrated on those congregations that had called him to

their service.⁵

Around the year 1790 McGready received a call from two churches located in Orange County--Haw River and Stony Creek.⁶ Both belonged to the Orange Presbytery, which had been created out of the Hanover Presbytery in 1770 with only seven ministers.⁷ Orange Presbytery extended south and west of the Virginia line and grew steadily so that by 1793 it contained thirty-one churches with twenty ministers.⁸ Stony Creek Church was built on some twenty acres of donated land in the northwest corner of Orange (now Alamance) County on a knoll that slopes down to Stony Creek.⁹ McGready soon took up residence, settling three or four miles below High Rock on the Haw River, about equidistant from both congregations.¹⁰ One of his first actions was to make a change in his domestic status; in 1790 he married Nancy Thompson, a Presbyterian like himself.¹¹ Having put his house in order, McGready turned next to pursuing professional interests.

Having grown up and been converted in the Presbyterian educational system, McGready was convinced that education could be an important tool for promoting revival. In both of the revivals McGready had seen, as well as many that he must have heard about dating back to Neshaminy and the Great Awakening, schools and schooling played a crucial role. McGready concentrated his educational efforts in North Carolina in two directions. Following in the tradition of

his mentors, he opened a classical school in his home. Although nothing specific is known about the school, its curriculum most probably followed the pattern laid out by his teachers, Caldwell and McMillan. McGready and one of his brothers served as the primary instructors of this school which never grew very large and folded after McGready left North Carolina. McGready did educate there several locally prominent future evangelical leaders, including Ezekiel B. Currie, the leader of Presbyterian Great Revival efforts in North Carolina in 1802.¹²

McGready's educational interests also returned him to Caldwell's school in Guilford County as a part-time instructor. Later accounts relate that students favored McGready and that he had a long-lasting influence over many who studied under him there.¹³ He is given credit for the embrace of evangelical religion by more than thirty students at the school, including several who would work with him in Kentucky during the Great Revival.¹⁴ McGready had seen and undoubtedly had heard that revival came best when a group of men, rather than just one, worked for its arrival. He would have understood his educational efforts as a crucial step in that direction.

McGready also believed that preaching could spark revival and that it constituted the main responsibility of a pastor. Protestants in general and Reformed Protestants in particular had always placed a high premium on the preaching

role of the minister. McGready was no different: "Here is expressed, in a few words, the whole duty of the minister of the gospel, viz. to declare the whole counsel of God."¹⁵ God had told to his messengers, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins."¹⁶ Why? To "alarm and awaken Christless sinners from their security, and to bring them to a sense of their danger and guilt." How? By "roar[ing] the thunders of Sinai in their ears, and flash[ing] the lightnings of Jehovah's vengeance in their faces."¹⁷ Only through preaching could a minister hope to cut off all the hopes of the sinner and "point out the door of hope, and display the willingness and power of the blessed Jesus, to pardon, justify and save."¹⁸

McGready took to heart the Apostle Paul's instruction to his student Timothy about the necessity of preaching the Word even in the face of opposition. Paul wrote, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."¹⁹

From the evangelical perspective, North Carolina and the nation as a whole fit perfectly Paul's description of a people who could not "endure sound doctrine" and who had turned aside to myths. Numerous writers and preachers lamented the spiritual state of the nation in the 1790s, calling it an age of "free thinking" when skepticism was "aggressive, scoffing, irreligious and irreverent."²⁰ Evangelicals identified the Revolutionary War and the close association of the United States with the French during and after that war as causes of this sorry spiritual state of affairs. One writer argued that war always brings evil because armies naturally carry with them vice and corruption. Beyond that, evangelicals blamed the Revolution for distracting preachers from emphasizing experimental religion in favor of sermons on patriotic themes and the duties of war.²¹ Evangelicals found the end of the war no more to their liking as they complained that most Americans concerned themselves with restoring lost fortunes or protecting newly won civil liberties rather than investigating the state of their souls.²²

If evangelicals found the war damaging to their cause, association with the French and their Enlightenment proved an even more bitter pill to swallow. Benjamin Franklin's homespun Americanism had been the rage of polite French society during the 1770s, and French enlightenment and deistic thought returned the favor in the 1780s, swaying

some of America's most influential leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. Paine received much of the blame for transporting French "infidelity and impiety" to the intellectual class of America, an infidelity and impiety that had been quickly copied by the "uncultivated" masses.²³ French skepticism hit particularly hard at the doctrines of evangelical Christianity, and American evangelicals, worried that their countrymen might "renounce the religion of their fathers, and embrace a cold skepticism,"²⁴ perceived the importation of the "infidel opinions" of the French as a direct assault upon the truth of God and the future of the American nation.²⁵

Thinking about and preaching against Deism and skepticism certainly occupied much of McGready's pulpit time. Deism, as Jon Butler has pointed out, served as a useful label for evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike to attack a "broad list of [theological] evils."²⁶ McGready concerned himself with Deism both as an impediment to individual salvation and as an intellectual system that threatened to destabilize human society.

Deism threatened individual conversion because it provided an intellectual escape from the reality of man's sinfulness and drove individuals seeking salvation away from Christ. Deism to McGready meant a belief that the "Book of Creation is the unerring word of God, that it contains all things necessary to teach us our duty to God and man, and

that reason and the light of nature constitute a sufficient guide to lead us to true happiness." At that very point Deism broke down of its own weight, McGready argued, because reason alone, without a revelation from heaven, could never discern the way to salvation--Christ. Thus Deism was a dead-end road, a one-way street to damnation, because it offered no direction to solve the basic problem of man's sinfulness which he argued all of human history had so clearly illustrated.²⁷ Deists, he wrote, reject the Bible as "fable" and treat Christ as an "imposter," and thus "wilfully shut the door of mercy against themselves, and make their own damnation sure."²⁸ These "practical atheists" raise objection after objection but refuse to consider the possibility of the truth of the scriptures.²⁹

Such beliefs would be less dangerous if they concerned only the individual, but McGready argued that Deism threatened the stability of society as well. If Deism dominated society, he reasoned, individuals would "connive at sin" and "run into every excess without dreading the consequences."³⁰ Laws provide only a slight check against the evil tendencies of humans. The deist contention that man has no soul and that there is no existence after death "strikes at the foundation of all government and civil society" because if true many would be willing to "cheat, defraud, rob or steal, and heap up all the wealth and take all the pleasure that the world can afford" if they only had

to avoid the "lash of the civil law." Only God's higher law and higher punishment can keep man's sinfulness in check. The removal of God from society tends to "unhinge" society and "lets loose man's depraved disposition, to the commission of all manner of wickedness."³¹ McGready did not relate this point directly to the United States but applied it in general to human history and society.

Formalists, or "christianized deists," distressed McGready as much as deists, and formed the second group against which he waged his revivalist career. This group, he said, professed to believe the Bible and conform to the Christian faith but refused to have anything to do with its "spirituality." The ideas of the conversion experience, of the new creature, of communion with God are to them merely "wild delusions" and the result of "heated imaginations." These religious people, he complained, could not stand what they call the "whining, bawling, conversion preachers" but rather prefer a "rational and philosophical" religion that allows for worldly pleasures upon a "polite scale." These individuals, McGready charged, were like the Israelites of old whose empty feasts and sacrifices eventually wearied God, and like the Pharisees of Christ's time who prayed for hours on end and strictly observed all Jewish laws and customs but were in reality only "deceived hypocrites."³²

Individuals who made no pretense to religion constituted the third group that McGready perceived as

opposing his ministry. Three basic types made up this group: the unthinking, the uninvolved, and the openly sinful. The unthinking he defined as ignorant and uncaring of all religion. The uninvolved rarely attend services, or if they do they do not hear a single word, or worse yet they sit outside and fill their minds with jesting and laughing or with "temporal business." They return from church not knowing what the preacher said, "but with great exactness they can describe the color and fashion of every dress, coat and bonnet in the congregation." The openly sinful flaunt their devilish nature and "live in the love and practice of sin." This type, he said, simply "makes a mock at sin" and only laughs at a minister's warning of his or her impending doom.³³

McGready well understood, of course, that these types were nothing new in the 1790s. Opposition to the gospel had existed since its inception. It seemed to many evangelical clergy, however, including McGready, that anti-Christian sentiment and accompanying immorality had sharply increased in post-Revolutionary America.³⁴ A chronicler of North Carolina complained much about "parties for dancing," the "free and dangerous" use of "spiritous [sic] liquors," and horseracing. Evangelical preachers worried that many in the common population considered "freedom from moral obligation as part of civil liberty."³⁵

This "rising immorality," if there indeed was such, met

McGready soon after his arrival in North Carolina, during the funeral of a church member. Many funerals of the time, including this one, included the "very objectionable" practice of consuming alcohol. "The solemnity of the occasion was sometimes lost in the excitement, and scenes of drinking invaded the house of mourning."³⁶ Yet to preserve an air of dignity for the occasion the participants usually asked a local clergyman to "open the scene of eating and drinking by asking a blessing on the refreshments prepared."³⁷ Being the newest pastor of the area, McGready was called upon to deliver such a blessing. Shocked at what he considered to be gross immorality at the point of passage from this life to the next, he bluntly refused, saying, "No, I will not be guilty of insulting God by asking a blessing upon what I know to be wrong."³⁸ Such activities fell exactly into his description of formalists and revelers given above. His refusal, not surprisingly, appalled many at the affair and caused a "great sensation."³⁹

His obstinacy at this point laid the foundation for much future bitterness and division within his churches in Orange County. Yet, on the point of alcoholic consumption he could not yield. Later in life he detailed his objections to alcohol in typically intricate fashion but reserved as his most important objection its effect on efforts at salvation. He related that in the three revivals with which he had been associated, no drunkards had ever

embraced Christ and the few who had made open professions "were no honor to the cause of Christ but a burden to the church; as they would be frequently dabbling with the Devil's bait, and as frequently drunk." The intemperate use of alcohol effectively "puts a man beyond hope" because although there may be repeated repentances, once the bottle is presented, the individual will "turn like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."⁴⁰ Deists, scoffers, and the ignorant provided McGready with a difficult challenge, but for alcoholics he found little hope.

Indeed, were it not for God's provision of Christ, McGready would know of no hope for any of humankind. Fortunately, he believed, God had provided a written record of Christ's sacrifice. Not all could read so God employed preachers and ministers after Christ the same way he had used prophets before Christ--to spread the message and continually call people to God. That basic task he understood to be the primary duty of a minister, but it was a duty that only a born-again minister could effectively perform.

In a sermon reminiscent of Gilbert Tennent's Danger of an Unconverted Ministry (1740), McGready outlined the qualifications and duties of a minister. No clearer picture of how McGready viewed his life's work exists. McGready outlined three basic qualifications for the ministry: a man

must be "savingsly converted [and] experimentally acquainted with the work of regeneration in their own souls; he must "live habitually as a scholar at the feet of Jesus; and he must "be called of God to the ministerial office especially." Those who did not fit this description could not preach the gospel because they naturally were more concerned with showing their own learning and erudition than the true means of conversion.⁴¹ The duty of the minister was basic and unambiguous: "declare all the counsel of God." In other words, preach: "Alarm and awaken Christless sinners Try the foundation of his people's hopes Direct the awakened sinner to Christ . . . , [and] comfort the people of God."⁴²

McGready's forcefulness in the pulpit described in chapter two derived partly from his training at the feet of Smith and McMillan, partly from an understanding of man's nearly hopeless state, but largely from his conception that preaching the gospel was his most important job. Preaching consumed his life and his career from first to last. No minister could produce a revival through preaching, but no revival could come without preaching. Given his list of enemies and difficulties, McGready may well have been surprised that his fiery appeal for revival and regeneration struck an almost immediate chord with the population of Orange County.

"McGready's revival," as it became known, spread

throughout the Carolina Piedmont during 1791.⁴³ That region had experienced evangelical revival before McGready. A short-lived one had taken place immediately after the American Revolution under the leadership of James Hall of Iredell. Hall's revival, however, contrasted sharply with those of the 1790s and later. Hall's preaching was marked by "simplicity, earnestness, and tenderness" and therefore produced a revival characterized by a "great solemnity and stillness."⁴⁴ McGready's preaching produced a more dramatic effect. In his churches and "wherever else he preached in the neighboring charges, the excitement on the subject of religion was great, and the inquiry about experimental godliness became very general."⁴⁵ McGready's revival led to more excitement than Hall's, but the participants in this early revival still did not experience the physical manifestations that marked revivals after 1800.⁴⁶ The revival of 1791 burned hot, but it also burned quickly and only locally, being "limited in extent and of short duration."⁴⁷ Before it ended McGready's revival had spread throughout Alamance, Orange, and Granville counties, as well as along the Hico and Dan Rivers, but it never pushed beyond the northern North Carolina Piedmont and lasted only one communion season.⁴⁸

The real significance of McGready's revival lay not in numbers or longevity but in the conversion of a handful of men to evangelical Presbyterianism, men who then decided to

follow McGready by becoming "zealous and efficient preachers" in much the same way that McGready followed McMillan, Dod, Smith, and the Tennents.⁴⁹ These notable converts included William Hodge, Barton W. Stone, William McGee, and Samuel McAdoo. Some young and some old, these men, fired by McGready's example, spread the revival within the area.⁵⁰ Hodge, for instance, had been a farmer until he heard McGready preach. At nearly fifty years of age he then found a "desire to preach rekindled," undertook studies at Caldwell's school, and became ordained in 1792. Hodge, known as the "Son of Consolation" in contrast to McGready, would, like the others, accompany or follow him to the west in the late 1790s where collectively they laid the groundwork for the Great Revival.⁵¹ In Paul Conkin's words, "the interconnections, the family-like network, thus persisted."⁵²

McGready's efforts at revival did not meet with the undivided approval of the residents of Orange County. Right from the start McGready had made himself "extremely unpopular by his unsparing invectives against horse-racing, gambling, and other vices."⁵³ Some families of "wealth and influence"--those with the most money to spend on "immorality"--naturally objected to his unrelenting condemnation of their loose religious habits and morals, until their dislike of him "exceeded all bounds."⁵⁴ McGready encountered opposition not only from the "openly

profane" outside his churches but also from the "nominal professors of religion" whom he had been so quick to rebuke.

In addition to the simple issue of morals, the opposition to McGready had an economic component. Some in and out of his churches complained that he distracted the people from their work by creating "unnecessary alarm about the eternal destiny of their souls."⁵⁵ What he met on a small scale in Orange county, Schmidt has identified as an increasingly common complaint against revival both in Scotland and America. Those most closely integrated into the rising capitalist bourgeois economy did not like the enormous work time that revivals or sacramental occasions took away from laborers and farmers and repeatedly sought to curtail those events.⁵⁶ Opposition to McGready therefore was based both on his condemnation of immorality as well as his encroachment on the work-week. For both causes, the wealthy in and out of his churches constituted the leadership of the anti-revival movement.

Verbal opposition became the least of McGready's worries sometime in 1795 or early 1796 when his enemies within the church moved beyond verbal persuasion in their efforts to oust or gag him. Once he had refused to heed their advice, the anti-revivalists took action to ensure his silence or departure. A portion of the opposition broke into the church at Stony Creek, removed the pulpit and some pews to the church yard and burned them. The group left a

letter to McGready, written in blood, warning him that "unless he desisted from his way of preaching, their vengeance would not be satisfied with the destruction of the pulpit; and his person would not be inviolate."⁵⁷ Faced with this challenge to his authority and to revival, he found himself with a clear choice: submit or fight. He chose the latter course.

The Sunday following the incident, McGready prepared a pertinent service for his congregation. After opening with prayer, he "let out" a hymn written by Isaac Watts with the following verses:

Will God forever cast us off?
His wrath forever smoke
Against the people of his love
His little chosen flock?

Think of the tribes so dearly bought
With their Redeemer's blood;
Nor let thy Zion be forgot
Where once thy glory stood.

Lift up thy feet and march in haste,
Aloud our ruin calls;
See what a wide and fearful waste
Is made within thy walls.

Where once thy churches pray'd and sang
Thy foes profanely roar;
Over thy gates their ensigns hang,
Sad tokens of their power.

How are the seats of worship broke!
They tear thy buildings down,
And he that deals the heaviest stroke
Procures the chief renown.

With flames they threaten to destroy
Thy children in their nest;
Come let us burn at once, they cry
The temple and the priest.

McGready then proceeded to preach a sermon designed to further condemn and embarrass those who opposed him, and as he saw it, God's work. He chose Matthew 23:37-38 for his text: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"⁵⁸ No record exists of exactly what McGready said in his sermon, but the hymn and sermon text are clear enough indications that his message that day was not conciliatory.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, McGready soon changed his mind about staying in Orange County to fight. It may be that the opposition held more power than he first imagined and that he felt compelled to leave for his own personal or family safety. It may also be that he decided his presence constituted a hindrance to the growth of his churches because of the intense personal battles that had raged since his arrival in Orange County. He may simply have taken the opportunity to answer the call of former parishioners then living in Kentucky. Whatever the reason, the presbytery, of which he was then clerk, did not receive the news of his intended departure with enthusiasm. In response to his request for dismissal from his charge, the presbytery granted the petition but frowned on his "hasty

preparations for a removal, his not giving his people timely and public notice of his intended departure."⁵⁹

McGready's departure indeed spelled disaster for the two churches he had served in Orange County. Thirty-six-year-old Samuel McAdoo of Guilford County took over at Haw River. He lasted at that church only until 1801, and upon his departure the congregation broke up over "revivals and Psalmody," never to reappear.⁶⁰ Stony Creek also underwent turmoil before finally reorganizing in 1821. By that time, apparently, all the combatants from the 1790s had either moved away or died, allowing for a peaceful recreation of the church.⁶¹

When McGready took his family and left that strife-filled place, they did not wander westward aimlessly. They followed a call from former parishioners who had previously removed to Logan County, Kentucky. McGready left North Carolina with his family in the early fall of 1796. Ever the evangelist, he paused briefly near present-day Knoxville, Tennessee, where he participated in a small revival before pushing on to Kentucky in the late fall or early winter of 1796.⁶²

Logan County represented the leading edge of the southwestern frontier in 1796. Bisected by an Indian path from the Nashville, Tennessee, area to the headwaters of the Red River, the area around Logan County had constituted a "continual battleground" for Indian tribes during the

eighteenth century with no one tribe able to exert complete control.⁶³ This lack of Indian hegemony over the area eased somewhat the process of white settlement, but Kentucky settlers nevertheless experienced severe Indian trouble well into the 1790s, relations with the American natives being the "daily topic of conversation" among the settlers. Kentucky frontiersmen stood well advised to keep weapons handy day and night.⁶⁴ After about 1795, Indian troubles faded rapidly.⁶⁵

The topography of south-central Kentucky consists of rolling woodland and broad meadows criss-crossed by rivers and creeks.⁶⁶ Whites first entered the area in the 1770s and began settling in Logan County as early as 1780; the first permanent settlement succeeded in 1783.⁶⁷ Russellville, soon to become the county seat, was founded in the center of the county in 1790 on the site of what had been Cook's Station.⁶⁸ Neither Logan County nor Russellville grew rapidly. By 1800, only 5,807 people inhabited the county, while Russellville claimed only 117.⁶⁹ From the first arrival of settlers, Logan County attracted small-to-medium-sized farmers who typically owned between fifty and two hundred acres.⁷⁰ Bottom lands in Logan County generally were high in soil quality and easily put under plow,⁷¹ but as one resident warned a friend in 1806,

I never would advise any man in [your] situation to move to Kentucky without surveying it; it is

not a country that a man can ever Calculate on getting rich on farming[;] he may live plentifully, but he must live very much within himself.⁷²

The Russellville region was strikingly similar in topography and settlement patterns to McGready's first home in North Carolina.

Logan County probably reminded McGready of Orange County in another respect as well--its spiritual state. Evangelicals distraught over the state of religion in North Carolina and the rest of the country expressed identical sentiments over the religious situation in Kentucky in the 1790s. The church's prospects, they related, were "shrouded in gloom" as religion "underwent a general decline." Why? The Reverend Robert Davidson, a leading Kentucky Presbyterian evangelical in the early nineteenth century, listed six reasons for this torpor: 1) "the long-continued absence of the regular ordinances of the Church," 2) "neglect of family religion and careful instruction of the young," 3) "the irregular life of the backwoodsman," 4) the "universal cupidity" for land and money--"Land-jobbing, litigation, feuds, and heart-burnings distracted the country for many years," 5) dissension among Christians, and 6) the "introduction and spread of French Infidelity." Therefore, Davidson wrote, "by the close of the century, a decided majority of the people were reputed to be infidels; and as infidelity is the prolific parent of vice, it is not surprising to find that the whole country was remarkable for

vice and dissipation."⁷³ Historians have generally shrugged off these descriptions as evangelical exaggerations, but the recent work of Jon Butler may lend credence to Davidson's descriptions.⁷⁴

Peter Cartwright, a resident of Logan County in the 1790s and later an evangelist himself, confirmed that vice rather than virtue dominated Logan County. He recalled in his autobiography that "Sunday was a day set apart for hunting, horse-racing, card playing, balls, dancing and all kinds of jollity and mirth." Cartwright went on to say that

Logan County, when my father came to it [early 1790s], was called Rogues' Harbor. Here many refugees from almost all parts of the Union fled to escape justice or punishment Murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers and counterfeiters fled here until they combined and actually formed a majority They put all law at defiance⁷⁵

None of this would be either new or unexpected to McGready.

The Logan County churches that called McGready--Red River, Muddy River, and Gasper River--had participated in some of this same infidelity and irreverence. He described the Logan County Presbyterians, who had organized themselves around 1789 or 1790, as "in a state of coldness and declension, and . . . nearly destitute of spiritual life."⁷⁶ Upon his arrival he found his new sheep to be "almost totally unacquainted with the nature of vital piety and experimental religion,"⁷⁷ so much so that congregation members often asked such elementary questions as "Is religion a sensible thing?" and "If I were converted, would

I feel and know it?"⁷⁸ He must have felt his work cut out when he arrived in Kentucky.

Evangelicals had been active before McGready's arrival, and the perceived state of spiritual deadness in the state cannot be blamed on a lack of effort. Presbyterians first arrived in Kentucky from the Virginia valleys in the 1770s, but the first large-scale movement came in the 1780s.⁷⁹ Preachers soon followed communicants, and the arrival of David Rice in 1783 gave Kentucky its first "ordained and practicing" Presbyterian clergyman.⁸⁰ Rice, born into an Anglican family in Hanover, Virginia, had evangelical bloodlines as impressive as McGready's. His conversion came as a result of the work of Samuel Davies in the 1750s. He soon thereafter enrolled in Princeton and following graduation in 1761 married the daughter of Samuel Blair.⁸¹ Rice's major contribution to the spread of Presbyterianism came in his orchestration of the creation of the Transylvania Presbytery in 1786.⁸²

Rice's efforts at evangelization faced a major obstacle in the early 1790s--schism. Contention within the Presbyterian church, as McGready would soon learn, sapped revivalist energies and generally only expanded the influence of other denominations. The Reverend Adam Rankin provoked a schism in Kentucky Presbyterianism over the issue of music in church services. Rankin opposed the use of any music except psalms and enforced his belief by banning from

communion those in his church who opposed him on this point. The ensuing controversy ended with Rankin's departure from Kentucky and withdrawal from the Presbyterian church, but the churches in Kentucky continued to be "torn and convulsed for years by disputes on Psalmody." "Scarcely a congregation" avoided the distractions caused by this dissension.⁸³ At the time McGready entered into Kentucky, he found a Presbyterian church badly damaged by division and strife.

The hymnody question provides an opportunity for an interesting and instructive insight into McGready's mindset. He would certainly not have agreed with Rankin, for McGready quoted hymns and poems at length in his sermons and often used them in his services. All hymns were not created equal, however, in early national America. Hatch has recently argued that nothing short of a "hymnodic revolution" swept the nation between 1780 and 1830, one in which the older, more reverential, often British-penned hymns of the eighteenth century were overthrown in favor of "indigenous folk alternatives."⁸⁴ Written by "self-made tunesmiths" who paid no attention to the traditional conventions of hymnody, these songs quickly gained widespread acceptance in the popular, revivalist denominations. Baptists, Methodists, and other Arminian denominations took to these often overtly anti-Calvinist hymns most heartily. The popular generation and popular

acceptance of the new hymns marked for Hatch "yet another aspect of the democratic upsurge in American Christianity."⁸⁵

McGready certainly used hymns and poetry, but those he used could in no way be classified as popular doggerels. In the forty-two sermons contained in the Posthumous Works, McGready quoted on average about one hymn or poem per sermon. Sometimes he quoted only a couplet, but other times entire hymns. Of the forty-one hymns, just under half have proved readily traceable, making the conclusions of this section tentative but nevertheless instructive.⁸⁶

McGready's selection shows a clear preference for older, eighteenth-century style hymns. His favorite authors included Isaac Watts, the hymnist of choice for most evangelicals, Samuel Stennett and Anne Steele, English Baptists of the eighteenth century, and Bishop John Newton, an evangelical English Anglican of the eighteenth century who was closely associated with Whitefield and the Wesley brothers.⁸⁷ He also quoted verses of Ralph Erskine, a Scottish Presbyterian who participated in conventicles, Samuel Davies, an early Presbyterian evangelical working in Virginia, Charles Wesley, and Elizabeth Rowe, a fairly popular poet and devotionalist who lived in England from 1674 to 1737.⁸⁸ He could have chosen songs from the folk hymnals then being compiled and published by Henry Alline, Elias Smith, and others, but he stayed with the more

traditional tunes and authors--reflecting his traditionalist, eighteenth-century mindset.⁸⁹

Additionally, the wording, syntax, and phraseology of all the hymns McGready used suggest an eighteenth-century pattern. The versification is often complex and intricate, and the words used often uncommon. For instance, he offered this verse to illustrate Christ's work of salvation:

My heart that wounded was before,
Kindly he bound, therein did he pour
Love's healing quintessence.

Sweet was the feast my heart enjoyed,
I ate--I drank--nor was I cloyed,
For more I thirsted still.⁹⁰

Hatch and Bruce both have contended that ease of singing and commonality of phrase and words marked the new hymnology. The phrases above and especially the words quintessence and cloyed hardly fit such a bill. One of the longer verses McGready quoted leads to a similar conclusion:

And now by swift degrees,
They sail through azure seas;
Now tread the milky way.
Farewell ye planets in your spheres;
And as the stars are lost a brighter sky appears.
In haste for Paradise,
They sketch the pinions of a bolder thought.
Scarce had they willed but they were past
Deserts of trackless light, and all the Etherial waste,
And to the sacred borders brought,
With pleasing reverence they behold
The pearly portals--spires of gold.
Noon stands eternal there; and there their sight
Drink in the rays of primogential light.
They breathe immortal air;
Joy beats high in every vein;
Pleasure through all their bosoms reign.
The laws forbid the stranger pain,
And banish every care.
They view the bubbling streams of love

Beneath the throne arise;
 The streams in crystal channels move,
 Around the golden streets they rove,
 And bless the mansions of the upper skies.⁹¹

"Ethereal waste," "pearly portals," and "primogential light" can hardly have been everyday phrases of frontier Kentucky. It is a minor point, and an admittedly tentative one, but his choice and use of hymns points toward the classical hymnology of the eighteenth century rather than folk hymnology of the nineteenth century.

Faced with a divided Presbyterian Church and a less than pious population in Logan County, McGready unsheathed one old and one new revivalist weapon that he hoped would be sufficient to "arouse the people from this dangerous lethargy."⁹² He first employed his "warm and earnest" preaching, focusing on "the necessity of repentance, faith, and regeneration."⁹³ Taking Daniel 5:27--"You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting"--he warned of impending doom in much the same way the handwriting on the wall had warned the ancient Babylonians.⁹⁴ The initial reaction of many in his congregations was the same anger he had so recently left behind in North Carolina, but by the spring of 1797, particularly in the Gasper River Church, his listeners began, in McGready's opinion, to show "considerable solicitude" toward his words.⁹⁵ His message moved one woman in particular. Welcomed into "full communion" of the Gasper River congregation in the spring of 1797, she "immediately visited her friends and relatives,

from house to house, and warned them of their danger in a most solemn, faithful manner, and plead with them to repent and seek religion."⁹⁶

McGready did not rely simply on the efforts of himself and this one woman. In an attempt to involve a larger portion of his church, he tried something new and more dramatic--he urged but did not require his flock to sign and adhere to the following covenant:

When we consider the word and promises of a compassionate God, to the poor lost family of Adam, we find the strongest encouragement for Christians to pray in faith--to ask in the name of Jesus for the conversion of their fellow men. None ever went to Christ, when on earth, with the case of their friends that were denied, and although the days of his humiliation are ended, yet for the encouragement of his people, he has left it on record, that where two or three agree, upon earth, to ask in prayer, believing, it shall be done. Again, whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. With these promises before us, we feel encouraged to unite our supplications to a prayer-hearing God, for the outpouring of his spirit, that his people may be quickened and comforted, and that our children and sinners generally, may be converted. Therefore, we bind ourselves to observe the third Sunday of each month, for one year, as a day of fasting and prayer, for the conversion of sinners in Logan county, and throughout the world. We also engage to spend one half-hour every Sabbath morning, at the rising of the sun, in pleading with God to revive his work.⁹⁷

This is vintage McGready, reflective of his covenant thinking as well as his strict religious life. Congregational covenants like this were probably not part of the normal revivalist package, but covenants in general were nothing new to Scottish Presbyterians. Perhaps the most

notable hallmark of Reformed theology is its emphasis on God's covenants with humanity, and the Scottish National Kirk had been born of a national covenant among presbyters in the 1630s. McGready may well be putting the idea of a covenant to a new use here, but the vehicle he uses to promote revival would have been familiar and acceptable to most any Calvinist. This covenant also reflects the seriousness with which he undertook his mission. He would not leave himself open to the charge of being idle or lukewarm. He believed that revivalism took commitment and single-mindedness; he was willing to give that commitment and wanted his church to follow.

Whether through his preaching, the work of the woman visiting, or the power of the covenant, McGready's efforts paid off at Gasper River during the summers of 1797 and 1798. By the end of the first summer many members had gotten so caught up in revival that they "almost entirely neglected their secular affairs."⁹⁸ During that first summer in Kentucky, Finis Ewing, a member of one of McGready's churches, experienced conversion and began displaying his own preaching skills. Ewing soon proved to be as effective in the pulpit as McGready. On one occasion, when Ewing warned that the congregation's "hearts were as hard as the seats they sat on, and he would not give a brass pin for their religion," one angry couple stalked out and headed home. Once there, however, they experienced

conviction, returned to the meeting, and were converted before the service ended.⁹⁹

This Gasper River revival died down during the winter of 1797-1798 but picked up again in the spring. At that point McGready moved from near the Red River Church in south Logan County to Russellville so as to be equidistant from all his churches. In Russellville he promptly opened a school, becoming the first "teacher of the languages."¹⁰⁰ By September 1798 the Gasper River revival had begun to spread to McGready's other churches. He later related that "but few families in the congregation could be found who, less or more, were not struck with an awful sense of their lost estate Few persons attended to worldly business, their attention to the business of their souls was so great [The] awakening work went on with power under every sermon. The people seemed to hear, as for eternity. In every house, and almost in every company, the whole conversation with people, was about the state of their souls."¹⁰¹ At that instant, while seemingly on the verge of revival, an anti-revival preacher as stubborn and forceful in many ways as McGready himself arrived who promptly quashed the revival.

James Balch was born in 1750 in Maryland and raised in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. He had served with some controversy in the Orange and Hanover Presbyteries before arriving in Kentucky and gained a wide reputation as an Old

Side, anti-revival minister. In the early fall of 1798 Balch arrived in Logan County from North Carolina and founded a Presbyterian church in northern part of the county; he called it Mt. Tabor, after a mountain in the north of Palestine that symbolized strength and truth in the Old Testament.¹⁰² Balch immediately began preaching against the Gasper River revival. He ridiculed the work and theology of McGready's revival and, in McGready's eyes, mischievously set out to involve the people of McGready's churches in "disputations and confusion."¹⁰³ Balch's efforts proved devastatingly effective. The revivals stopped almost immediately, and by the end of the year "the people had sunk back into a state of darkness and deadness."¹⁰⁴ McGready's first efforts at revival in Kentucky had met a strikingly similar fate to those in North Carolina--initial success followed by opposition and collapse. This time, however, he chose not to run but to persevere, confident that if the God he claimed to know desired revival, revival would come, notwithstanding the efforts of James Balch.

The first decade of McGready's professional life ended far from where it had begun, and farther still from where he wanted it to go. He had tried in Carolina and Kentucky to bring revival to his congregations through his preaching, teaching, and a covenant of prayer among his people. In both places he met with only fleeting success. Having been

educated and converted at the feet of John McMillan, McGready must have heard stories about the Great Awakening and Scottish conventicles, and so he knew that revival efforts did not have to end like this. He knew that the light of revival could spread beyond geographical and denominational lines. Many men might well have given up preaching revival after failing as he had. His pulpit burned and his church ransacked, he had been forced out of North Carolina to the west. There he preached revival, only to be ridiculed and defeated by a fellow Presbyterian clergyman. Had he possessed a theology or methodology that placed the burden of success on himself, he might well have given up. His Reformed theology, however, constantly buoyed him by placing the burden of revival and conversion on God rather than McGready. At the close of 1798 his decade of preaching might have seemed wasted. Yet because of his theological and educational link back through McMillan and Caldwell to the evangelists of the Great Awakening, McGready knew that nationwide revival was possible, though not inevitable, but in every case demanded perseverance. He had no way of knowing how close he was. He simply labored in the only way he knew, preaching the only message he knew, in the way he felt God had called and prepared him. He could not have known that his efforts in Logan County would soon spark a revival throughout the southeastern United States that progressed "like fire in a

dry stubble."¹⁰⁵

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Guion Griffiths Johnson, Ante-Bellum North Carolina, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 7-13.
2. Hugh Leffler and Paul Wager, Orange County--1752-1952 (Chapel Hill: 1953), 16.
3. Ibid.; Harry Roy Merrens, Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 76-77.
4. Leffler and Wager, Orange County, 14-16.
5. Bruce, And They All Sang, 37.
6. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 373.
7. Manual of the Presbytery of Orange, 3rd. rev. ed. (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, Printers, 1908), 3.
8. Ibid.; Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 98-99.
9. "This Hallowed Ground": A Bicentennial History of Stony Creek Presbyterian Church, (n.p., n.d.), 4.
10. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 373; Rankin, Buffalo Presbyterian Church, 151.
11. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 373; James Smith, History of the Christian Church (Nashville: 1835), 562.
12. Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 134; Foote, Historical Sketches of North Carolina, 373; Eli W. Caruthers, "Richard Hugg King and His Times. Reminiscences of Rev. Eli Caruthers of Orange Presbytery, N.C." North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C., 103.
13. Caruthers, "Richard Hugg King," 101; Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 373.

14. Lewis Collins and Richard H. Collins, History of Kentucky, 2 vols. (Covington, Ky.: Collins and Co., 1882), 1:428; Johnson, North Carolina, 379.

15. McGready, Posthumous Works, 213. Italics McGready's.

16. Ibid., 216.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 218.

19. Ibid., 220; 2 Timothy 4:2-5.

20. William K. Boyd, History of North Carolina, 3 vols. 1919; rpt. (Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1973), 195.

21. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 370-371. Only one of McGready's sermons could be considered on a patriotic theme. During the War of 1812 he preached a fast day sermon but spent most of the time calling for American repentance rather than American perseverance.

22. Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 62.

23. Ibid.; Boyd, North Carolina, 195.

24. Boyd, North Carolina, 185ff.

25. Elder John Rogers, The Biography of Eld. Barton Warren Stone, Written by Himself (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1847), 252.

26. Butler, Awash, 219.

27. McGready, Posthumous Works, 1-3.

28. Ibid., 114.

29. Ibid., 141.

30. Ibid., 114.

31. Ibid., 485-486.

32. Ibid., 117, 242, 258.

33. Ibid., 114-115, 139.

34. Ibid.; Boyd, North Carolina, 185.

- 35.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 371.
 - 36.Ibid.
 - 37.Ibid.
 - 38.Samuel A'Court Ashe, History of North Carolina, 2 vols. (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1925), 2:172; Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 371-372.
 - 39.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 371-372.
 - 40.McGready, Posthumous Works, 500.
 - 41.Ibid., 214-215.
 - 42.Ibid., 216-218.
 - 43.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 263.
 - 44.Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 63.
 - 45.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 374-375.
 - 46.Ibid., 375.
 - 47.Caruthers, "Richard Hugg King," 100.
 - 48.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 374-375.
 - 49.Caruthers, "Richard Hugg King," 101.
 - 50.Johnson, North Carolina, 379.
 - 51.Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 182-183.
Smith, Christian Church, 667-668.
 - 52.Conkin, Cane Ridge, 54.
 - 53.Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 259-260.
 - 54.Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 375.
 - 55.Smith, Christian Church, 563-564.
 - 56.Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 193-205.
 - 57.Ibid.; Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, 375.
 - 58.Smith, Christian Church, 563-564.
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59. Johnson, North Carolina, 379n; Manual of the Presbytery of Orange, 19.
60. Stockard, Guilford County, 142-143; Stone, Orange Presbytery, 151.
61. "This Hallowed Ground", 7.
62. Smith, Christian Church, 564; Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 132.
63. Willard Rouse Jillson, Pioneer Kentucky (Frankfort, Ky.: The State Journal Company, 1934), 58, 77; Edward Coffman, The Story of Logan County (Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1962), 16.
64. Daniel Drake, Pioneer Life in Kentucky, 1785-1800 (New York: Henry Schuman, 1948), 26-27.
65. Coffman, Logan County, 16.
66. Ibid., 11.
67. Ibid., 28.
68. Jillson, Pioneer Kentucky, 77.
69. Coffman, Logan County, 281.
70. Jillson, Pioneer Kentucky, 45.
71. George M. Bibb, "Letter Written to Dr. _____, by Bibb, describing some Logan County farm land and buildings," August 26, 1810. George M. Bibb Collection, King Library, University of Kentucky.
72. Gabriel Jones, "Letter from Gabriel Jones to Peter J.," May 25, 1806. Gabriel Jones File, Western Kentucky University Library, Bowling Green.
73. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 99-102.
74. See Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith.
75. Quoted in Coffman, Logan County, 41.
76. E. B. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1873), 27.
77. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 260.

78. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 27; Smith, Christian Church, 568-569.

79. Weeks, Kentucky Presbyterians, 8-12.

80. Ibid., 12-14.

81. Ibid., 14-15.

82. Ibid., 26-27.

83. Ibid., 27-28; Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 97.

84. Hatch, Democratization, 146.

85. Ibid., 147. Hatch built on and expanded the work of Dickson Bruce, who studied revival choruses and came to similar conclusions, finding not only an anti-Calvinist theology but also a popular sentimentality as well. Bruce admitted, however, that choruses and hymns could not be directly compared, because the folk-generated choruses were often appended to an official hymn. Since McGready constantly used hymns rather than choruses, Hatch's work will be primarily used for comparison and analysis since it concentrates on hymns themselves and not secondary choruses. See Bruce, And They All Sang, 96-122.

86. Of the forty-one verses, only sixteen have proved traceable. This may be due to a lack of sources, although the American Imprint Series has allowed for an extensive search, but is more likely due to McGready quoting only parts of hymns, especially internal verses, or even parts of verses. Most hymnals had indexes of first lines of songs, and some even of first lines of verses, but none possessed concordances which would make a thorough search more feasible. Among the hymnals and other researched works searched are: Psalms and Hymns . . . in the Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1843); Philip Schaff and Arthur Gilman, eds. A Library of Religious Poetry (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1881); John Dobell, A New Selection of Seven Hundred Evangelical Hymns (Morristown, N.J.: Peter A. Johnson, 1810); Samuel Worcester and Samuel M. Worcester, eds., The Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the Rev. Isaac Watts, new ed. (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1834); [Lowell Mason], Church Psalmody (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1850); and, John Julian, ed., A Dictionary of Hymnology (London: John Murray, 1892).

87. For quotations of Watts' hymns see McGready, Posthumous Works, 81, 107, 419, 420, and 428. For quotations of Stennett's hymns see McGready, Posthumous Works, 226, 363, and 430. A Steele hymn may be found ibid., 231; Newton is quoted ibid., 446. Biographical information on Stennett, Steele, and Newton may be found in Julian, A Dictionary of Hymnology, 1091-1092, 1044-1045, and 803-804, respectively.

88. See McGready, Posthumous Works, 23, 158, 217, 382, and 424. For Erskine see Julian, Dictionary of Hymnology, 353. For Davies see George William Pilcher, Samuel Davies: Apostle of Dissent in Colonial Virginia (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1971). Rowe was closely associated with Watts, who penned a biographical sketch for one of her posthumously published works. See Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Devout Exercises of the Heart, I. Watts, ed. (Baltimore: J. Kingston, 1811), 3-51.

89. See Hatch, Democratization, 146-161.

90. McGready, Posthumous Works, 50.

91. Ibid., 232.

92. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 27-28.

93. Rumple, Presbyterianism in North Carolina, 172; Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 27-28; Smith, Christian Church, 566-567.

94. Smith, Christian Church, 566-567.

95. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 28-29; Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 132-133.

96. McGready, Posthumous Works, vii.

97. Smith, Christian Church, 565-566.

98. Ibid., 566-567.

99. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 28-29.

100. Coffman, Logan County, 117.

101. McGready, Posthumous Works, vii-viii.

102. Coffman, Logan County, 54; see Psalm 89:12, Jeremiah 46:18, and Hosea 5:1.

103.Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 29-30; Smith, Christian Church, 567-8; McGready, Posthumous Works, viii.

104.Smith, Christian Church, 567-568; McGready, Posthumous Works, viii.

105.Weisberger, They Gathered, 2.

Chapter Four--The Revival Years, 1799-1803

James McGready and his evangelical contemporaries had little trouble finding the right imagery to describe what occurred in Kentucky during the opening years of the nineteenth century. McGready pictured all that had gone on before 1800 as "but like a few scattering drops before a mighty rain when compared with the overflowing floods of salvation" that came during the Great Revival.¹ James Smith, who compiled and published McGready's sermons, took this watery imagery further by comparing the Revival to a "small rivulet that issues from the mountainside and winds its devious way over rocks, crags and dales . . . until it becomes a deep and broad river . . . and finally empties itself into the ocean."² Western evangelicals of all denominations described a movement that spread and swept outward, first over the Logan County area, then Kentucky, and finally back across the Appalachians to Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, and elsewhere.

In many ways the Great Revival mirrored Cambuslang, Kirk o'Shotts, and the conventicles of seventeenth-century Scotland as well as the Great Awakening in colonial America. Much of the similarity came from the schedule and format of the revival meetings and from a common focus on celebrating

the Lord's Supper at the revival meetings. Indeed, McGready always understood himself as a follower of the revival path laid out by the Tennents, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. The revival McGready led, however, differed from the earlier revivals in two key ways. First, the Great Revival carried with it a level of religious "exercises" unseen by earlier generations, exercises which proved the first, but not final, focal point for dissension within the Presbyterian church that later led to a double schism.

Second, and ultimately more important, the denominational, political, and ideological, setting of the Great Revival differed enormously from the Great Awakening, and further still from the Scottish revivals. In Scotland, Presbyterians and Anglicans battled largely alone on the religious field. The middle colonies in the 1740s evinced more denominational multiplicity than Scotland--being filled with Presbyterians, Anglicans, Quakers, Lutherans, and German Pietists of all sorts, not to mention countless other smaller denominations. The Great Revival added to that mix Baptists and Methodists, two staunchly pro-revival groups that would shape the Great Revival in ways that McGready did not envision.

Politically and ideologically, Americans had by 1800 come over the great divide between authoritarianism and democracy.³ The Revolution in the 1770s, the ratification of the Constitution in the 1780s, and the election of Thomas

Jefferson in 1800 all signaled a rejection of Old World political deference in favor of New World egalitarianism. The ideological fervor that produced those events could not be confined solely to the world of politics but soon spilled over into American society, religion, and culture. In religion, this new-found freedom displayed itself in a myriad of ways, including the creation of several new denominations and the expansion of some older ones that followed this democratic spirit. McGready must have been only barely cognizant of this, because politics really meant very little to him. Saving souls was his business, and revival was his chief tool. He continued to promote revival, largely unaware of how religiously explosive it could be on the new democratic American frontier. McGready thought only of events that, in his mind, came from the "sweet gales of the divine spirit, and soul-reviving showers of the blessings of heaven."⁴

Having seen some success at revival in the summers of 1797 and 1798, as the weather warmed in 1799 McGready must surely have been hopeful that revival would return once again to his three churches in Logan County, the efforts of James Balch notwithstanding. The long distance between his house and the Gasper River congregation had led McGready in the spring of 1799 to give that pulpit up to John Rankin. McGready had taken a smaller but closer congregation at Clay-lick earlier that year, all the while continuing his

ministerial duties at the Muddy River and Red River Churches.⁵ In the Red River meeting house in July 1799 McGready held his first large meetings of the summer, meetings that could be compared to Smith's small rivulet.

The Red River Meeting House rested on a small knoll some two miles northeast of the Red River. An unimpressive building of shaven logs sealed with clay mortar, the church served the southeastern corner of Logan county, sitting only five miles from the state line. A simple wooden pulpit faced the hard wooden benches that filled the interior; a fireplace to the side warmed communicants in winter. Unglazed windows covered with planked shutters provided breezeways in summer.⁶ The congregation of Red River had built themselves a church plentifully ample in seating for normal circumstances. The crowds of July 1799 proved to be anything but normal.

As the meeting commenced on the Friday before the fourth sabbath in July, the overflowing crowds spilled onto the grounds to hear the aggregation of ministers headed by McGready. Except for larger than normal numbers, nothing unusual happened at this meeting until Monday, when John McGee, a pastor in the region, "went through the house, shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy" to revive the people. The result, he later recorded, was dramatic: "the floor was soon covered with the slain; their screams for mercy pierced the heavens."⁷ After McGee's

exhortations, many attenders were unwilling to go away so McGready called them back for further preaching and prayer before dismissing them to their homes.⁸ Hoping to build upon this fervor, McGready scheduled meetings for Gasper in August.

The Gasper River Church was located in the extreme northeastern corner of Logan County, a few hundred yards north of the river's source. In assisting its pastor, John Rankin, McGready preached a typically gut-wrenching and soul-searching sermon on the fourth Sunday in August from Hebrews 11:16--"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." In his standard exegetical style, McGready probably told the story of Abraham related in Hebrews 11, how he left his native land to find the better land God promised to him, much as Christian left the City of Destruction for the Celestial City. He then would have called the congregation to leave their native land of sin and travel to the city God had prepared for his children.

His sermon struck a sensitive nerve. He reported that when Rankin dismissed the congregation, all stayed and the faces of many evidenced an "awful solemnity." What happened next must have taken even McGready by surprise. Several of the congregation cried out in loud voices and fell to the floor "powerless, groaning, praying and crying for mercy,"

as he described it. A woman who had followed him from North Carolina and attended his sermons for years called to him and confessed she had no true religion and must be bound for hell. A family, from grandfather to grandchild, wept out loud and declared to the congregation, "We must get religion, or we will be damned!"⁹ Once the Gasper meeting finally ended, anticipation filled McGready's mind. Would the revival floodgates continue to open or would they be slammed shut as in 1798?

The next two months helped answer that question, as several other mass meetings took place in the region, all headed by McGready and his colleagues. At Clay-lick, his new pastorate, the excitement hit the following Sunday.¹⁰ Then at Muddy River in late September, the numbers and fervor of the Red and Gasper River meetings reappeared, with circumstances largely the same, or even exceeding those two occasions, especially in the number of wagons present.¹¹ Many other meetings continued to be held in and near Logan County, including one at Desha's Creek that attracted thousands.¹² This season of meetings culminated in late October at the Ridge, a pastor-less congregation in Sumner County, Tennessee, where Rankin, McGee, and McGready preached to thousands.¹³

After the Ridge meeting came the dangerous time for revivals--the winter. In the same way that cold weather tended to suppress military expeditions, it tended to

suppress revival meetings. This no doubt weighed heavily on McGready's mind that winter: when the spring thaw came, would revival return?

The flood McGready worked and prayed for came during the summer of 1800. He later related that "the year 1800 exceeds all that my eyes ever beheld upon earth."¹⁴ Of the three revivals he participated in his life, this one topped them all in length, in numbers of converts, and in popular excitement. The events of that summer fulfilled his revivalist dreams and those of countless other evangelicals who had been working for a mass revival since the summers of the 1740s.

Once again the tide rushed forward first at Red River in June 1800. McGready called it "the greatest time we had ever seen before," when "profane swearers," "sabbath breakers," "frolicers [sic] and dancers" were all swept away into the rush of revival.¹⁵ Hodge, his former student now turned colleague, preached from Job 22:21--"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." The crowd reacted as they had to McGready's preaching the previous summer. People threw themselves on the floor, begging for mercy and salvation. McGready likened the participants to "condemned criminals at the place of execution."¹⁶

As it had the year before, the scene then shifted to Gasper River. At this meeting in July a new phenomenon

appeared, not in the intellectual, ritualistic, or liturgical realm, but in that of lodging and provisioning those who attended the meetings. McGready knew Jesus's own unique solution for feeding large crowds, but his beliefs prevented him from experimenting in miracles. Instead, he turned to mundane, practical means to solve the problem. The idea of an encampment for the meetings might have come to McGready by watching a family at Red River in 1799 that came to the meeting with its wagon fully loaded with provisions for the weekend.¹⁷ Or it might have come from a family recently arrived from the Carolinas. This family wanted to attend the Red River meetings but, being new to the area, did not want to impose on any stranger's hospitality. They thereupon decided that since they had camped all the way from Carolina to Kentucky, they could camp during a revival meeting, bringing with them whatever provisions they needed for the long weekend. McGready, noticing this effort, used the pulpit to urge others come to Gasper River and camp on the grounds for the duration of the meeting, turning the Gasper meeting into the first "camp meeting" in American history.¹⁸

Camp meetings, in many ways, were nothing new to McGready and Scottish Presbyterian revivalism. Scots had known of them as conventicles or sacramental occasions for nearly two centuries.¹⁹ Conventicles and McGready's camp meetings followed the same schedule from Thursday to Monday,

with the focal point always being the celebration of communion on Sunday, followed by a day of thanksgiving on Monday. Frontier historians such as Peter Mode and Charles Johnson argued that camp meetings stood as a prime example of the effect of the frontier on American religion, but as Schmidt put it, from the angle of Scottish revivalism they look "decidedly less distinctive, less exceptionally American."²⁰

Communion served as a visible demonstration of the Gospel for this still largely illiterate population. McGready, in a preparatory sermon preached at Gasper River (though perhaps not at this meeting), called the holy table a "dreadful place" and warned his listeners not to take communion lightly. He called it a "striking exhibition of the most important transaction ever witnessed by men or angels, viz. the redemption of guilty sinners," and a place where God comes down and communes with his children. At the table the saved "receive gracious tokens of his love, and are permitted to read their Father's testament, which will shortly put them in possession of their heavenly inheritance."²¹

His use of the word "tokens" there is interesting because communicants would have known well about tokens. In Presbyterian tradition, the elders of a church would examine members before communion to assess their worthiness for participation in the sacrament. Those they approved, on

grounds of conversion and on grounds of a clean heart, would be given small, coin-sized tokens, which they redeemed at communion. When the time came to receive the bread and the wine, only those who possessed tokens would be seated at the long tables and served. Tokens, therefore, worked as visible reminders that not all were saved and that not all could approach and commune freely with God. Use of tokens traveled to America with Scottish Presbyterians, and the use of them continued into and through the Great Revival, at least in Presbyterian circles.²² The restrictive policy of tokens, however, ran counter to Baptist and Methodist theology, as well as growing American egalitarianism, and was increasingly dispensed with as Baptists and Methodists assumed control of American revivalism.

When McGready called for participants to camp at Gasper, he knew only of the Scottish tradition and gave no thought to any Baptist or Methodist threat. His encouragements to come to Gasper paid off. Some twenty to thirty wagons carrying families from forty, fifty, even one hundred miles away came to Gasper loaded with people and provisions "in order to encamp at the meeting house."²³ As had often been the case with conventicles, the first two days were fairly calm and placid. Then, on Saturday night, the waves of excitement began crashing in. William McGee preached on Peter's sinking into the waves when he took his eyes off Jesus.²⁴ People responded with dramatic

reactions--swooning, praying, crying out--reactions that continued through the night until the Sunday dawn. In fact, McGready related, this fever-pitch of excitement lasted not just one night but three nights and two days, not subsiding until Tuesday morning when the entire meeting broke up.²⁵

This first camp meeting set the pace for all that followed during the Great Revival. Much more reminiscent of the Scottish sacramental occasions than the often-contrived and overly orchestrated camp meetings of the later nineteenth century, the Gasper meeting nonetheless played a key role in the spread of the Revival. For when the participants returned home they carried with them not only the excitement of Gasper but also the logistical idea necessary to carry forward the Revival in the midst of still widely scattered frontier settlements. In Scotland, those who attended weekend-long conventicles relied on the hospitality of locals; on the American frontier there often were too few locals to supply the communion crowds: hence the camp meeting.²⁶

The tide of revival swept continually through Logan County during the rest of the summer. McGready preached again at Red River the next Sunday after the Gasper meeting and roused the same excitement as before, including this time among some black slaves who attended. At Muddy River in August, twenty-two wagons loaded with people arrived to join the local communicants, who were grateful the visitors

brought provisions. He calculated that church members could not have supplied even half the visitors had they shown up without food.²⁷

Starting in September, McGready joined in spreading the Revival outward from Logan County. He concentrated his efforts primarily on north-central Tennessee, preaching first at Blythe's Big Spring on Desha's Creek in Sumner County to the "largest number of people ever known to be collected together in the country." Crowds arrived in wagons, on horseback, and on foot, and the preaching continued uninterrupted night and day.²⁸ McGready also preached at the Ridge, where he reported that fifty children made a profession of faith.²⁹ The Tennessee revivals of 1800 culminated at the Shiloh congregation at the end of October. There McGready joined with fellow Presbyterians William McGee, Hodge, and Rankin, as well as Methodist preachers John McGee (William's brother), John Page, and John Sewell.³⁰ They collectively preached for four days and four nights to five thousand listeners.³¹

The revivals of 1800 extended longer and farther than had those of 1798 or 1799. Sacramental seasons had traditionally ended in September or October but lasted in 1800 until the last weekend of November, when the final meeting took place at Hopewell, Tennessee, hosted by a congregation then under the leadership of Hodge.³² McGready also, for the first time since his arrival in

Kentucky, set his sights beyond the Logan-Sumner region. He traveled twice in September to Red Banks, later known as Henderson, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, a settlement he described as "Satan's seat, a second Hell." There he and Rankin preached to a small but promising group of listeners.³³ The revival meetings or sacramental occasions were replicated throughout the region in churches of various denominations during the fall of 1800. Indeed, McGready wrote later that besides these large, well-publicized meetings, so many "private occasions, common-days preaching, and societies" took place during the fall that the relation of them would "swell a letter to a volume."³⁴

These must have been heady days for McGready. Not since his early pastorate in North Carolina or perhaps his brief stop at Hampden-Sydney, had he seen such religious excitement. Even then he had not witnessed either the numbers or interest displayed during the Logan-Sumner meetings of 1800. As he rode his horse or sat at home during the winter of 1800-1801, he must have thought back to the stories that McMillan and Caldwell surely told him of the crowds of an earlier revival, when Whitefield drew thousands and people throughout the colonies asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Excitement and anticipation must have risen in McGready in early 1801 like the creeks of Logan county rising with the spring rains. Being a reflective man, however, McGready tinged his

anticipation with a note of concern or worry, for he also knew that the Great Awakening of the 1730s, not to mention the conventicles of Scotland, had produced not only new disciples in the Presbyterian church but new divisions as well. The divisions, he surely hoped, would this time be avoided.

Kentucky, as well as much of the rest of the southeast, fell to revival fever during the earliest years of the new century, turning McGready's Logan County Revival into the Great Revival. From 1801 to 1803, hundreds and even thousands of revival meetings on the Logan-Sumner model occurred in Dixie and occasionally north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Letters, diaries, and published accounts tell a similar story time and again of meetings in Kentucky, Tennessee, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Pennsylvania. McGready continued to concentrate his efforts in the Logan county region, but the Revival flooded from southwest Kentucky into the heartland of old Kentucky and eventually back across the mountains whence McGready and his revival ideas had come.

The years 1801, 1802, and 1803 brought revival meeting after revival meeting for McGready. Several letters written by him describe his work during this time. He reported in 1801 that the events of 1800 had been repeated many times in the region. He had even taken another trip to Red Banks, which he once again described as "a perfect synagogue of

Satan," and he was pleased to report that by the time he and his helpers departed several new praying societies had been started.³⁵ By 1801 the revival had spread throughout the entire Cumberland and Green River regions.³⁶ Two other letters from 1803 tell of his efforts then and for the past few years. McGready, Hodge, McGee, Rankin, and others continued to hold sacramental occasions at various sites around the region. McGready traveled with Terah Templin, another senior pastor of the region, some eighty miles from Logan County to the mouth of the Cumberland River, just east of present-day Paducah.³⁷ All the while the revival swept over friends, neighbors, even family members of ministers.³⁸ The work continued throughout the Logan County region, not only in large meetings but also in many smaller affairs.³⁹

Numerous residents and visitors to Kentucky recorded the widening scope of the Great Revival. One pastor from Pennsylvania reported that during his trip to Kentucky in 1801 he had been to three occasions, each of which had drawn five to seven thousand participants.⁴⁰ Others reported meetings throughout the state that drew anywhere from five to twenty thousand listeners and lasted as long as ten or twelve days.⁴¹ Invariably, the leadership and followers at these meetings crossed denominational lines to include not only Presbyterians but also Baptists and Methodists.⁴²

Observers worked hard to describe the meetings they

attended, but a number professed an inability to do so because what they had seen "exceeds the powers of human language to describe."⁴³ David Purviance, later a preacher himself, recorded his memories of camp meetings as an eleven year old:

When we arrived it was dark; we found the people in the yard, mostly standing on their feet; but when we went to the crowd we found many persons under both physical and mental excitement. Some were happy, rejoicing in the Lord. Others were lying apparently almost lifeless, while many were praying to God most fervently for the pardon of their sins.⁴⁴

As the "vehement" preaching stretched on for days, more and more listeners felt themselves brought to the "awful precipice" with the "mouldering brink crumbling" under their feet.⁴⁵ All the while that preaching went on in one place, groups of people gathered in another to sing psalms, hymns, and choruses.⁴⁶

The largest of these camp meetings took place at Cane Ridge near Paris, Kentucky.⁴⁷ As far as is known, McGready did not participate in this meeting, but he did play a crucial role in its inception. Barton W. Stone had traveled to Logan County in the spring of 1801 to see his former mentor and the revival he had spawned.⁴⁸ Stone took back the revival fever to his congregation in eastern Kentucky. There, in August 1801, the Cane Ridge revival took place.

Meetings had been happening all summer long in eastern Kentucky, with up to eight thousand attending at one time.⁴⁹ Cane Ridge outdid them all. Estimates ranged from

twelve to twenty-five thousand participants in 125 to 135 wagons.⁵⁰ Attenders, including the governor, collected in circles of ten or twelve singing hymns or other songs. When a preacher got up to start his sermon, hundreds rushed forward to hear his message. "Now, suppose twenty of those groups around; a minister engaged in preaching to a large congregation, in the middle; some mourning; some rejoicing; and great solemnity on every countenance; and you will form some imperfect idea of the extraordinary work!" At night the meetings continued by candles and torchlights set in trees, on wagons, and at the tents.⁵¹ For five days the preaching continued at Cane Ridge before the meeting broke up, as usual, on a Tuesday. This revival, no longer McGready's revival or even the Logan County revival, did not stop with eastern Kentucky but soon flowed back across the Appalachians.

James McGready must have been happy to hear that the revival had, by 1802, been carried back to his former homes in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. As reports reached him of its spread, he must have wondered what the reaction of those who chased him out of Orange County would be when it first hit the area.⁵² The Great Revival flooded over North and South Carolina between 1801 and 1803. One minister reported a meeting in the Yadkin River area which drew between eight and ten thousand and was led by fourteen Presbyterian, three Methodist, two Baptist, one Episcopal,

one Dutch Calvinist, and two German Lutheran ministers.⁵³ The Great Revival also spread to the Mecklenburg County region as well as the upcountry region north of Camden, South Carolina. There, "thousands of every rank" attended four-day meetings.⁵⁴ The revival remained strong in the Carolinas for several years, although by 1805 "new awakenings" were not "so frequent as formerly."⁵⁵

The revival also spread northward over the Alleghenies to the Pittsburgh area, where McGready's former teacher John McMillan still labored. Beginning in late 1801 and lasting throughout 1802, the revival swept through the area, climaxing in September in the churches of Elisha McCurdy.⁵⁶ McCurdy, known locally as the preacher "who knocked people down," apparently employed a homiletic style similar to McGready's.⁵⁷ These Pennsylvania revivals, which copied the Cumberland model, spread also into McMillan's churches, and he welcomed them with open arms.⁵⁸ McMillan noted that these awakenings were simply more forceful expressions of a revival that had engulfed his churches between 1791 and 1794.⁵⁹ Besides these two areas of the Carolinas and western Pennsylvania, the revival continued to expand into Ohio, eastern Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia, and elsewhere.⁶⁰

The Revival spread across denominational lines as well. Revival fever gripped especially the Baptists and Methodists but also many others. McGready would have been neither dismayed nor surprised at the ecumenicalism of the Great

Revival. The Great Awakening, he surely knew, had encompassed several denominations, and he was broad enough evangelical to be thankful for the membership increase in these churches, even if he could not support them on many theological points.⁶¹

Indeed, he held special contempt for those he called creedal or denominational hypocrites. Creedal hypocrites make a Christ of their system of principles or form of doctrines and are not true Christians. McGready was not against systems as such but opposed all who "put them in Christ's stead." Denominational hypocrites included Presbyterians who lived prayerless and decadent lives but held fast to the forms, customs, and confessions of their Scottish ancestors; Baptists who sacrificed all else to defend adult baptism by immersion; Methodists who lifted up the ideas of the Wesleys and exulted in their rejection of Calvinism; and New Lights who joyed in having no creed or confession at all but condemned all who did not agree with their system.⁶² McGready proved quite willing to work with ministers outside his denomination but denounced ministers and members in all denominations who cared more for minute points of doctrine than Jesus Christ.

The Great Revival, of course, meant different things to different people. To McGready and others of his evangelical bent, it stood as the culmination of all their wildest dreams. They exulted in the conversions, the excitement,

and the change in morals that they perceived among the people of Kentucky. One traveler to the state wrote that Kentuckians in general "were now as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissoluteness and immorality. And indeed I found Kentucky to appearances the most moral place I had ever seen. A profane expression was hardly ever heard."⁶³ A new unfavorable attitude toward alcohol, one that McGready would have heartily welcomed, typified the moral changes in Kentucky and parts of the rest of the South, the region soon to become known as the Bible Belt.⁶⁴ Even disinterested, secular observers admitted that the "whole attention of the people was turned to religious subjects" for the first few years of the 1800s.⁶⁵ Described variously as "absorbing" and "pervading," the interest in religion was "universally infectious" among all classes, except, apparently, lawyers.⁶⁶

Revivalists looked for a change in morals as proof of the legitimacy of their work. They happily used these reports and many others to show their opponents that the Revival was indeed from God. Many, both within and without the Presbyterian church found fault with numerous aspects of the revival--its pan-denominationalism, its "anti-intellectualism," its theology, the camp meeting itself--but the one aspect of the Kentucky revival to which opponents most immediately objected was the wide variety of what McGready called "uncommon bodily exercises and

agitations."⁶⁷ For those who favored the revival, the falling exercises, the jerks, the barking, and the dancing all stood as supernatural signs of God's approval and presence. The same exercises often fully convinced those who opposed, or sat on the fence, of the opposite--that this revival was Satan's work to delude the people of the frontier that they had received true religion when they had not.

The exercises took various forms at various times and were not universally present at all camp meetings. Indeed, observers often indicated that some exercises, particularly the falling exercise, often occurred outside the setting of the camp meeting--at home, in shops, at the plough, or in the woods.⁶⁸ The most common of the exercises were the falling exercise, the jerks, and the barking exercise.

James Smith wrote that the falling exercise began under the ministrations of McGready, whose preaching caused his listeners to "feel the hair of their heads standing on end through fear, and their blood run chill within them, while the converted fell like dead men all around."⁶⁹ The falling exercise took place most often toward the end of a sermon at a camp meeting. With hundreds or even thousands gathered around, several people would suddenly, with little or no warning, stand up, utter some piercing scream such as "Glory! Glory!" become stiff, and fall to the ground, where they would lie, often for hours, "and appear as dead." At a

large camp meeting two to three hundred might fall at one time and lie "in heaps" all about the grounds. There they continued "breathless and motionless" from one to eight or ten hours. Occasionally they might rise to groan, shriek, or pray, but they would always return to their near-lifeless state. All about them stood friends, relatives, and onlookers who sang and prayed until they revived. Finally they arose and often began exhorting, causing others around them to fall and start the cycle again.⁷⁰

"The jerks," as Barton W. Stone wrote, "cannot be so easily described."⁷¹ Richard McNemar, a Presbyterian preacher later turned Shaker, compared them to being goaded with hot irons.⁷² The jerks normally began with the head being thrown backward and forward and side to side in such a violent and rapid manner that "the features of the face could not be distinguished."⁷³ The jerks then spread down the body until the limbs seemed ready to "fly asunder."⁷⁴

The barks, according to Stone, were merely the vocal outcome of the violence of the jerks. As the head and body jerked back and forth, a grunt or bark caused by the rapidity of the convulsion issued from the person. Thus in Stone's mind barking was not a particularly important exercise.⁷⁵ Others, like McNemar, gave it rather more prominence in their descriptions of the meetings. McNemar wrote that the subject, having been involuntarily seized by the power of the Spirit, would "take the position of a

canine beast, move about on all fours, growl, snap the teeth, and bark."⁷⁶ The subject might continue like this for several minutes or more than an hour.

Other exercises, such as dancing, laughing, rolling, running, and singing were less common but still often present. The jerks could change into dancing, sometimes slow and sometimes fast but always repetitious, that might last for hours until the dancer became exhausted. Laughing, unlike barking or falling, was not contagious but was normally confined to one or two people who laughed a "rapturously solemn" laugh, as Stone put it. Rolling was the most dangerous of all the exercises: a participant either rolled up like a wheel or lay like a log and rolled back and forth on the ground in what Stone described as a "debasing and mortifying" manner. Running occurred when a listener felt an exercise coming and attempted to run away from it. More often than not, Stone reported, the runner lost the race and either fell, barked, or jerked. Singing, Stone related, was the most "unaccountable" of all the exercises, as subjects who before had no knowledge of singing technique suddenly began "most melodiously, not from the mouth or nose, but entirely in the breast."⁷⁷

These exercises, difficult for many in the Presbyterian church to tolerate, stood for revivalists as God's stamp of approval on their work, and both sides quickly moved to assert their positions. Supporters of the exercises

included ministers, like McGready, who viewed them as signs from God, as well as some who expressed only cautious, lukewarm acceptance. Ministers who questioned the source and purpose of the exercises ranged from those who were simply uneasy with this new "enthusiasm" to others who viewed it as nothing short of the work of Satan.⁷⁸

Adam Rankin, the center of the hymnology controversy in the 1790s, codified the arguments of this latter group. In a diatribe aimed at discrediting the Revival as a whole, Rankin focused his criticism on the exercises. He condemned the revivalists for promoting and allowing "extravagant affections, such as falling into dead fits . . . and [other] ungovernable measures." He argued that acceptance of these as signs from God required the jettisoning of all Presbyterian orthodoxy. Rankin wrote that these exercises were diabolically inspired, and he compared the jerks and the barks to instances of New Testament demonic possession. Finally, he wrote, Satanic influence could be seen in these exercises because the falling is nowhere prescribed or described in scripture, because the exercises produced boldness rather than humility, because immorality often accompanied the camp meetings where the exercises took place, and because Satan is at his most powerful when he appears as an Angel of Light. The net effect of these exercises was to leave the subject deluded, not saved, possessing a faith that rested on emotion and feelings and

not on God.⁷⁹

Responses to Rankin's and others' attacks ranged from tepid to hot. One writer to the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine urged those who opposed the Kentucky Revival because of the exercises to be more cautious and circumspect before condemning the entire movement on this one point.⁸⁰ Others closer to the situation, like David Rice, argued that exercises such as falling might be either beneficial or detrimental, depending on the individual situation. If the person had a previous understanding of sin and scripture, then falling could have a "happy influence" on that individual's "temper and conduct." If, however, they were ignorant of their state before God, falling would leave them deluded and unfounded.⁸¹ David Thomas, in a direct reply to Rankin, scolded him for focusing so heavily on what Thomas described as events peripheral to the overall work and asserted that all recent revivals had reported similar exercises.⁸²

John McMillan's understanding of the exercises is perhaps the best insight into the source and scope of McGready's. The exercises of the Great Revival did not shock McMillan, who wrote that they differed from earlier ones with which he had been associated "only in this, that the body is more generally affected."⁸³ He went on to write in the Western Missionary Magazine, of which he was a board member, that when such stupendous events occurred as

had in Kentucky, no one could doubt the source: "We must reject the word of God, not only in some particular passages, but in the substance of it, if we reject such a work as not being the work of God. The whole tenor of the gospel proves it; all the notions of religion which the scripture gives us, confirm it."⁸⁴

McGready followed McMillan in defending the exercises, though he confessed that he had some initial doubts about their origin and rightness. In a letter in 1804 he reflected that he had experienced "many fears and scruples . . . and sometimes strong prejudices" against the exercises upon their first appearance, and that the falling, the crying, the dancing and laughing had "filled me with awful fears lest it might not be the work of God." He reported that he concealed those fears from others lest the exercises were indeed from God. He recounted how he had struggled with this issue for many months before finally seeing "clearer light upon them."⁸⁵ The clearer light came at least by 1801, when he set forth a vindication of the exercises in a sermon designed specifically to put to rest any fears that the current revival was not from God.

Preaching from Matthew 11:4-6, a passage relating the miraculous works of Christ, McGready began by remarking that whenever God through Christ had shown his power for the salvation of sinners, he had done so in a manner "contrary to the expectations of a blind world." Jesus, he noted, had

come not as a king, as the Pharisees and others had hoped and expected, but as a simple, poor carpenter from Nazareth, of all places. In the same way, God's coming in the present revival was unacceptable to some because it was marked with "circumstances equally unreasonable in the opinion of the proud and worldly mind." Many in Jesus's day questioned whether he was the true Messiah; many in this day question whether this is a true revival.

After quickly reviewing the events of the past few years in Logan County and the rest of Kentucky, McGready moved on to list some of the effects of the Revival on the inhabitants of Kentucky and followed Jesus's argument of Matthew 7:18 that a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and vice versa. The first effect he noted was a "deep, rational and scriptural conviction" of their sins and their place before the Almighty. This weight of guilt, said McGready, is such an "unsufferable [sic] burden" that the sinner's strength fails and he or she falls to the ground. The second effect among the people is a new understanding of the "beauty and lov[e]liness" of Christ--something McGready equated with the blind seeing and the deaf hearing. He thirdly pointed to a new disposition evinced in all those who are saved, particularly in their compassionate attitudes toward the lost. Fourth, he noted the increase in knowledge about "Christ and divine things" among the converted, replacing the ignorance which reigned before. Finally,

McGready argued that the change in lifestyle exhibited among the saved--from drunkard, swearer, and gambler to one who sang, prayed, and obeyed God's commands--stood as the clearest proof of all that this revival came from God alone.

But, McGready saw, the "prejudiced mind" could not understand or accept the exercises that accompanied what otherwise might be a true revival. He resorted, therefore, to both reason and scripture to dispel any further doubts on this matter. To the question of falling, he answered first that the connection between body and soul is so intimate that any man filled with "uncommon sense of terror and divine wrath" should fall to the ground as a matter of human nature. He cited Jonathan Edwards to support this point, relating that Edwards said that people in such a state would "sink dead upon the spot." McGready went on to cite several scriptural examples of Christians falling when faced with a "similar manifestation of divine glory."

As to the shrieking and crying, he again referred to reason, Edwards's authority, and scripture. Would not a slave, when faced with an angry master, cry out for mercy? How much more so a sinner in the hands of an angry God? McGready pointed out that the great Edwards himself had said that

Were a person suspended over a deep pit filled with devouring flames, by a small cord just ready to break, would it seem strange to hear him screaming and cry out for deliverance? Then, should it seem strange to see a guilty sinner, hanging over the bottomless, flaming pit of hell

by the brittle thread of life, and that thread in the hand of an angry God,--to see him cry out for mercy, in most extreme anguish?

Scripture, too, recounted men and women crying--indeed, commanded to cry out--to God for mercy.

The confusion of camp meetings, McGready noted, offended some who thought it violated Paul's proscription in 1 Corinthians 14 against disorder in worship. McGready deflected this objection by explaining that most of the extreme exercises came at the conclusion of preaching that marked the end of the formal worship service. Therefore, revivalists could not be accused of promoting confusion in worship since the exercises did not come during worship. He compared the excitement of camp meetings with that after the Pentecostal sermon of Peter in Acts 2. Confusion like that, McGready argued, the church could use more of!

Dancing, jerking, and laughing, McGready again explained, were all clearly within the pale of acceptability for newly converted Christians. Introducing dancing as a regular part of worship, he admitted, would be "truly absurd and ridiculous." This dancing, however, was "entirely involuntary and produced altogether by extraordinary and overpowering impressions on the mind." The subject filled with the spirit of God's power leaped about in joy as David had done when the Ark of the Covenant came home to the Israelites.

To those who questioned the jerks he proclaimed that

the exercise contained no intrinsic lewdness or evil and that the subject broke no commandments during the jerks. If no evil was inherent in the jerks and no commands were broken by them, objections were "trifling and groundless." As long as those experiencing bodily influences maintained rational and scriptural minds and views, then it did not matter what motions their body made.

Finally, McGready argued that laughter came from God originally and that although fallen man had often corrupted laughter to evil ends, nonetheless laughter was a gift from God. Had sin not entered the world man would laugh in delight at the love of God. Why cannot laughter still be prompted, then, by such an awareness, notwithstanding the influences of the fall? Laughter and rejoicing, McGready argued, should be part and parcel of the present experience of God just as they had been for the people of biblical times.⁸⁶

McGready was ever-ready to defend the exercises against objectors. He had to; not to defend the exercises was not to defend a primary mark of the Revival. He made two insightful observations: that humans in general are "apt to condemn everything that we nor our fathers never saw before," and that humans are prone to "call things that are new and uncommon to us in religion, delusion and enthusiasm." He cautioned that such attitudes, on the one hand, limited the hand of God, and on the other confused

mental delusion with bodily agitation. Delusion and enthusiasm, he wrote, are disorders of the mind and not the body. In judging delusion one must judge a person's views of God, Christ, sin, holiness, the Scriptures, as well as how the individual displays the influence of conversion in everyday life. Again, a tree is known by its fruit. In the bodily exercises one finds "neither delusion, nor yet religion." True religion is found not in the body but in the mind and heart. Exercises do have a purpose. They demonstrate the power and divinity of the gospel, and they "arouse the attention of a stupid world" in much the same way that miracles once did.⁸⁷ Exercises for McGready played an important role in the progress of the revival, but for him the effects on the lives and beliefs of individuals stood as a much higher proof of the justness and righteousness of the Great Revival. He neither particularly encouraged nor discouraged the exercises but simply took them as an accompanying part of God's work that periodically reappeared on earth during times of intense religious revival. McGready understood the exercises not as innovations but as a sign of intensification.⁸⁸

The Presbyterian church as a whole had an increasingly difficult time coming to grips with the Revival in general and the exercises in particular. The General Assembly of 1804 gave clear and straightforward approval to the Revival and the exercises, which the Committee on Missions described

as a "dispensation of the grace of God."⁸⁹ The next year the report of the Committee on Missions adopted by the assembly was somewhat less enthusiastic. The report acknowledged the many conversions and powerful preaching, but it noted that "in some instances" the bodily motions have "proceeded to such lengths as greatly tended to impede the progress, and to tarnish the glory" of the revival. It went on to caution that although God can send such exercises, they can also issue from natural causes or from Satan. Arguing that "God is a God of order and not confusion," the assembly lamented the "irregular and disorderly" camp meetings and rejoiced that they seemed to be subsiding and that the "minds of the people are reverting to more rational and scriptural views and exercises."⁹⁰ By 1806 the assembly was willing only to express its thanks for the conversions of the revival, while warning that Satan had incited many "to the most absurd and extravagant outrages upon christian sobriety and decorum." It cautioned revivalists to stick to the "unerring guidance of God's written word" or they would undoubtedly fall victim to "ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism."⁹¹

Why the radical change in the views of General Assembly in just two years? The answer has little to do with the exercises themselves. By 1804 when the first report was issued, the exercises had been proceeding in full force for three years. More than enough time had passed since the

start of the Revival for the Assembly to form a negative opinion. Yet it had not, because the bodily exercises in and of themselves did not threaten either the position or the stability and orthodoxy of the Presbyterian church. Some within the assembly may have disapproved of them, but the exercises were not a sufficient cause to bring down the wrath of the assembly on the promoters of the Kentucky Revival.

The years after 1804 introduced two new components into the equation. First, by 1804 the exercises and camp meetings were no longer Presbyterian possessions. The Baptists, and to an even greater extent the Methodists, had appropriated McGready's revival and expanded their denominational power and numbers throughout the southeast. By 1806 it was clear that these two denominations--not Presbyterians--would be the primary beneficiaries of the Revival. That cannot have pleased eastern Calvinists who shuddered at the thought of the rapid growth of these Arminian denominations. There may well have been a political component to their objections as well. Many eastern Calvinists aligned themselves with the Federalist Party, whereas the southern and western Baptists and Methodists tended to support the Jeffersonian Republicans. The ecumenicalism of the Great Revival, therefore, proved to be one of its undoings in the Presbyterian Church.

The second ingredient--in the form of doctrinal

heterodoxy and schism--proved to be even more explosive within the Presbyterian church. Division will come twice in Kentucky in the span of just three years. This the assembly could not abide. When in 1806 the assembly condemned the exercises, it in reality condemned the growing doctrinal heterodoxy and the resulting disruption within the Kentucky Synod. Presbyterians, of course, had seen plenty of divisions over the centuries--Burghers and anti-Burghers, Seceders and anti-Seceders, Old Lights and New Lights--but never before had they faced from within such openly non-Calvinistic beliefs as some Kentucky Presbyterians will present after 1803. Largely because of these schisms the General Assembly turned its back both on the exercises and the Revival.

The heterodoxies and schisms of 1804 to 1807 caused tremendous upheaval not only in the Presbyterian Church but also in the life and career of James McGready, bringing him sadness, humiliation, and defeat, and forcing him once again to leave his home and his churches for another place farther out on the frontier. In 1803, of course, McGready knew about none of the upcoming sorrow. The previous four years, the revival years, had been the culmination of all that he had been working for since the day he himself had undergone conversion. A decade of defeat and frustration had not swayed him from the path that he set for himself as he left McMillan's school and returned to his home in Carolina. The

Kentucky revival had certainly been all he hoped for. It had crashed ashore like a great wave in Logan County in 1800, from whence over the next four years it surged across much of the frontier, back to the Carolinas, and beyond. The Great Revival met all McGready's criteria for a successful revival: it sustained itself over time and distance; it affected people of all ages and walks of life; it changed not just respondents' minds but their lives; on top of all that, the revival had been visited with bodily exercises that McGready could only explain as the visitation of God's power. These, the revival years, undoubtedly made James McGready a very happy man. As he rode on his horse from camp meeting to camp meeting he must have believed that his Scottish forebears, not to mention the Tennents, Whitefield, and Edwards, would have been happy too.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1.[James McGready], "A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County," New York Missionary Magazine 4 (1803): 154.

2.Smith, Christian Church, 570.

3.Most of the following paragraph is heavily dependent on the work of Nathan Hatch in Democratization of American Christianity.

4.[McGready], "A Short Narrative," 154.

5.Ibid., 152.

6.The Red River Association of Russellville, Kentucky, has rebuilt the Red River Meeting House upon its original site using drawings and descriptions from the period. The above description comes as a result of personal observations made at the site in October 1988.

7.Quoted in Dunaway, The Scotch-Irish, 269.

8.McGready, Posthumous Works, viii.

9.Ibid.

10.[McGready], "A Short Narrative," 153.

11.McGready, Posthumous Works, ix. Dunaway, The Scotch-Irish, 270-272.

12.Dunaway, The Scotch-Irish, 270-272.

13.[McGready], "A Short Narrative," 154.

14.McGready, Posthumous Works, ix.

15.Ibid.

16.[McGready], "A Short Narrative," 154-5.

17.Dunaway, The Scotch-Irish, 270.

18. Smith, Christian Church, 572-573. Crisman, Origin and Doctrines, 34.

19. For this section I have relied most heavily on Schmidt, Holy Fairs, and to a lesser extent, Westerkamp, Triumph of the Laity, and Conkin, Cane Ridge.

20. Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 65.

21. McGready, Posthumous Works, 174-179.

22. For more on tokens and their usage, see Schmidt, Holy Fairs, *passim*.

23. McGready, Posthumous Works, ix.

24. Matthew 14:28-31. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," 193-4.

25. *Ibid.*, 194. McGready, Posthumous Works, ix.

26. Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 65.

27. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," 196.

28. John Carr, Early Times in Middle Tennessee (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F.A. Owen, 1857), 68ff.

29. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," 197.

30. Smith, Christian Church, 576-578. Records of Sumner County Shiloh Presbyterian Church, 1793-1847 (Typescript copy, Tennessee State Archives, Nashville, Tennessee), 2.

31. Records of Shiloh Presbyterian Church, 2. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," 197. Smith, Christian Church, 577-578.

32. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," 199.

33. *Ibid.*, 197.

34. McGready, Posthumous Works, xi.

35. *Ibid.*

36. James McGready, "A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County," Western Missionary Magazine, I (June 1803): 173.

37. "Letter from [James McGready], July 26, 1803," Western Missionary Magazine 1 (June 1803): 404.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. James McGready, a Presbyterian Minister, in Logan County, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr. Coke," Methodist Magazine (London) 26 (April 1803):183-184.

40. "Extract from a letter of the Rev. J. Hughes, a minister of the Ohio Presbytery in the state of Pennsylvania, dated Nov. 23, 1801," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer, (April 1802): 393.

41. "Letter Addressed to Mr. Edwards, October 23, 1801," Methodist Magazine (London) 25 (June 1802): 262-263. "Extract of a Letter to the Publisher, from Tennessee, dated October 10, 1801," New York Missionary Magazine 3 (1802): 38.

42. "McGready to Coke," 184. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. John Evans Findley of Mason-County, Kentucky," Methodist Magazine (London) 26 (March 1803): 126.

43. "From a Presbyterian Minister in Kentucky, to another in Philadelphia, August --, 1801," Methodist Magazine (London) 25 (June 1802): 264. Quoted in James R. Rogers, The Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 151-154.

44. Elder Levi Purviance, A Biography of the Elder David Purviance . . . Written by Himself (Dayton: B.F. and G.W. Wells, 1848), 246.

45. "Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Kentucky to his brother in Lower Virginia," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer (April 1802): 392-393. F.A. Michaux, "Travels to the West of the Allegheny Mountains," in Reuben Gold Thwaites, Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, vol. 3 (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 249-250.

46. "Letter from John Evans Findley," 127.

47. The best and most recent treatment of the Cane Ridge meeting can be found in Conkin, Cane Ridge. Conkin, following the lead of Schmidt, put Cane Ridge in its appropriate Scottish context.

48. Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 151-154.

49. "Extract of a Letter from Colonel Robert Patterson, of Lexington, Kentucky, to the Rev. Dr. John King," Methodist Magazine (London) 27 (June 1803): 82-86.

50. Ibid. Richard M'Nemar, The Kentucky Revival (Cincinnati: John W. Brown, 1807; New York: Edward O. Jenkins, 1846), 26-27. "Religious Intelligence," New York Missionary Magazine 3 (1802): 118-122. Barton W. Stone, History of the Christian Church in the West (1827; Lexington: The College of the Bible, 1956), 2-3.
51. Stone, Christian Church in the West, 82-83, 118-122. "Letter from the Rev. John Evans Findley," 126-127.
52. [McGready], "A Short Narrative," New York, 176.
53. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. J. Hall . . . to Mr. Woodward, Iredell County, North Carolina, May 4, 1802," Methodist Magazine (London) 27 (June 1803): 275.
54. Ibid. "Extract from the Georgia Analytical Repository . . . for May and June 1802," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer 3 (August 1802): 77.
55. "Extract of a Letter from a respectable clergyman, dated Orange County, N. Carolina, March 5th, 1805," Evangelical Intelligencer 1 (1805): 251.
56. "Revival of Religion in the Western Country," Western Missionary Magazine 1 (September 1803): 293.
57. Schmidt, Holy Fairs, 61.
58. "Letter from Thomas Moore, Washington, Co., Pennsylvania--Dec. 20, 1802," New York Missionary Magazine 4 (1803): 113.
59. John McMillan, "The Revival," Western Missionary Magazine 2 (January 1805): 353.
60. "From Rev. Ezekiel Cooper to Dr. Coke, June 12, 1801," Methodist Magazine (London) 25 (September 1802): 422-425. "From Mr. Stith Mead to Rev. Dr. Coke, May 11, 1802," Methodist Magazine (London) 25 (November 1802): 521-523. "Religious Intelligence," Western Christian Monitor I (August 1816): 376. For general accounts of the spread of the revival see Cleveland, The Great Revival, and Boles, The Great Revival.
61. See John W. Kuykendall, Southern Enterprize: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), for a discussion on the theological commonalities of evangelicals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

62. McGready, Posthumous Works, 259.

63. "Letter from the Rev. George Baxter to the Rev. A. Alexander, dated Washington Academy, Virginia, Jan. 1, 1802," New York Missionary Magazine 3 (1802): 87, 92. Quoted in Thomas H. Campbell, Studies in Cumberland Presbyterian History (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1944), 55.

64. Campbell, Studies in Cumberland History, 55. William K. Boyd, History of North Carolina, 3 vols. (1919; Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, 1973), 1: 195-196. Durward T. Stokes, "North Carolina and the Great Revival of 1800," North Carolina Historical Review 43 (Autumn 1966): 401. Cleveland, The Great Revival, 158. McGready himself joined into the anti-alcohol campaign. See McGready, "The Dangerous and Destructive Consequences Attending the Use of Spirituous Liquors," in Posthumous Works, 487-511.

65. Robert B. McAfee, "Life and Times of Robert B. McAfee . . . written by Himself," (1845) Typescript copy, University of Kentucky Library, 125.

66. "Extract of a Letter from Rev. James Welsh, of Lexington, Kentucky, dated July 15, 1802," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer III (September 1802): 120. Campbell, Studies in Cumberland History, 55. Z.F. Smith, The History of Kentucky (Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, Publishers, 1892), 422. McAfee, "Life and Times," 125.

67. In Maxwell Pierson Gaddis, Footprints of an Itinerant (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1873), 479.

68. "Letter Addressed to Mr. Edwards," 262-263. Smith, Christian Church, 590-591.

69. Smith, Christian Church, 588-589.

70. "From a Presbyterian Minister in Kentucky," 264. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 20. "Letter from the Rev. George Baxter," 121-122. Stone in Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 151-154, 159-160. Michaux, "Travels to the West," 249-50. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. William Hodge, of Sumner County, State of Tennessee, to the Rev. Francis Asbury," Methodist Magazine (London) 26 (June 1803): 269.

71. Stone in Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 160.

72. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 65.

73. Stone in Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 160.

74. Ibid. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 65.
 75. Stone in Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 161.
 76. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 66.
 77. Ibid., 64. Stone in Rogers, Cane Ridge Meeting-house, 161-162.
 78. "Extract of a Letter from the Rev. G. Baxter," 89.
 79. Adam Rankin, A Review of the Noted Revival in Kentucky (Lexington: John Bradford, 1802), passim.
 80. "On the Kentucky Revival," Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer 2 (June 1802): 477.
 81. David Rice, "The Kentucky Revival," Western Missionary Magazine 1 (September 1803): 403.
 82. David Thomas, The Observer Trying the Great Reformation in this State (Lexington, Ky.: John Bradford, 1802), 8-32.
 83. McMillan, "The Revival," 354.
 84. Ibid., 356.
 85. In Gaddis, Footprints of an Itinerant, 479-480.
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 88. Smith, Christian Church, 590-592.
 89. "General State of Religion," in New York Missionary Magazine 3 (1804): 266-267.
 90. "Report of the Committee on Missions to the General Assembly, May, 1805," in Evangelical Intelligencer 1 (May 1805): 258.
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Chapter Five--The Cumberland Years, 1804-1807

The revival slowed but did not cease in the Cumberland region after 1803. McGready spent many a weekend preaching to the flock in Logan County, watching them fall, and reviving them again with one of Watt's hymns.¹ For McGready, however, religious revival increasingly gave way to religious survival between 1804 and 1807. During those years he held a seat in the newly formed Cumberland Presbytery which was dominated by revivalists and committed to the Revival. Challenges and charges against him and that presbytery occupied the bulk of his attention for the next four years as the divisions that McGready had hoped to avoid appeared and resulted in the shredding of the Presbyterian church in Kentucky. In that crucible of dissension McGready's professional life reached its climax. Faced eventually with a stark choice between two opposing theological parties, he followed the path of his upbringing and showed his traditionalist colors more clearly than he ever had before or would thereafter.

McGready's battles within the church came while a member of the Cumberland Presbytery. The need for a new presbytery in southwest Kentucky had become apparent by late 1802. The explosion of new converts in that region due to

the Great Revival necessitated a presbyterial organization closer to the scene than the Transylvania Presbytery that normally met in central and eastern Kentucky. In October 1802 the Synod of Kentucky carved the Cumberland Presbytery out of Transylvania south and west of the Bigbarren and Salt rivers.² The synod assigned ten ministers to the new presbytery--McGready, William Hodge, William McGee, John Rankin, Samuel McAdow, Thomas B. Craighead, James Balch, John Bowman, Samuel Donnel, and Terah Templin--soon to be joined by an eleventh, Robert Haw.³

From the beginning, the presbytery was riven by faction, both personal and theological. Craighead possessed a family-generated animosity toward Finis Ewing, a young exhorter who later became a key member of the revival party.⁴ More important, the presbytery fell into two theological parties--the revival, or Majority, party, and the anti-revival, or Minority, party. In the majority were six ministers--McGready, Hodge, McGee, Rankin, McAdow, and Haw. Terah Templin and Craighead headed the minority of five who opposed the revival on several grounds: the protracted night meetings, the multiple preachers, the itinerant preachers, all the noise, and, of course, the exercises.⁵

Members of these two groups had not always been divided on the Revival but found themselves increasingly so. For instance, McGready and Templin had traveled together to at

least one revivalistic event. Had the mild-mannered Templin been well enough to exert his influence, contentiousness might have been reduced, but he turned sixty in 1802, was not in the best of health, and rarely attended presbytery.⁶ Instead, the leadership of the anti-revival group fell to Craighead, a much more rancorous man than Templin.⁷ McGready easily towered above the revival group in experience, in intellect, and in status. More than any other among the revival party, he had ties to Caldwell, McMillan, and the revivalists of earlier days. His importance to the party and the Cumberland presbytery is reflected in his presence at virtually every meeting and his frequent service as clerk or moderator of the presbytery.⁸

Problems in and with the Cumberland Presbytery might have been more easily resolved had not events in eastern Kentucky in 1804 colored the outlook of the Synod of Kentucky and the General Assembly. When disputes eventually arose between the Kentucky Synod and the Cumberland Presbytery, the synod did not take up the Cumberland situation, as it were, in a vacuum. The New Light and Shaker schism of 1804 affected the later Cumberland controversy by creating a tense atmosphere within the synod and by giving the synod a worst-case scenario as a lens through which it would view all doctrinal and procedural irregularities.⁹

Worries about dissension and division in Kentucky

Presbyterianism began to arise as early as 1803. David Rice, the father of the Kentucky presbyterianism, openly expressed some of his fears about the current "stir in the land" that he firmly believed was a true revival.¹⁰ His concern was not to squelch the revival but to encourage it along pure paths. He urged opponents of the Great Revival and its methods to reconsider their positions because no revival could be truly perfect and because of the many marks of this revival that clearly made it a true one.¹¹ He went on to warn that many things could bring this revival to a halt or into disrepute, among them pride, enthusiasm that leads men to make doctrinal judgments based on feelings and not scripture, and contention between ministers.¹² Rice pointed out two problems in particular that threatened the Revival.

The first of the approaching storm clouds, as Rice saw it, was the mixing of doctrines such as Arminianism, antinomianism, and Calvinism in the preaching at camp meetings. Such a mixture, of course, could not be avoided when at any given camp meeting ministers representing three or four different denominations and doctrines of salvation were preaching. Rice exhorted presbyteries and synods to prevent any doctrinal mixing within their own bodies. Of most immediate concern to arch-Calvinists was the drift away from limited atonement and predestination to the free will, unlimited salvation doctrines expressed two centuries before

by Jacobus Arminius. The perceived drift to Arminianism greatly concerned Rice, but his alarm heightened even further because he believed that moving from Calvinism to Arminianism was the first of eight precise steps to atheism.¹³ When moderates like Rice expressed concern over doctrinal infidelity by revivalists, they feared not just the end of Calvinism but the end of mass Christianity.¹⁴ This attitude helps explain the swift and decisive action the Synod of Kentucky will take against the Springfield and Cumberland Presbyteries between 1804 and 1807.

Rice also warned against what he saw as the "improper exercise of church discipline" in Kentucky. Presbyterial or synodical discipline either too lax or too harsh against ministers or exhorters would stop the revival. Discipline too lax would lead to the very doctrinal waywardness described above, but if discipline in the form of deposition was too harshly levied, then "suspicions are raised, ill-will excited, and parties are formed, wrangling takes place, and the sun of prosperity sets, and a dark night succeeds."¹⁵ Anti-revivalists, who increasingly grew in strength in the Kentucky Synod, happily heeded Rice's first piece of advice, but rather less his second. The choice for them boiled down not so much to "Discipline or Revival?" as to "Truth or Revival?"

Division came first to eastern Kentucky. The "New Light" schism, as it became known, centered in the

Washington Presbytery and resulted from the activities and ideas of two men in particular, Barton Stone and Richard McNemar. Stone, as will be recalled, had first been put on the path of revivalism and evangelicalism by McGready. Soon after he began attending Caldwell's school he heard McGready preach on the "horrors of hell," but he was only converted after hearing Hodge preach on the love of God.¹⁶ Stone's being personally touched by the sweetness of the gospel rather than the rigors of damnation undoubtedly played a heavy role in his theological transformation in 1804.

Stone always blamed the New Light schism on ministers (probably like McGready) who promoted the daily teaching of Calvinism at camp meetings and on presbyters (like Balch) who opposed the Revival, but he, McNemar, and others opened intradenominational warfare by openly challenging Calvinist orthodoxy. McNemar best laid out the New Light theology that several members of the Washington Presbytery had begun to preach by 1803. He first declared that God's will was manifest to all individuals who sought after it by means of an "inward light, which shone into the heart," pushing away the sola scriptura of Calvin, Knox, and the Westminster Confession. He went on to argue that all creeds written by humans, especially Calvinism, should be done away with because all true Christians would naturally "see eye to eye" on matters of doctrine and faith. McNemar also staked out the position that God did not limit atonement but made

possible "the salvation of all souls" with an "open door" for all to come in. Individuals who do not respond can only "blame themselves for their own perdition."¹⁷ In worship, McNemar said, each should be free to praise God "agreeably to their own feelings." Exercises like jerking and falling were clearly of "supernatural origin" and tended to "increase the inward workings of the Spirit." Generally speaking, he warned, those who did not participate did not have true religion and were "only dead weights upon the cause."¹⁸ That is a position, as has been seen, that McGready could not have accepted. McNemar admitted that these doctrines "threatened the total subversion of the Calvinistic system" but argued that the recent revival had not come simply to pump up current church rolls; giving the Revival a purpose more important than increasing numbers, McNemar believed this revival would "prepare the way for that kingdom of God, in which all things are new."¹⁹

In September 1803 a group of Washington Presbytery ministers, including Stone and McNemar as well as Robert Marshall and John Dunlavy, withdrew from the synod and established a new independent Springfield Presbytery to avoid the synod's impending discipline.²⁰ Stone wrote, we "saw the arm of ecclesiastical authority raised to crush us, and we must either sink, or step aside to avoid the blow."²¹ The group questioned the strict adherence of the Presbyterian church to the Westminster Confession and

attempted to appeal from it to the Scriptures.²² Despite synodical attempts at repairing this rupture, by June 1804 no grounds for unity had been found. The synod would not accept any agreement short of total capitulation to what McNemar called the "soul-stupefying [sic] creed" of Calvinism.²³ The Springfield Presbytery thereupon dissolved itself in June 1804 in a document it called the "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." The group declared null and void all denominational associations and became part of what they described as the universal "Christian Church."²⁴

Almost immediately, splits developed within this "universal" church. Three Shaker missionaries appeared in eastern Kentucky in the summer of 1803, carrying with them the message of Mother Ann Lee. Stone and McNemar welcomed them into the fold initially as Christian brothers fighting against the Calvinist hierarchy. Stone soon became suspicious of their theology, which bore little resemblance to any form of orthodox Protestantism, but McNemar and Dunlavy were won over and by the end of 1804 had joined the Shaker cause, which quickly grew to a considerable size in eastern and southern Kentucky.²⁵ Within a year McNemar and Dunlavy, senior members of the Kentucky Synod, had moved from orthodox Presbyterianism to Shakerism.²⁶ The General Assembly, hearing of all this in 1804, attempted to repair the damage by sending a committee westward. The committee

ultimately failed but did commend the synod for its handling of the entire situation and its staunch support of Calvinist doctrine.²⁷

McGready and most of the rest of his southwest Kentucky revivalist colleagues had nothing to do with the New Light schism of Stone and McNemar. Indeed, the theological indiscretions of his former student must have grieved him greatly. He strongly disapproved of the doctrinal innovations of the Springfield Presbytery. He and the Cumberland ministers therefore should not have been associated by the Synod with the New Light schism. Unfortunately for the Cumberland Presbytery, such cool reasoning did not prevail between 1804 and 1807. The New Light-Shaker schism confirmed the worst fears of many already-suspicious anti-revivalists and heightened their sensitivity towards any new heterodoxies.

Differences among Cumberland presbyters centered on four issues: ministerial education, doctrine, the use of exhorters, and church government--issues basically the same as in the 1730s and ones that had continually divided revivalist and anti-revivalist Presbyterians.²⁸ Anti-revivalists normally insisted on a college or college-equivalent education before ordination or even licensing; revivalists often failed to strictly enforce this traditional Presbyterian standard. Anti-revivalists likewise required complete acceptance of all parts of the

Westminster Confession of Faith; revivalists tended to be more willing to grant exceptions, especially to licensees or exhorters. Revivalists generally were quick to turn to unordained licensees or exhorters to preach to far-flung minister-less congregations; anti-revivalists preferred to use only ordained ministers to preach the gospel. Finally, revivalists usually pointed to the presbytery as the only body authorized to examine ministerial candidates while anti-revivalists installed the synod with those powers as well. These divisions had existed within the Presbyterian Church since the reunion of the New York and Philadelphia Synods in 1758, and many presbyteries had maintained peace and unity despite internal differences on these and other points. These revivalist/anti-revivalist distinctions did not necessitate rancor within presbyteries but did lay the groundwork for it; they also promoted an often intense competition within a presbytery for control of it.

Two events turned this heated competition within the closely-divided Cumberland Presbytery into open battle in 1804. First, Craighead sent a letter to the synod protesting the overuse of exhorters in the region and the presbytery's laxness in examining and overseeing them.²⁹ Second, the Shiloh congregation split into two churches. The anti-revival part of the church had seceded and petitioned Cumberland Presbytery for admission to the presbytery as the true Shiloh church. They did so, they

declared, because "their brethren held communion with those holding Arminian principles." The presbytery, dominated by the revivalist Majority, refused their request because this rebel group had "uniformly opposed and condemned the revival." The petitioners thereupon appealed to the synod for satisfaction of their claim.³⁰ The synod responded to both these events at its October 1804 meeting by creating commissions to investigate and report back the next year.³¹

Nothing much happened on this front until October 1805, when the synod met in a "state of great perplexity and anxiety."³² It heard the commission's report, compiled largely by Archibald Cameron who had attended the spring meeting of the Cumberland Presbytery.³³ This report charged the presbytery with violating the rules of discipline spelled out in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, particularly in regard to ordaining and examining ministers and exhorters.³⁴ Having waited a year already, and having recently seen how rapidly the New Light controversy in eastern Kentucky deteriorated into schism, the synod feared that waiting any longer would be "impolitic and dangerous" and therefore moved to "suppress growing irregularities in the West."³⁵ In addition to accepting the report, the synod created a commission "vested with full Synodical powers to confer . . . and adjudicate" upon the proceedings of the Cumberland Presbytery. The synod charged the commission with investigating presbyterial abuses in

general and the Shiloh situation in particular. The order called for the commission to convene on the first Tuesday in December at the Gasper Meeting House and required all members of the Cumberland Presbytery as well as exhorters licensed by that body to appear so that a "full, fair, and friendly" investigation might take place.³⁶

The commission came to order on December 3, 1805, at the Gasper River House. John Lyle, who had spent nearly two months traveling within the presbyterial bounds and who served as one of the commission's twelve members, opened the proceedings by preaching on Hebrews 5:4--"And no man taketh this honour [the ministry] unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The next day the commission laid out to the presbytery its standing and purpose as a juridical agent of the Kentucky Synod. After that, it took up the questions laid before it by Craighead's letter, Shiloh's appeal, and Cameron's report.³⁷

Craighead's letter, it will be recalled, focused on the overuse of lay exhorters and the laxness of the presbytery in examining them before licensing them to preach. The use of exhorters had been sanctioned by the Scottish Kirk as early as 1560 and had been approved by Transylvania Presbytery since 1796.³⁸ The constitution of the Presbyterian Church allowed for young men of "good moral character" to be examined respecting their "experimental acquaintance" with religion. It "recommended" that

licensees produce a diploma or some proof of a regular course of study. They must also answer four questions in the affirmative, most importantly that they "sincerely receive and adopt" the Westminster Confession.³⁹ A presbytery generally used exhorters only when it did not have enough ordained ministers. Because only five Presbyterian ministers from the Logan County region favored revival in 1801, the Transylvania Presbytery was faced with either letting the people go without a ministry, losing them to other denominations, or retaining them within the Presbyterian church by using exhorters. David Rice suggested the last course to the presbytery in 1801, a course it promptly followed by licensing three men, including Finis Ewing.⁴⁰ When the synod created the Cumberland Presbytery in 1802, these men automatically transferred under the control of that presbytery.

The interpretive sticking point on the use of exhorters came over the issue of higher education. Rice wrote to the General Assembly on behalf of the Transylvania Presbytery in 1804 asking whether exhorters could be licensed without a college, or equivalent, degree. The assembly responded with a definite maybe. It warned Rice that experience had shown that a liberal education was "absolutely essential" for usefulness to the church and was the generally accepted standard of the church. Furthermore, if the church was opened to ignorance, it would soon be swamped with "errors"

and "the wildest disorders." Nevertheless, the assembly went on to say that from time to time, under extreme situations, exhorters without degrees might be licensed, but only with "great caution" and "proper restrictions and limitations" lest they fall into extravagance and pride and spurn the discipline of presbytery.⁴¹ Basically agreeing with General Assembly's ruling, Rice wrote that use of uneducated exhorters was dangerous because presbyteries opened the gate to preachers "too ignorant to know their own weakness, too self-confident to be under government and controul [sic], too vain to behave with decency, and enthusiastic enough to imagine they have authority to speak in the name of the Lord, tho' they can scarce speak common sense. This would destroy all rule, and reduce the church to a disorderly Mob."⁴²

The Cumberland Presbytery--at least its pro-revival majority--chose to ignore these warnings, deeming itself to be in an exceptional situation that called for unusual measures to maintain the flock. Between 1803 and 1805 the presbytery examined and licensed nearly thirty men as exhorters and without exception tested them only on their personal experience with "experimental religion" and their "motives to the ministry." No mention in the minutes is made of a broad education, in sharp contrast to similar examinations in Transylvania Presbytery at the same time.⁴³ In addition, Cumberland only required a "partial adoption"

of the Confession, forcing exhorters to accept it "only so far as they, in reason, think it corresponds with the scriptures."⁴⁴ McGready, anxious to promote revival and despite his educational and theological backgrounds, agreed to both these practices.

When the synod's commission opened hearings in December 1805, it focused on the latter issue. McGready, seeking compromise, spoke for the majority party by saying that the Confession was, after all, of "human composition and fallible" and should not be elevated to the level of Scripture. The commission responded bluntly that Cumberland's line of action would produce a situation "by which no man can know what they [the exhorters] believe in matters of Doctrine." The commission thereupon attempted to examine the licensees themselves, but William Hodge interposed for the Majority, rejecting the authority of a synod to examine presbyterial licensees.⁴⁵ After a night of conferring among themselves, the Majority, headed by McGready, and the licensees continued to refuse the commission the chance to examine the exhorters. The commission thereupon declared the exhorters by "common fame" to be "illiterate" and "erroneous in Sentiment." It forbade them to preach under the Presbyterian banner until they submitted to the Synod of Kentucky and underwent proper examination. As for the Majority members, the commission remanded each of them to the Synod's next regular meeting of

October 1806, where their fate would be decided. It also charged Hodge, Rankin, and McGee with holding doctrine contrary to the Confession and ordered them to appear at the next session of the synod.⁴⁶ Finally, the commission commanded that the "orderly [non-revivalist] part" of the Shiloh Congregation be admitted into the presbytery under any name but Shiloh.⁴⁷

The Majority party must have been stunned. The commission had exercised powers far beyond what they believed it possessed. They continued to insist that only presbyteries had the right to examine and ordain ministers and exhorters or to admit churches.⁴⁸ In addition, the charge of doctrinal heterodoxy must have stung McGready especially hard.

When Presbyterians charged one another with doctrinal heterodoxy, they generally meant a specific rejection of the tenets of Calvinism as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. More often than not, the dispute centered on the points of election and predestination, perhaps the most distinctive Calvinist doctrines and certainly among the most controversial. This general pattern followed form in Kentucky in 1805. When the commission charged Cumberland presbyters with theological heterodoxy, the specific complaint was over a perceived rejection of these two points of Calvinism in favor of acceptance of the free-will doctrines more palatable to

Baptists and Methodists.

As events turned out, that charge against the Cumberland Majority and its exhorters was justified, with the exceptions of William Hodge and James McGready. Notwithstanding his love for the Revival, McGready was not willing to sacrifice two hundred years of Presbyterian doctrine. Indeed, as he would have seen it, holding on to Calvinism was the only way to continue the Revival; true revival could in McGready's thinking come only from a Calvinist theology.

On the two points of predestination and election McGready remained orthodox, as Presbyterians understood orthodoxy. Those doctrines formed only a small part of his preaching, but when pressed he made his position clear. He condemned clergy and laity who rejected predestination and election, whose hearts "boil with madness" when they hear the words, and who reject all else that the preacher might be saying once those words were uttered. When anti-Calvinists speak, McGready complained, they often do so with "rancor and bitterness; not in the spirit of Christ," even though the terms are used by both Christ and the apostle Paul. To any who rejected predestination and election as unbiblical, McGready responded, "These things I read in my Bible, and I have no authority to take them out. Some people tell us this doctrine is from hell; if so, the Bible is from hell, for it is full of it."⁴⁹

Predestination and election led inexorably to the doctrine of limited atonement, easily the most objectionable of Calvin's doctrines to the non-Reformed church. The idea that salvation was only open to a few was anathema to Arminians in general and revivalist Arminians in particular. Yet again, McGready showed limited atonement to be his position, even during a sacramental occasion. In a sacramental meditation delivered at the Gasper Church (the date is not known), he reviewed the sacrifice of Christ and described in great detail the agony of the cross. In addition to the physical agonies, Christ had to suffer having the "sins of all the Elect world, both before and after conversion, [fixed] upon him like so many vipers."⁵⁰ McGready did not use the term, but the statement that Christ on the cross bore only the sins of the elect means that the atonement or propitiation of sins by Christ is limited to the elect alone.

Anti-Calvinism, which is what the commission detected in the Cumberland Presbytery, was not limited to southwestern Kentucky. Had it been so, the commission might have been more lenient. Instead, anti-Calvinism comprised one of the most common themes of early national religion.⁵¹ Popular religious movements from the New Lights to the Mormons, from Baptists to the African Methodist Episcopalians and Unitarians rejected the Calvinist paradigm that had dominated to a greater or lesser extent American

religious circles from the founding of the colonies. Riding the democratic wave of the Revolution, religious groups that could agree on little else combined to attack Calvinism, which smacked to them too heavily of complicated dogma, clerical arrogance, and elitism.⁵² The Calvinists of the Synod of Kentucky could do little about the spread of Methodism or Unitarianism, but they could and did seek to suppress any hint of Arminianism within their own body.

The rising tide of anti-Calvinism within the country placed the synod on the alert, and the New Light schism brought the troops to arms to defeat heterodoxy. In that tense atmosphere came the Cumberland controversy. For the synod, it was as if they had just saved one end of a house from burning down, only to discover that a new fire had broken out on the other end. The synod had no way of knowing that the Cumberlands would not venture as far from Calvinism as the New Lights or Shakers; they only knew that doctrinal deviation was happening once again within the synod. For the Synod of Kentucky, the primary goal in 1805 was not reconciliation through compromise but prevention of another set of heresies--heresies that had led in 1804 to the rupturing of the church in eastern Kentucky. Because of the anti-Calvinist fervor sweeping the nation, and because of what happened in 1804 with Stone and McNemar, the synod could not and would not in 1805 take any chances with the Cumberland Presbytery. To do so might well mean the end of

the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky.

The Cumberland Majority longed for the Revival to continue. They believed that the loss of exhorters would mean the end of revival in the Presbyterian church. Ministers alone would not be able to meet the needs of the people of the region. Anyone who sought salvation would be forced to find it in some other church, most likely a Baptist or Methodist one. So when the commission put a gag on the exhorters in December, 1805, the Synod saw the preservation of the church through doctrinal purity, while the Cumberlands saw the end of the Great Revival within the Presbyterian Church, which would of necessity relegate the Presbyterian Church to second-class status on the frontier. Each group believed itself to be working in the best interests of the Presbyterian Church while the other worked, perhaps unknowingly, for the church's destruction.

This set of circumstances put McGready in an excruciating situation. To reject the exhorters and the Cumberland Majority meant the rejection of the revival as he knew it. It also meant the rejection of a number of his friends and converts with whom he had labored since the early days of his ministry in Carolina. On the other hand, support of the Cumberlands meant associating with Arminians and running the risk of being labeled a heretic and schismatic. He would need time to work this problem out.

Events, however, forced his hand. The wounded

Majority, in protest of the synod's actions, refused to attend meetings of the Cumberland Presbytery and instead formed themselves into a body they called the Council. McGready, still seeking to find compromise between the two parties, initially joined this group, whose purpose was to preserve unity among the six revivalists Cumberland ministers and the nearly thirty Cumberland exhorters. Soon thereafter, despite being the Council's "chief counselor," he withdrew from it. At some point in the winter or spring of 1806, when is not exactly clear, McGready evidently realized that the path he followed led only to schism. Perhaps he met a time or two with the Council and only then realized the depth of their Arminian sentiments and their rebellious attitudes towards the synod. He, like Rice, must have feared future departures from orthodoxy.⁵³ McGready's withdrawal was a "heavy blow" to the Council. Alone among its members he had the personal, educational, and theological stature to face the synod.⁵⁴ Having stepped to the edge of the precipice, McGready turned back, but had then to watch his students, friends, and spiritual children jump off the cliff.

The Synod tried to repair relations with those still-rebellious members of the Cumberland Presbytery, but efforts to reach Hodge and Rankin proved "abortive." In October 1806 it therefore suspended them from the ministry until they manifested "repentance and submission." McGready had

been asked to attend the fall meeting but did not, although a letter from him received by the synod while it sat gave reasons for his absence that it found "abundantly satisfactory."⁵⁵

The Council, declaring that it could not "indulge one hope" of having its case fairly adjudicated by the Kentucky Synod, appealed in the spring of 1807 to the General Assembly. In a letter to that body the Council described the Revival and the need for exhorters. The members of the Council knew that the men they had chosen had no "literary acquisitions," but that they were men with "gifts, piety, and influence." After explaining the Commission, its actions, and the subsequent actions of the Council, the letter asked for the interposition of the General Assembly between the Synod of Kentucky and the Cumberland Presbytery. The Council proclaimed its desire for peace, purity, and unity in the church but warned the Assembly that unless it redressed these problems, "every respectable Presbyterian congregation in the region will bolt."⁵⁶ General Assembly sent this letter to a committee, which drafted replies to the Council and to the Synod of Kentucky.

The General Assembly's reply to the Council scolded it for licensing and ordaining unqualified men who did not fully adopt the Confession, advising that those actions appeared to be the "origin of the evils of which you now complain." Probably more so than even the Synod of

Kentucky, the Assembly was cognizant of the rampant anti-Calvinism within the nation. The Assembly expressed its "decided disapprobation" of Council actions which it warned might have "dangerous consequences" for the church. Since the Council's letter was not a formal appeal, the General Assembly declared it could not act on the matter but would ask the Synod of Kentucky to review its actions for any wrongdoing. It closed by urging the Council members to return to the fold if they truly desired the best interests of Christ's church.⁵⁷

To the Synod of Kentucky the Assembly wrote that it sympathized with the synod's difficult situation but generally approved of its actions. It questioned the legality of the suspension of Hodge and Rankin and asked for a review of the case. It cautioned the synod, however, not to veer from the standards of the church in an effort to promote peace. Synodical power should be used for "edification and not destruction," but church purity should never be sacrificed simply to preserve an artificial unity.⁵⁸

Over the next two years, the Synod of Kentucky attempted to bring Hodge, McAdow, Rankin, and McGee back under the wing of the church. For their part, these men continued to protest to the synod and to the General Assembly that they had been wrongly treated and unjustly and illegally accused. The Kentucky Synod, having reviewed the

case, declared itself to have acted properly in all instances and proceeded with church discipline against the offending members. By 1809, the General Assembly had rejected all appeals by the Council and had instead commended the Synod for acting in such a "respectful and able" manner in the midst of the "trying circumstances in which they have been placed."⁵⁹ The General Assembly further expressed sorrow and outrage that a "spirit of fanaticism, propagating the most palpable errors" had appeared in the Synod of Kentucky.⁶⁰

The Synod and the Transylvania Presbytery, with the increasing support of the General Assembly, moved to squelch the dissension in 1808. By that date the synod had dissolved the Cumberland Presbytery and turned the controversy over to the Transylvania Presbytery, which once again held jurisdiction over Logan County. Having received the case, the Transylvania Presbytery asked McGready, Hodge, McGee, Rankin, and McAdow all to appear at the March 1809 meeting. Only Hodge appeared. He asked for terms for re-entry. McGready did not appear as ordered, but presbytery members were convinced "as individuals" that he intended to make formal submission to the presbytery and cited him to appear at the next session in October. In the meantime, the presbytery deposed Rankin for "continuing to propagate and encourage heresy and schism and manifesting no disposition to return to the faith and discipline of the church."⁶¹

Any hopes for reconciliation between the Council and the Presbyterian church finally disintegrated in the fall of 1809 and the spring of 1810. In response to the General Assembly's final rejection in 1809, the Council met in August of that year and voted to constitute themselves a presbytery.⁶² This McGready and Hodge could not abide. Having long absented himself from the Council, McGready made official his return to the fold in a letter to Presbytery received in October 1809 in which he expressed "due submission to the discipline of our church in every point."⁶³ Hodge followed McGready when he submitted at Greentown on December 6.⁶⁴ The others refused to return. In February, four ministers met to form a new fully revivalist Cumberland Presbytery that preserved Presbyterian polity but rejected predestination, election, and limited atonement. McAdow joined and was soon suspended by the Transylvania Presbytery, as was Finis Ewing, formerly an exhorter, now a minister. McGee joined the new church in the fall, whereupon the Transylvania Presbytery deposed him as well.⁶⁵

McGready's submission to authority is another indication of his eighteenth-century outlook. For if anti-Calvinism marked early national religion, so also did anti-authoritarianism.⁶⁶ In politics, in society, and in religion, Americans in the decades after the Revolution turned away from the traditional authority of institutions

and offices and increasingly opted instead for the egalitarian ideals of Jefferson and later Jackson. Having dominated the Anglo-American religious landscape for nearly two hundred years, Calvinists after 1800 found themselves supplanted by Arminian and egalitarian denominations that rode the wave of democratic sentiment that issued from the Revolution forward to dominant positions within the evangelical community. Congregationalists and Presbyterians survived this change but not completely intact. Many Congregationalists had by the early nineteenth century long since abandoned traditional Calvinism not for Arminianism but Unitarianism. Calvinist Presbyterianism lived on but without its revivalist heritage and as a secondary rather than primary denomination. Had McGready wanted to ride this wave of the future, had he been an innovator and a changer, he would not have submitted to the Transylvania Presbytery, but would have joined the new Cumberland Church. That he chose tradition and submission over innovation and rebellion at the most crucial juncture of his life speaks to his overall outlook as clearly as any set of sermons could do.

The Cumberland schism marked not just the climax of McGready's life; it also marked the end of mass Calvinist revivalism. The revivals that succeeded, those of Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and others, were decidedly non-Calvinist. McGready's revivalism--the Calvinist revivalism he received from Scotland via Tennent, McMillan, Caldwell,

and others--met its American death in the Kentucky bluegrass.⁶⁷ To be sure, individual ministers, including McGready himself, continued to promote Reformed revivalism and hold sacramental occasions on the frontier for several decades after the Cumberland split. After the New Light and Cumberland fiascos, however, Calvinistic revivalism died as an organized, widely supported part of American Presbyterianism.

That statement is not so remarkable. Historians from William Warren Sweet onward have cited the Great Revival as one of the events that marked the end of the Calvinism as a revival doctrine. Most have focused on the rejection of Calvinism by revivalists, citing Stone, the Cumberlands, the Baptists, and the Methodists as proof. That assessment is quite true, as many ministers in a variety of denominations refused to accept or recanted their acceptance of Calvin's ideas of predestination and election. The opposite, however, is equally true. Calvinist revivalism died partly because revivalists rejected Calvinism, but also because Calvinists rejected revivalism.

The New Light and Cumberland schisms proved too much for the Presbyterians to bear. Since the 1750s an uneasy union had existed in the American Presbyterian church between Calvinism and revivalism. The Kentucky schism exploded that union as forcefully as Fort Sumter would divide another union some sixty years later. Revivalism for

Calvinists became anathema, in much the same way that Calvinism proved unacceptable to revivalists. American Presbyterians, seeing clearly that the power of revivalism could not be easily controlled in the trans-Appalachian, post-Revolutionary setting, turned their backs on revivalism and the camp meeting and embraced instead less volatile forms of evangelization. When heresy and schism issued forth from Kentucky, McGready's revivalism--despite a heritage of some two hundred years--could not stand.

By the time of the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, McGready no longer lived in Logan County. Sometime in 1807 he had moved his family to Henderson (formerly Red Banks), Kentucky, on the Ohio River. He probably left the region primarily to get away from the religious wrangling of which he wanted no part. Having left the Council and having no friends in the Minority that controlled the Cumberland Presbytery after December 1805, McGready truly was a man without a church home in Logan County. He might conceivably have been able to patch up relations with the Minority, but they expressed no desire to do so. During 1806 the Minority carried out what can only be described as a smear campaign against McGready, not because he personally was so objectionable to them but because as leader of the opposition he was their most dangerous enemy.

The campaign to discredit McGready grew out of the

financial difficulties and indiscretions of his brother Israel. Israel McGready had traveled to Kentucky with James in 1796, had initially prospered, but had run into hard financial times by 1803. With creditors breathing down his neck, Israel moved to fulfill one promise he had made to his brother--a gift of property to his favorite niece, one of James's six daughters. This he did by transferring the title of a small piece of land to James to hold in trust for his daughter. Apparently unwittingly, James sold the property and gave the proceeds to his daughter. Creditors cried foul, and in the spring of 1806 the Cumberland Presbytery, by then completely in the control of the Minority, examined the case for any impropriety on McGready's part. Exactly what the presbytery determined is not known, but subsequent actions taken by the Transylvania Presbytery make quite clear that the Minority excoriated McGready for his part in the affair and leveled serious charges of malfeasance against him.

The Transylvania Presbytery reviewed the affair at its next regularly scheduled meeting in October, 1806. Since McGready was unable to attend, the presbytery appointed a committee to investigate the scandal and the allegations made against him by Minority Party of the Cumberland Presbytery. The committee met at Russellville in February 1807 and took some fifteen depositions from locals. Without exception, these deponents exonerated McGready of all

wrongdoing. Ninian Edwards, future governor of Illinois and McGready's closest neighbor since 1799, described him as one of the most "honest men who possessed and practiced the most exemplary piety of any man I ever saw or was acquainted with."⁶⁸ Edwards also pointed out that it was "somewhat strange that Israel should have conveyed so small a portion of his property" if, as creditors charged, his goal had been to defraud them.⁶⁹ The committee proceeded to draw up a report to the Transylvania Presbytery which it forwarded for the presbytery's attention at the annual fall meeting.

At the October, 1807, meeting, the Transylvania Presbytery not only accepted the report but went on to censure the recently dissolved Cumberland Presbytery for giving a "false, iniquitous, and malicious" representation to the Synod of McGready's actions in the affair. It called the presbytery's actions "ill-intended" and concluded that the charges clearly issued from a spirit of "iniquity, falsehood, and malice" among some if not all of the presbytery members. Transylvania closed its reproof by stating, "We cannot avoid thinking that the presbytery involved themselves in slander."⁷⁰ The Transylvania Presbytery, much to its credit, saw through the Cumberland Minority's game. In the end the Cumberland Minority only brought disrepute upon itself.

This was not the Presbyterian Church McGready thought he knew. On the one side, his former pupils, many converted

under his own teaching, were challenging the discipline, theology, and authority of the church, and yet continued to preach revival. On the other side stood opponents of the Revival who had tried to prevent it from ever beginning. The latter possessed the best claim to being the protectors of the Reformed truths of the Westminster Confession that McGready held so dear. Some in this group, though, had involved themselves in an unjust campaign to discredit not only his revival ideas but also his personal integrity. The loss of a theological consensus in the Cumberland Presbytery made it difficult for him to operate in the region. The vindictive actions of the Minority in 1806 made it impossible for him to remain in Logan County. With his revival compatriots fast heading out of the orbit of the church, he would soon be left to make peace with ministers like James Balch who had opposed him and his theology all along. Such a peace before the Israel McGready affair might have been feasible, but the events of 1806 made reconciliation impossible. Put in a completely untenable situation, McGready chose in 1807 to pull up stakes once again and settle somewhere "a greater distance from the scene of agitation."⁷¹ Henderson, Kentucky, on the steep banks of the Ohio, would be his final home.

It must have been with a sad heart that McGready left Russellville. Having lived in Logan County for more than ten years, he had put down extensive roots. Most of his

children had grown up in the several houses he had owned. Russellville and Logan County, too, had been the site of his greatest triumph, the starting of the Great Revival. Sadly for him, the happy, exciting years of the Revival had been followed by the Cumberland years, ones filled with sorrow and schism. As he traveled the eighty-odd miles from Russellville to Henderson, he must have reflected on the events of the past few years and wondered what went wrong. He had wanted revival; he had been rewarded with schism.

Schism and the collapse of Presbyterian revivalism came partly for reasons beyond McGready's control or comprehension. The intellectual and social forces which shaped the early republic swept away many a tradition-- political, social, and religious. The Calvinistic revivalism which had proven so successful in the 1730s and 1740s under Edwards, Whitefield, and Tennent, was largely unacceptable by the turn of the nineteenth century. The democratic egalitarianism of the Revolution and of Jeffersonianism made it so. In much the same way that popular democratic egalitarianism swept away the deferential politics of John Adams and the Federalist Party after 1800, it pushed aside McGready's revivalism that relied on intricate Calvinist doctrine, deference to ministerial and presbyterial authority, and a well-educated clergy. McGready could deny his Calvinism no more than Adams could his federalism. He understood the world to work in a

particular way, and no matter how many thought otherwise he knew himself to be right. The currents of history in the early republic simply left McGready, like Adams, behind and bewildered.

McGready must bear some blame for the Cumberland schism. With his strong educational background and solid grounding in the teachings of the church, he should have been more alert to the dangers of licensing uneducated exhorters tinged with Arminianism. Not the enthusiasm of revival, but the enthusiasm for revival got the best of James McGready. Blinded apparently by a consuming desire to promote the Revival, he sanctioned actions that he himself later admitted were mistakes.

He could not, of course, have known how swiftly and harshly the Synod of Kentucky would move against the Cumberland "irregularities." The synod might at another time have approved of the exhorters, but the events in eastern Kentucky in 1803 and 1804 made that impossible. With the experience of the Springfield Presbytery only recently behind, the synod could accept no deviations from the letter of the law. James McGready pulled back from schism, but not before he made enemies of the Minority, and not without alienating the Majority. With no home left for him in southwest Kentucky, he decided to try his hand in northwest Kentucky, farther out on the frontier. Disappointed and downtrodden, but not broken, McGready

retreated to Henderson to spend the final years of his life in service to the church into whose fold he had returned.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 41.
2. "Minutes of the Synod of Kentucky," in Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, v.2, 310, henceforth cited as MSyK.
3. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America from its Organization in A.D. 1789 to A.D. 1820 Inclusive (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), 265. Crisman, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 40.
4. Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 254-264.
5. McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 41-42.
6. Louis Weeks, "Terah Templin: Kentucky's First Presbyterian Preacher," Filson Club Quarterly 53 (1979): 51.
7. For insight into Craighead's personality, see Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 254-264.
8. "Minutes of the Cumberland Presbytery," in Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, v.2, 283-305, henceforth cited as MCP. For duties of the clerk and moderator, see The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1797), 418, 421.
9. Boles, in Great Revival, argued along this general line of interpretation. See pp. 161-163.
10. David Rice, "A Sermon on the Present Revival of Religion," Western Missionary Magazine 2 (December 1803): 403.
11. Ibid., (January 1804): 438ff.
12. Ibid., (December, 1803): 394-395.
13. Ibid. (January, 1804): 429-434; Robert H. Bishop, An Outline of the History of the Church in the State of Kentucky (1824; Cincinnati: Art Guild Reprints, Inc., 1968), 330-331.

14. Like any good Calvinist, Rice did not believe that Christianity would ever be completely extinguished. The Reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints assured Rice and others that there would always be at least a remnant of the God's chosen people on earth.

15. Rice, "A Sermon," (December, 1803, and January, 1804): 397, 431.

16. Rogers, Barton W. Stone, 119-123. Rogers, Cane Ridge, 113-120.

17. Stone, Christian Church in the West, 3. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 29-30.

18. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 31, 33, and 61.

19. Ibid., 5, 57.

20. Ibid., 43.

21. Stone, Christian Church in the West, 5-8.

22. Hatch, in Democratization, noted that this was a common tactic among the egalitarian denominations of the early national period, 170-179.

23. M'Nemar, Kentucky Revival, 27-28.

24. Weeks, Kentucky Presbyterians, 44ff.

25. Stone, Christian Church in the West, 45. For more on the Kentucky Shaker movement, see Julia Neal, Kentucky Shakers (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982).

26. "Kentucky New Lights," Evangelical Recorder and Western Review 2 (May 1813): 229-230.

27. Minutes of the General Assembly, 325-330.

28. McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, passim. Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 60-73.

29. Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 254.

30. MCP, 292-293, 302.

31. Msyk, 329.

32. A Brief History of the Proceedings of the Synod of Kentucky (Lexington, Ky.: Thomas T. Skillman, 1823), 9-10.

- 33.MSyK, 331-333.
- 34.Ibid.
- 35.A Brief History, 9-10.
- 36.MSyK, 335.
- 37.Ibid., 336-337.
- 38.Barrus, "Cumberland Presbyterian Church," 153-154.
- 39.Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, 397-401.
- 40.Smith, Christian Church, 579-580.
- 41.McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 49-50.
Minutes of the General Assembly, 293, 299-301.
- 42.Rice, "A Sermon" (December 1803): 407-408.
- 43.MCP, 287, 291, 294, 301.
- 44.MSyK, 338. John Lyle, "Rev. John Lyle's Diary and Journal of a Missionary Tour within the bounds of the Cumberland Presbytery Performed in the year 1805," (Typescript copy, Lexington Theological Seminary), 3.
- 45.Ibid., 16.
- 46.MSyK, 338, 343.
- 47.Ibid., 343.
- 48.McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 77-78.
- 49.McGready, Posthumous Works, 237-238.
- 50.Ibid., 177.
- 51.Hatch develops this idea most fully in Democratization, 170-179.
- 52.Ibid., 171.
- 53.Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 243, 260.
Smith, Christian Church, 614, 615.
- 54.Smith, Christian Church, 243.
- 55.MSyK, 348ff.

56. Smith, Christian Church, 617-625. Minutes of the General Assembly, 378.

57. Samuel J. Baird, comp. A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1856), 629-630.

58. Ibid., 630.

59. Ibid., 631-632. Minutes of the General Assembly, 406.

60. Minutes of the General Assembly, 420-1.

61. "Minutes of the Transylvania Presbytery," in Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, v. 2, 219-220, henceforth cited as MTP.

62. Smith, Christian Church, 634ff.

63. MTP, 222-226.

64. MTP, 228.

65. MTP, 228-229. McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 84.

66. The inspiration for this section is taken largely from Hatch, Democratization, 3-46.

67. Schmidt, in Holy Fairs, provides a set of compelling reasons for the death of Presbyterian revivalism in Scotland, many of which no doubt operated in the American situation as well. See pp. 169-212.

68. MTP, 214-215.

69. Ibid.

70. MTP, 217-218. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 260n.

71. Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 243.

Chapter Six--The Henderson Years, 1807-1817

As McGready entered his last decade, his heart and mind must have been filled with much uncertainty. Having been thrust from his Russellville home to a frontier town with a dubious reputation, he undoubtedly wondered what new trials and triumphs life would now bring to himself and his family. Although very little day-to-day information exists for McGready's last years, one thing is clear: removal to Henderson did not mean retirement. McGready's years in and around Henderson were busy ones: he served as a pastor to the local congregation, as an itinerant preacher in Kentucky and Tennessee, and as a church-planting missionary in Indiana. His Henderson years, though, were not without sadness, frustration, and disappointment--both personal and professional. Particularly after 1810, McGready bore increasingly heavy burdens, yet he continued to fulfill his mission as a minister as best he knew and in the only way he knew--relentlessly. That relentless pursuit of ministry in his final years provides a few more avenues of investigation into the person and work of James McGready.

Some of his disappointment probably started upon his arrival in Henderson. Located on a bend in the Ohio River about halfway between Louisville and Paducah, Henderson in

1807 could not have been a very appealing place in which to settle down. American settlers had first come to the area, originally known as Red Banks after the red mud along the banks of the Ohio, as early as 1791 or 1792.¹ In its early days, Henderson had a reputation as an outlaw town. McGready himself traveled there in 1801 and described it as "a place famed for wickedness, and a perfect synagogue of Satan."² Another traveler in 1806 described the inhabitants as "a people whose doom is fixed," and "languid, emaciated and sick." The whole town apparently had just been ravaged by a series of diseases.³ In 1807 Henderson could boast only twenty wooden houses and cabins, two stores, and two tobacco warehouses. The tobacco and cotton trade, in addition to traditional subsistence farming, barely kept the economy going. About five hundred hogsheads of tobacco passed through the warehouses every year, and the town had at least one cotton gin.⁴

Yet even ten years later Henderson was not always a safe place. A visitor told in 1818 about the "Rowdies of Kentucky" who operated in and around Henderson and who robbed and murdered travellers. Local regulators, "self-appointed ministers of justice," kept the Rowdies in check while the law, "in itself inefficient, permits or winks at such matters."⁵ Despite its troubles, Henderson did continue to grow during McGready's time there. By about 1820, 159 souls inhabited Henderson's one hundred houses,

and the town contained a jail, a courthouse, a steam-mill, and several tobacco warehouses.⁶ Its reputation must have been enhanced by the presence of the naturalist John James Audubon, who moved there after 1809.⁷ Henderson, then, was probably fairly typical of hundreds of frontier towns in the Old Southwest and Northwest. As such, it provided plenty of work for McGready the pastor to bring civilization and, more important in his mind, salvation to the Hendersonites whose doom was otherwise fixed in more ways than one.

McGready's first tasks upon arriving in Henderson would have been to set up his home and begin work in the previously minister-less local church. Having chosen a site on Race Creek to the east of the main town, McGready was hampered in his efforts to settle down by the continual sickness of his family in the fall of 1807. He reported to a colleague in December 1807 that his whole family had since August been plagued with a "complaint of a bilious nature attended with a continual vomiting." A local doctor considered it a variety of yellow fever. He informed his friend that his wife had had three bouts with it and one of his daughters four.⁸ Much of the work of housekeeping, therefore, may have fallen to McGready himself.

The second job, settling in as minister of the church, probably occupied the balance of his time in the fall of 1807. How many Presbyterians then lived in and around Henderson is unknown. McGready's visit in 1801 had

established praying societies, and at his arrival there must have been enough communicants to support a minister, but the Presbyterian church had no land on which to erect a building. It eventually obtained land through a gift of Margaret McGready Barbour, who gave one acre in the center of Henderson after her husband Ambrose Barbour's death in 1822.⁹

As pastor, McGready would have been responsible for all the jobs of a minister that he knew well--preaching, giving sacraments, visiting members, performing marriages, and so on. McGready did not use his time at Henderson to slack off on his preaching and exhorting. Indeed, he apparently wrote and delivered, or at least expanded, many of the sermons in The Posthumous Works.¹⁰ Setting up a house and pursuing his duties at the local church probably occupied most of his time between 1807 and 1809, when the Presbyterian church formally welcomed him back into its good graces.

Some ministers, having experienced first-hand the dangers of working outside of their own congregation, would probably have been content to lie low in Henderson and live out their lives in peaceful obscurity. Not so McGready. Almost immediately after his reinstatement by the Transylvania Presbytery, McGready joined the work of the presbytery and the General Assembly as an itinerant preacher and presbyter. His zeal for spreading the word of salvation won out over any fear of a repetition of the Cumberland

fiasco.

The bulk of McGready's work outside Henderson consisted of three-month journeys into remote sections of the country. He also served on at least one presbyterial committee. In 1810 the Transylvania Presbytery appointed him a member of a committee to recommend to the Synod of Kentucky a division of the presbytery into two or more new units. Considering the disaster that had befallen the Transylvania Presbytery the last time McGready participated in such a division, that was quite a vote of confidence to McGready.¹¹ Still, both the presbytery and the General Assembly recognized that McGready's true talents lay in preaching and exhorting, not in serving on committees. Their willingness to send him out on far-flung journeys speaks volumes about their confidence in him and their approval of his theology.

McGready's itinerancy took him to remote parts of western Tennessee, western Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. Beginning in 1808, he undertook these missions almost yearly. In that year he traveled to Ohio, in 1809 to the "waters of the Great Miami," and to Indiana for three months each in 1811 and 1812. In 1813 he preached his way through the Muhlenburg Presbytery of southern Ohio, of which he was by then a member. In 1814 he traversed the Presbytery of West Tennessee; 1815 and 1816 saw him back in the territory of Indiana serving the counties of Clark, Harrison, Gibson, and Knox. In all these cases, McGready

went at the behest of and with the blessing of the General Assembly.¹²

McGready performed a variety of functions during these missions. In one case, the General Assembly delegated him to solicit funds for Princeton Theological Seminary.¹³ The Assembly had outlined the ordinary jobs of the missionaries in 1789: "form . . . congregations, ordain elders, administer the sacraments, and direct them [the frontier settlers] to the best measures for obtaining the Gospel ministry regularly among them."¹⁴ All that, of course, rested on the missionary's ability and willingness to preach and travel day in and day out. Presbyterian itinerants generally directed their attention to settlers who had come from a presbyterian background or who currently participated in no church at all. In 1794 the General Assembly directed its missionaries not to "proselyte from other communities to our denomination . . . , to avoid all doubtful disputation, [and] to abstain from unfriendly censures or reflections on other religious persuasions."¹⁵ This latter directive would have been especially difficult yet important for McGready to carry out since Cumberland Presbyterians inhabited most of the areas through which he traveled. McGready sometimes showed a willingness to work with his erstwhile brethren--in the fall of 1816 he attended and preached at a Cumberland Presbyterian camp meeting near Evansville--but generally he avoided contact with them.¹⁶

Since McGready took most of his trips north of the Ohio River in Indiana, more is known about his efforts there than anywhere else. The Indiana Territory remained very much a frontier area during McGready's time in Henderson. Indians, predominantly the Shawnee, controlled most of Indiana well into the first two decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁷

When white settlement began around 1800, many of the pioneers came from the southern backwoods of western Kentucky and made their homes along the Wabash, White, Muscatutuck, and Blue rivers. The movement of southerners into Indiana, especially ones only recently removed from North Carolina, made southern Indiana a natural missionary target area for McGready.¹⁸

Population rose steadily between 1800 and 1820. In 1808 only 17,000 whites inhabited Indiana; by 1812 the number had risen to 24,000, and it leaped to 64,000 by 1816, when Indiana entered the Union.¹⁹ Most of the people were subsistence farmers. There were few roads and fewer towns. Vincennes, on the Wabash, the only true town in the state, could list only 670 inhabitants and one hundred houses by 1812; the other small villages of the territory had "nothing very worthy of notice to distinguish them from each other."²⁰ McGready's job as an itinerant missionary would not have been an easy one. He spent much time traveling through underpopulated rural areas on horseback exhorting groups both large and small to turn to Jesus.²¹

McGready had preached to Indiana settlers even before he moved Henderson. The first Presbyterian itinerants came to Indiana between 1804 and 1806, and McGready had participated in that effort. These missionaries established the First Presbyterian Church of Vincennes, a church McGready served from time to time.²² Presbyterian efforts, including some by McGready, continued between 1807 and 1814, but nothing of a very permanent nature could be done until the War of 1812 stabilized the Indian situation.²³ Soon after peace came, McGready and others moved into Indiana to renew and solidify their previous work. McGready alone established three new churches in 1815 and 1816 among the largely rural population--at Pisgah, Livonia, and Blue Creek.²⁴

By the time McGready returned to the Indiana territory in the mid-1810s, the backwoods of America were filled with hundreds even thousands of missionaries and itinerants from numerous denominations--Baptists and Methodists most especially--who had descended on the West to accelerate the process of Christianizing the frontier.²⁵ One new missionary phenomenon that intersected with McGready's efforts also appeared about this time to further the work--non-denominational home missionary organization.

Beginning in the late 1790s and continuing into the next century, all sorts of regional and later national missionary organizations emerged, each having as its primary

purpose home missions.²⁶ Mostly based in New England, these organizations sent out missionaries to the west and published magazines to enlighten and inform readers about the progress of home and foreign missions. These journals, such as the New York Missionary Magazine, the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, and the Panoplist, have provided historians with valuable insights into the goals and purposes of the organizations that published them.

Home missionary societies arose for a variety of reasons and had a number of goals. The most animating of those reasons was a belief held by many church leaders that they lived in extraordinary times--times directed by God for the fulfillment of long-awaited prophecies of the return of Christ or the establishment of his kingdom. Belief in the approach of the millennium stood as a prime motivating factor in the rise of home missions organizations.²⁷

For the South, millennial thought does not seem to have been a widespread ministerial topic before 1801.²⁸ The Great Revival, however, sparked millennial thinking and preaching among southern evangelicals, if only temporarily. Ministers began preaching, writing, and talking as if they were "fully persuaded that the glorious Millennial Day had commenced."²⁹ For Southern preachers unwilling to accept that the millennium had already dawned, the idea that the Great Revival would inaugurate it "may have increased the evangelical zeal as it enlarged the expectation of many

southern pietists," further fueling the Great Revival.³⁰ Millennial thinking, therefore, played a heavy role not just in inspiring missions but in the Revival as well.

Millennial thought was nothing new to the Anglo-American religious world. Historians generally agree that post-Reformation English millennialism originated with Joseph Mede's work Clavis Apocalyptica, first published in Latin in 1627 and widely circulated in the vernacular during the revolutionary struggle of the 1630s and 1640s.³¹ Widely adopted by English Puritans and others even more radical during the English Civil War, Mede's ideas traveled to the New World with the Puritans, whose "eschatological convictions supplied a profound dimension to Puritan life."³² The "eschatological excitement" of the founders of the Bay colony was, if anything "probably more intense than that of the Puritan mainstream," and it increased after their arrival.³³ That intensity reached some of its fullest expression in Increase and Cotton Mather in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Both acknowledged influence of Mede's ideas on their own.³⁴

The eschatological thought of Mede and the Mathers was of a particular type known in theological and historical circles as premillennialism or millenarianism or chiliasm. It is "that view of the Last Things which holds that the second coming of Christ will be followed by a period of world-wide peace and righteousness, before the end of the

world, called 'the Millennium' or 'the Kingdom of God,' during which Christ will reign as King on this earth."³⁵ Millenarians generally believed that man himself could not inaugurate any type of Kingdom of God on earth; erection of God's kingdom rested solely on the direct intervention of Christ. Hence they "became associated more generally with a passive reliance on divine miracles and a tendency to withdraw from the world in the expectation of the approaching conflagration."³⁶ Christ would return, and following that return would come a thousand years during which Christ would personally exercise his power on earth before the final judgment.

Beginning perhaps as early as Jonathan Edwards, American ministers and theologians began turning to an opposing eschatological doctrine--postmillennialism.³⁷ Postmillennialists believed that the thousand years referred to in Revelation 20 would occur prior to Christ's return. The peace and harmony of the millennium would come about "through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit," leading eventually to the Christianization of nearly the entire world.³⁸ In other words, postmillennialists possessed "an optimistic belief in progressive human action towards the millennium, according to which God's providential plan would be carried out by human means and the world would enjoy a period of social perfection before the supernatural intervention at the end

of time."³⁹ It was this "optimistic belief" that human effort could bring on the millennium that fueled the missionary movement in the early nineteenth century. Postmillennialism in theological circles, much like democratic liberalism in political circles, represented the wave of the future and provided much of the impetus behind the Great Revival and the rise of the home missions movement. As a participant in both movements, McGready was likely to have possessed or at least to have appropriated postmillennial theology as his own, but he did not. Instead, he was committed to a much older eschatological doctrine known as amillennialism.

Amillennialism "is a view of the Last Things which holds that the Bible does not predict a 'Millennium' or period of the world-wide peace and righteousness on this earth before the end of the world." Instead, "there will be a parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil" until Christ returns at the Second Coming. At that time Christ will engineer the resurrection of the saints and the final judgment before establishing "the eternal order of things"--God's perfect kingdom for the saved.⁴⁰

Amillennialism, therefore, rejects both the pre- and postmillennial view of the end times because it rejects a formal thousand-year period. Revelation 20, to the amillennialist, should be interpreted figuratively, as referring to the very long time--precisely how long no one

could know--between Christ's ascension and his second advent.⁴¹

Although the term is relatively new, the concept of amillennialism is quite old, dating from Augustine.⁴² Augustine, Bishop of Hippo from 395 to 431, laid down the basic eschatological doctrines that would be followed by the church (Catholic and Protestant) from the Council of Ephesus in 431 to the seventeenth century. Augustine emphasized the apocalypse, or final judgment, rather than the millennium, believing that the millennium of Revelation 20 must refer to "the victorious life of Christians on earth," to the "perfect period of time appointed by God for the sojourn of the Church in the world" until the Final Judgement.⁴³ The leaders of the Roman Catholic Church adopted Augustine's argument and suppressed all contrary doctrines from the fifth to the sixteenth centuries.⁴⁴

The earliest main Protestant reformers agreed with the Augustinian interpretation. Lutherans in the Augsburg Confession rejected the chiliastic belief in a "world hegemony [of the saints] in which all the godless will be wiped out."⁴⁵ John Calvin and the bulk of his sixteenth-century Reformed adherents followed suit. For Calvin, any emphasis on an earthly kingdom of Christians tended to "dissolve the true hope which is directed to the eternal future of the Lord and his coming kingdom."⁴⁶ Such an emphasis substituted the greater glory of heaven for the

lesser glory of the millennium. Calvin did not spend a lot of time debunking this line of interpretation, however. He bluntly stated that the "fiction [of the millenarians] is too puerile to require or deserve refutation."⁴⁷ Like Augustine, Calvin focused on the judgment and the apocalypse rather than an earthly kingdom. Again, like Augustine, Calvin considered the millennium as only a period of church history, falling between the advents, and not a distinct eschatological era. The events of Revelation 20 referred only to the "various agitations which awaited the Church in its militant state upon earth."⁴⁸ Those who propounded another view must, in Calvin's words, be either "entirely inexperienced in all heavenly things or with secret malice are trying to shake the grace of God and the power of Christ."⁴⁹ Amillennialism, emphasizing God's grace and power rather than man's ingenuity or efforts, fit with Calvin's doctrinal emphasis on election, predestination, and the sovereignty of God.

Scottish church leaders from John Knox to McGready, and the doctrinal statements they produced, followed in the Augustinian-Calvinist tradition in the area of eschatology. The Scots Confession of 1560 made no mention of a millennium, only of a judgment immediately following the return of Christ.⁵⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith and accompanying catechisms, probably the most important documents in Scottish Presbyterianism, likewise said nothing

of a millennium, despite having been written in the middle of the English Revolution. Robert Baillie, one of the prominent Scottish divines at the Westminster Assembly, publicly declared that he found the millenarian views of some of his English colleagues "rather distasteful," calling them "against Scripture."⁵¹ The response to Question 56 of the Larger Catechism states simply that Christ will come on the last day "in the full manifestation of his own glory . . . to judge the world in righteousness."⁵² Finally, the 1788 Constitution of the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States focused only on the final judgment and made no mention of a millennium. The final judgment day, according to Chapter 33, will be "unknown to men" so as to deter them from sin and "shake off all carnal security," keeping humans "always watchful."⁵³

That is not to say that no American Presbyterians believed in a literal, earthly millennium of some sort. Many of the middle colony Presbyterians apparently held to some form of millennialism as fervently as did their Congregational brethren to the north. As in New England, postmillennialism seems to have been the dominant opinion among this group in the eighteenth century. Two of McGready's theological ancestors, Robert Smith and Samuel Davies, have been put in this category by Christopher Beam, the only scholar who has done extensive work on eighteenth-

century Presbyterian millennialism.⁵⁴ His other forebears, including Gilbert Tennent, do not show up on Beam's list.

Indeed, Tennent is notably absent from just about every discussion on eighteenth-century millennialism. James West Davidson half-heartedly put Tennent in the premillennial camp while admitting that the evidence for his opinion was "not entirely conclusive."⁵⁵ Ruth Bloch hardly mentioned him at all; likewise Beam.⁵⁶ Jon Butler argued that "Catechization and Regeneration formed the Tennents' principal theological interests" and that they avoided millennialism altogether. Instead of worrying about the future on this earth, Butler wrote, the Tennents stressed topics of more immediate concern like personal regeneration, spiritual rebirth, and the conversion experience.⁵⁷ In sum, a significant portion of American Presbyterians, including the most important colonial figure in Presbyterian revivalism, both came out of and held to an amillennial tradition, a position James McGready most closely held.

Amillennialists identified themselves in two ways. Some, like Robert Baillie and John Calvin, explicitly argued against any millennialist interpretation. McGready could do that; he described those who believed the millennium had already begun or was about to begin as deceivers who did the work of the Devil.⁵⁸ More often he simply omitted any mention of the millennium when discussing the end times. In fact, he evinced little interest at all in the events which

would mark the end of the world. He addressed the topic in any length in only one of his published sermons entitled "On the General Judgment."⁵⁹ The very title, though, displays McGready's greater interest in the judgment rather than the end times.

McGready did say that several things would happen before judgment comes. First, Christ would return, but rather than being at the end of a thousand year period of bliss, his return would be "sudden and unexpected, at a time when the world least expects it . . . , while millions are engaged in midnight revels and debaucheries, dancing, drinking, [and] gambling." His coming will be "public" and "visible to the whole universe . . . , august and glorious beyond comprehension." His reappearance will amaze men and devils, and cause the heavens and the earth to "fly away from the dreadful majesty of his face."⁶⁰ Next will come the "general resurrection of the dead; of the just and unjust of Adam's numerous race. All that sleep in the dust shall awake"⁶¹ This event too will amaze humankind, as "all the myriads of Adam's race, who have lived in time, are all collected before the Judgement Seat of Christ."⁶²

In some respects this vision is similar to the chiliastic vision that emphasized Christ's triumphant and dramatic return, but chiliasts and amillennialists parted company on what would happen next. Premillennialists argued

for the establishment of an earthly kingdom of Christ that would last for a thousand years before the final judgment. Amillennialists, like McGready, proceeded directly from the second advent, through the resurrection, to the final judgment.

The judgment, and the reality in McGready's mind of the reward or punishment which followed, served as the final engine which drove McGready's revivalistic spirit.

McGready, following his Pennsylvania mentors, held a reputation for most of his career as a fire-and-brimstone preacher, one who delighted in revealing the agonies of hell to his audience. In this he was not alone; Gilbert Tennent, among others, had once held a similar reputation.⁶³

McGready's thunderings from the pulpit, though, did not serve merely to titillate or, as he put it, "to gratify a vain curiosity."⁶⁴ Contemporaries and historians have both accused revivalists of over-emotionalism, of stirring up the emotions of the listeners in an effort to engineer a conversion experience.⁶⁵ For McGready, contemporaries and historians alike have gotten it backwards. He used pictures of heaven and hell to drive sinners to conviction and hopefully conversion, a conversion which would then bring an emotional release. He believed that describing the alternative ends of mankind was a most persuasive and powerful tool for bringing sinners under conviction and ultimately, hopefully, to salvation. The often emotional

release afterwards served as a sign or seal of conversion or at least conviction.

McGready pictured the final judgment as the climax of the entirety of human existence. At that time, "all men shall be judged, both small and great In that day will be judged all the words, thoughts, and actions of the children of men." Such a day will be both "solemn and awful" as God will pass judgment and "every secret act, idle word, and every vain imagination, will be laid open to the public view of an assembled universe."⁶⁶ From this point on there will be no turning back, no second chance, no changing of history. For those who rejected Christ, "their day of grace and all hope of mercy are gone forever."⁶⁷ The realization of this loss would be the first torment of hell. As judgment approaches, the sinner will come to his senses and "reflect like a rational creature." "Awful consternation, keen horror, and a fearful looking-for of judgment" will tear at the soul of the impenitent with "bitter agony." The "conscience awakes like a giant refreshed with wine, and gnaws like a greedy vulture." To the sinner, he warned, "All the sins of your past life stare you in the face, the guilt of all your slighted opportunities, the convictions you have murdered, the offers of prayer you have despised. The abused blood of the Son of God, now form the foretaste of hell--the forebodings of damnation."⁶⁸

Worse than judgment would be the punishment to follow. The end of time for those outside of the fold meant an eternity in Hell. McGready spared no words in describing the horrors of that place. Unlike Dante, McGready found no level of Hell to be tolerable. In sermon after sermon he poured out all of his energy to warn his listeners of its dangers--separation from God and reception of his eternal punishments, or as McGready put it, "the punishment of loss" and the "punishment of sense."⁶⁹

Separation from God and the glories of heaven comprised the "punishment of loss" and the first of the torments of Hell. God, "the source of all happiness," and heaven "with all its unspeakable joys," would be forever beyond those in Hell.⁷⁰ Heaven, "God and Christ, hope, and all possibility of mercy" would be gone forever.⁷¹ Death, eternal death, means the "everlasting exclusion of all possible good."⁷² Nothing good would be found in hell because God cannot be where evil is.

Separation from God will not be the worst of hell's punishments. Added to this punishment of loss would be punishments of sense. Those punishments, McGready admitted, are "inexpressible" in human terms, but he felt duty-bound to do his best. The punishments of hell started with the company one would be forced to keep--"devils, and damned souls and bodies of Adam's apostate family--all the filth and refuse of the universe . . . , black devils, and all the

ungodly wretches of the human race," and Satan himself.⁷³ There with sinners to spend eternity will be "the horrible fiends of hell . . . accursed spirits . . . damned ghosts . . . , [and] all the rubbish and off-scouring, the filth and refuse of the moral world, which a holy God deems unfit for any other place."⁷⁴ In hell every restraint which existed on earth will be removed, and "every sinful propensity will be brought to full perfection."⁷⁵

Such an existence alone would be punishment enough for some, but not for Jehovah God. Added to this companionship of demons will be the "constant and uninterrupted communications of Jehovah's pure and unmixed burning wrath."⁷⁶ These McGready could not adequately describe, for he had no words to do so. "Nothing less than the eternal mind of God" could comprehend the horrors of his punishments. "Were all the misery, pains, diseases, and tortures, ever felt by the whole human race since the creation of the world collected into one, and laid upon one person," this would not do. It would not even amount to "one twinge of divine wrath felt in the infernal world."⁷⁷ The scriptures describe these punishments as fire and brimstone, he said, but nothing in the "material world can give so shocking an idea of pain and misery."⁷⁸

The indescribable punishments of God would be multiplied by two things--their length and their increasing intensity. Hell will not last just a day, a week, a

lifetime, or even a thousand lifetimes. No, it will last for all eternity. The sinner "shall be cast into hell, into the blackness of darkness, into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, but the smoke of his torment shall ascend up forever and ever."⁷⁹ The final and most awful aspect of hell will be the continually increasing level of punishment. "As their enmity against God will be ripened to the most horrid perfection in hell, they will be eternally sinning, gnawing their tongues with infernal pain, and uttering the most dreadful blasphemies against God; therefore their bonds will be forever strengthening, and their misery forever increasing."⁸⁰

McGready used visions of hell as his final means to convict sinners of their doom without Christ and to drive them to conversion. Ever the good Calvinist, though, McGready acknowledged that his sermons had a limited effectiveness. "In vain," he said, "do we try to alarm poor sinners by pointing out the horrors of hell, or the miseries of an unconverted state." Even if someone rose from the dead and described them better than he, "it would have no abiding effect." He went on to quote Samuel Rutherford, one of Scotland's most renowned divines, who said that if hell itself were opened to mankind and the punishments clear for all to see, "all of this would not persuade one sinner to repent."⁸¹ In the final analysis for McGready, unless

God's spirit moved in a human, all his preaching would be for naught.

If McGready used hell as an awful stick to try to drive sinners to Christ, he used heaven as a sublime carrot to draw them to Jesus. Although he possessed a well-deserved reputation as a hellfire-and-damnation preacher, he dwelt a fair bit on the other end of judgment. Not all humanity, of course, was destined for hell and damnation. A significant part of humankind would pass from judgment into heaven. The final resurrection will not be a cause for fear but a cause for rejoicing among the saved. Soon Christ, who "purchased them with his blood, and ransomed them by his death, will own them before the assembled universe He will place them on his right hand as a mark of high honor and dignity, as a token of his love for them." From there Christians from all parts of the globe and from all history will "go home with Christ to his Father's house" where they will possess an inheritance that is "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. They shall be with Christ where he is, and shall forever behold his glory; and through all eternity, they shall taste such joys" as are beyond the descriptions of mortal men.⁸² Once again, though, he did not shrink from the task of describing the joys of heaven to his listeners.

The "Heavenly Canaan," as many called God's paradise, would be far better than the earthly Canaan, the promised

land, that God had delivered to the Israelites so long ago:

Man's lively fancy could imagine the sun to be ten thousand times more large and glorious--our earth to be a paradise, the whole atmosphere to be transparent crystal, the mountains to be solid gold, the seas and rivers to be wine, and milk and honey, and the rocks and sands to be the most brilliant diamonds--yet all these things are but dross and dung when compared with the glories of heaven.⁸³

Heaven will be extensive, wide and large enough to comfortably hold all the saved of all time, and it will be pure and unspotted, uninhabited by "bad neighbors, painted hypocrites and self-deceivers."⁸⁴ Sin and its concomitant troubles will not be present, and the inhabitants will be completely safe from their own natures and the snares of the Devil, who "can neither mar their peace--nor disturb their joys--nor interrupt their blessedness throughout all eternity."⁸⁵ The heavenly country will be healthy and happy, amply watered by the "wells of salvation," the "never failing springs of divine consolation," and the "rivers of pleasure flowing eternally at God's right hand."⁸⁶ There the saints will live with angels and archangels and "every happy soul that ever has or shall enter the pearly gates of the new Jerusalem through the blood and merits of the Son of God." Resurrected Christians, furthermore, will live in complete harmony, "knit together by the most pure and disinterested love." Earthly contention between Christians shall be known no more: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Toplady,

Wesley, and others will forget and banish "all disputes and suspicions."⁸⁷ The most glorious aspect of heaven, though, would not be the land itself, or the formerly human inhabitants thereof, but the presence of the God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the fellowship therewith.

Perhaps the most difficult sermon McGready ever delivered was the one he delivered in January 1809 at the funeral of his wife, Nancy, who had died at age 44. At one of the most painful times of his life he chose to preach on John 17:24--"Father, I will that they also, whom thou has given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." He spent much of the sermon exploring the nature of the paradise to come, going over the familiar ground touched on above. Toward the end he turned to the employment of the saints in heaven--beholding Christ's glory, "the possession and enjoyment of the sum of blessedness."⁸⁸

Beholding Christ's glory was difficult to describe, McGready admitted, but included, first, a complete understanding of all the names that expressed the different attributes of God--I AM, Jehovah, Immanuel, Jesus, Christ, and many more. The saints will also have a comprehension and knowledge of "all the mysterious works of God, in creation and providence . . . , [and] all the laws and phenomena of the natural world, far beyond the deepest researches, and investigations of the most accomplished philosophers of the earth and will as far outstrip them in

knowledge, as [Isaac] Newton does the illiterate peasant." Further, the saved will behold and comprehend all the works of providence in protecting the Church universal since the founding of the world. The redeemed will additionally have a full view of the "immeasurable height and depth, and length and breadth of the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus." The final wonder of beholding Christ's glory will be this: as eternity passes, the elect will increasingly become more like Christ himself.⁸⁹

None of this--McGready's descriptions of heaven and hell and constant reference to the final judgment--was new in McGready's day or originated with him. John Boles was quite correct that such an emphasis was "as old as pietistic religion."⁹⁰ Sermons like these could have been and had been delivered by countless hundreds of revivalists since the seventeenth century. McGready was breaking no new ground here. There are no new insights into the next life in his sermons. But that is just the point. McGready was no theological innovator, be the topic redemption, election, conversion, millennialism, or the after-life. His purpose in life, as he saw it, was not to reinvent the wheel, or even invent a new wheel, but to turn the old wheel and deliver the same message that he believed generations of Reformed revivalists had previously done.

As McGready labored with fellow missionaries in the backwoods of Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana, his

mind did not dwell on an earthly millennium brought on by human endeavor. As he preached to countless congregations McGready's mind never stopped at a thousand-year earthly kingdom of near bliss. Rather, he focused on the judgment he knew was coming and the punishment or reward then to be meted out. Knowledge of the judgment, of heaven, and of hell, rather than a vision of a future millennium, drove McGready to continue his revival and missionary efforts. The debacle of the Cumberland Presbytery and the waning of the Great Revival might well have professionally crippled someone motivated only by a postmillennial vision. For McGready, the events surrounding the Cumberland collapse simply confirmed his beliefs and spurred him on to further work.

Indeed, McGready's thoughts during his time in Henderson must have often been fixed on the next life, because the last decade of his life was filled with both personal and professional disappointments. The Henderson years started with the Cumberland fiasco, the Israel McGready affair, and severe family illness. The loss of his wife of nearly twenty years in 1809 must have been a heavy blow. In the funeral sermon he spoke of the sweetness for Christians of being reunited in heaven with "the very persons with whom they have spent sweet days and nights upon the earth, in heavenly conversation and in spiritual prayer--with whom they sat in communion under the sweet sound of

the gospel, and at the table of the Lord."⁹¹ Nancy McGready, the mother of his six daughters, would have been at the head of that group for him.

Added to this personal loss came an embarrassing event in 1810. As the story goes, McGready, riding between towns on a cold day with an empty stomach and suffering from a "bilious fever," was induced to drink too much alcohol to relieve his pain and hunger and became "shamefully intoxicated" in public.⁹² The event shamed him and prompted him to write the sermon against alcoholic consumption discussed above. McGready reported that he spent several weeks in anguish over his actions, with feelings of distress "almost comparable to the torments of the damned."⁹³ After finally pulling out of this morass, he made a covenant never again to consume alcohol, to prepare a piece for publication spelling out the evils of alcohol, to observe the day of his falling every month with fasting and praying, to pray three times every day and examine his heart twice a day to see if any sin lurked there, and to watch, pray, and guard against temptation.⁹⁴

There is no way to know whether, or how long, he kept such a regimen, but its establishment prompts several observations. The rigor of the covenant illustrates the seriousness of the offense in his eyes and the torment it caused him. This was no simple trespass to McGready. Recall that at his first official act as a pastor in North

Carolina he had refused to bless a funeral at which alcohol was served. Remember, too, that he had branded alcoholics as the most unlikely regenerates and alcohol as one of Satan's most potent weapons. He comprehended and assessed the seriousness of his danger and dealt with it accordingly. Additionally, his solution to his problem again points to a covenant mentality. This covenant aimed at overcoming a personal sin closely resembles the covenant his Logan County churches signed in 1798 to overcome societal sin and bring about revival. Making covenants seems to have been his primary solution for solving significant problems--personal or corporate.

At least one observer believed this episode had unfortunate consequences. Robert Davidson, a participant in and a chronicler of early Kentucky Presbyterianism, related that after this affair "Mr. McGready's influence and unction in the pulpit were never the same that they had been before."⁹⁵ Quite possibly the drinking episode so deflated him that he lost some of his power in the pulpit.

Combined with these personal difficulties came a series of professional disappointments that soured his final years. First, the ultimate outcome of the Cumberland controversy cannot have been satisfying to him. The eventual expulsion of former colleagues and spiritual offspring like Finis Ewing could not have been pleasing. The erection of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church likewise must have saddened

him. He simply cannot have rejoiced in the breakup of the Presbyterian church in Kentucky, especially given the pivotal role he played in the schism.

In addition to despair about the breakup came consternation over the conduct of the Cumberlands during his period in Henderson. Although willing to work with the Cumberlands upon occasion, McGready often grew angry at them. Writing in 1811, he described his feelings:

the New Cumberlands Schismatics are using all possible exertions to rend and break up Societys [sic] wherever they go. They have a flame of animation with them which they call the revival and this is what supports them and gains them importance, but their malignant spirit against the old Presbyterian Church, the contempt with which they treat some of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, and the Joy and pleasure with which they tell of its real and apparent distresses, and the vain glorious boast with which they proclaim their own superior successes seems in my view to differ far from the spirit of Christ or the temper of the Gospel.⁹⁶

Several things are notable about this passage. First, it again illustrates the importance of doctrine for McGready; he is genuinely aggrieved by the Cumberlands' rejection of parts of the Confession. Second, his words point up his dissatisfaction with an animated revival devoid of substance; pure emotion simply would not do. Third, revival without change of heart and action was similarly unacceptable and not a true revival, as he had told his congregations time and again. Finally, he seems to indicate that the Cumberlands were doing better among the general population than was the older Presbyterian church. That

frustrated him, especially considering his opinion of Cumberlands as expressed in the letter.

In addition to his anger and frustration over the Cumberlands, McGready's pastoral time with the people of Henderson did not particularly satisfy him professionally. He lamented in one sermon that despite his faithful preaching and all his efforts to "touch the heart and awaken the conscience" in almost two years, "no soul has been converted by my instrumentality." He proclaimed that he had "longed, and hoped against hope, until all hope seems to be gone" for just one convert, but none had come.⁹⁷ That must have been a bitter pill for the Father of the Great Revival to swallow.

Not only had the church at Henderson not grown, but to McGready it seemed to be continually losing spiritual ground. He recalled in a sermon the first time he came to Henderson during the Great Revival. Then, he remembered, the people of the church occupied their time with thoughts of heaven and Christ, and filled the surrounding woods, morning and evening, with prayers and cries to God. Now, however, the same people went weeks without prayer, attended church barely once a year, and refused communion at the Lord's Table. This latter group, he moaned, have not only "backslidden from their first love, but have forsaken the church, and are now anxiously seeking her destruction."⁹⁸ As for those who did stay in the church, McGready openly

questioned their commitment to God compared with saints of old who risked life and limb to serve God: "Would we not have very small worshiping congregations in Henderson county, if every person who went to meeting on the Sabbath, went at the risk of being shot down, or thrown into a dungeon, or hanged, beheaded or tortured to death."⁹⁹

McGready may have artificially increased his frustration in this instance by comparing revival times to normal times. Quite probably also some of this is common ministerial hyperbole, ministers rarely being completely satisfied with the piety and attendance of their congregations. McGready does seem to have been sufficiently disappointed with his situation in Henderson, however, to at least have explored the possibility of taking a church in Lebanon, Ohio. He stayed in Henderson.¹⁰⁰

If McGready's work for the Presbyterian church did not progress in Henderson, neither did Presbyterians do well against Methodists and Baptists on the frontier in general and in Indiana in particular. Despite his willingness to work with and alongside other denominations, McGready cannot have been pleased to see his church losing its once-dominant position on the frontier.¹⁰¹ Indiana in 1812 had 24,000 inhabitants but only one Presbyterian church, in Vincennes, that enjoyed the services of a full-time minister. In comparison, the Baptists had fourteen preachers and twenty-nine congregations, the Methodists five

itinerants and 1,210 members, and the New Lights, Stone's heretical denomination, six ministers and congregations.¹⁰² Even by 1815 the Presbyterians made "disappointingly slow" progress. By that year they still only had four congregations and three full-time ministers in the entire Indiana territory that by then possessed a population approaching seventy thousand.¹⁰³ John M. Dickey, one of the earliest Presbyterians in the territory who later wrote a history of early Presbyterianism in Indiana, expressed the feelings of the Presbyterian clergy thus:

For several years those who were laboring in Indiana, seemed almost to labor in vain. Frequently I was ready to conclude that I was a curse instead of a blessing to the people among whom I labored. Sometimes I thought I was of no use¹⁰⁴

McGready hinted at this slow pace in a letter to Samuel Mills in 1815. He informed Mills that he had just successfully completed the distribution of his supply of religious tracts, and wrote he could and would use many more on a wide variety of topics--prayer, conversion, the danger of amusements. That sounded like good news, and it was good on the surface, but McGready, one of the most captivating preachers of his time, needed tracts only because so many of the inhabitants of the area refused to come to public preaching. It is difficult to believe that any tract, no matter how well written, could have been half as effective as McGready at a camp meeting. McGready also pleaded for more Bibles because "multitudes in the motley, mixed

population of this western country" did not have one but in his opinion desperately needed one.¹⁰⁵

Starting after 1815, the eastern missionaries coming out of Congregational and Presbyterian seminaries "put strength" into the effort and largely replaced the older Southern Presbyterians like McGready. Still, progress came excruciatingly slowly. Unfortunately for them, the eastern missionaries conflicted with frontier culture at virtually every point--social, cultural, and theological.¹⁰⁶ Peter Cartwright, a Presbyterian-turned-Methodist revivalist, once advised an eastern Presbyterian to stop reading his tightly-worded sermons and start preaching extemporaneously or "the Methodists would set the whole Western world on fire before he would light his match."¹⁰⁷ Presbyterians generally ignored all such advice and as a result never again held the dominant position they had enjoyed on the frontier when James McGready arrived in 1796. Nevertheless, McGready continued to preach his own brand of Calvinist revivalism to the people of the West. The nation had passed him and his theology by, but rather than adapt, rather than innovate, he remained committed to the Reformed revivalism of Tennent and McMillan. His refusal to change may well help explain his and his church's relative ineffectiveness in his latter years.

McGready died late in 1817, about age 57. How or why

he died is unknown. The obituaries in two regional newspapers provide no details of his passing.¹⁰⁸ Given the lack of explanation, McGready probably died a natural death. Perhaps he preached one too many sermons outdoors in the damp, cold weather, or perhaps he simply wore himself out in his efforts to spread his good news. Whatever the reason, on December 27, 1817, James McGready, Father of the Great Revival and Son of Thunder, passed from this world.

The final years of James McGready, the Henderson years, were not his most successful ones, but neither were they ones of quiet retirement. McGready threw himself into his work as a frontier minister and missionary as fully as he had during his early days in Logan County. Joined in that effort by the 1810s by eastern missionary organizations, McGready continued to drive his own work forward not in hopes of bringing the millennium to fruition, but in hopes of assisting more saints into what he believed was the true Kingdom of God, heaven. Gripped with a vision of judgment, and of heaven and hell, McGready could no more stop preaching than he could stop breathing. Indeed, only that final loss of breath put an end to the life and preaching of James McGready, a man who, in the opinion of Reverend John Andrews, his necrologist for the Chillicothe Western Recorder, was a "subject of divine grace and unfeigned piety" who enjoyed a "great nearness to God and intimate communion with him" comparable to that enjoyed so long ago

by Enoch, Jacob, Elijah, Job, and Paul.¹⁰⁹ In the mind of an evangelical like Andrews, or McGready for that matter, that intimacy would only increase with death.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Edmund L. Starling, History of Henderson County, Kentucky (Henderson, Ky.: n.p., 1887), 26.
2. McGready, Posthumous Works, xi.
3. Thomas Ashe, "Travels in America performed in 1806," in Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), 29.
4. Fortescue Cuming, "Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country," in Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, vol. 4, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 267.
5. W. Faux, "Memorable Days in America," in Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, vol. 11, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 293-294. Starling, Henderson County, 31-34.
6. William Darby, The Emigrant's Guide (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1818), 202. John Woods, "Two Years Residence . . . on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country," in Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, vol. 10, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904), 252.
7. Audubon provided several sketches of Henderson in his journals. See John James Audubon, Audubon and His Journals, 2 vols., ed. Maria R. Audubon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897).
8. James McGready to Archibald Cameron, 11 December 1807. Typescript copy, James McGready file, Manuscripts Section, Western Kentucky University Library. Original in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.
9. Littleton Groom, History of Salem Presbyterian Church, (Princeton, N.J.: by author, 1969), 10-11. McGready, Posthumous Works, xi.
10. See, for example, McGready, Posthumous Works, 121, 409, 431.

- 11.MTP, 229.
- 12.Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, vol. 2, 778. Minutes of the General Assembly, 406, 427, 477, 506, 534, 513, 564, 587, 616-617.
- 13.Groom, Salem Presbyterian Church, 35. Minutes of the General Assembly, 564.
- 14.Earnest Trice Thompson, Presbyterian Missions in the Southern United States (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1934), 48.
- 15.Ibid., 49-50.
- 16.Smith, Christian Church, 672.
- 17.Hanford A. Edson, Contributions to the Early History of the Presbyterian Church in Indiana (Cincinnati: Winona Publishing Company, 1989), 23-24.
- 18.Rudolph, Hoosier Zion, 4-5.
- 19.Edson, Contributions, 23. John Melish, "Travels in the United States of America in the years 1806 . . . 1811," in Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), 33.
- 20.Melish, "Travels," 33. Rudolph, Hoosier Zion, 5-16. Darby, Emigrant's Guide, 216. John Bradbury, "Travels in the interior of America in the years 1809, 1810, and 1811," in Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley, (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), 38-39.
- 21.Rudolph, Hoosier Zion, 11-12.
- 22.Edson, Contributions, 30-31, 41.
- 23.Ibid., 53.
- 24.Ibid., 81. Chillicothe Weekly Recorder, 1 November 1815. Isaac Reed, "The Christian Traveler," in Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers, ed. Harlow Lindley (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Commission, 1916), 494-495.
- 25.The most recent and compelling review of early national Christian churches operating on the frontier is Nathan Hatch's Democratization of American Christianity. Other older and more encyclopedic works on the Baptists, Methodists, and others include William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1936), vol. 1, The Baptists, and vol.

4, The Methodists; Walter Brownlow Posey, The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845 (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1957); idem., The Development of Methodism in the Old Southwest, 1783-1824 (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Weatherford Printing Company, 1933); idem., Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1966). A sense of the life of a frontier preacher can be quickly gained by reading the journals of Francis Asbury, the head of the Methodist church in the early national period. See Francis Asbury, The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, ed. Elmer E. Clark et al., 3 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1958).

26. For a complete listing of missionary organizations which arose during this period, see Oliver Wendell Elsbree, The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815 (Williamsport, Pa.: The Williamsport Printing and Binding Co., 1928), passim.

27. The literature on the rise of the home missions movement is considerable. Elsbree's work, The Rise of the Missionary Spirit, was followed by that of Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), who argued that a desire to establish social and cultural control over the frontier was the primary motivation for the establishment of eastern home missions organizations. Kuykendall, in Southern Enterprise, and Ruth Bloch, in Visionary Republic (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), both returned to Elsbree's line of interpretation and largely rejected Foster's social control thesis.

28. Boles, Great Revival, 33-34, 101.

29. Quoted in ibid., 103.

30. Ibid., 104.

31. R.G. Clouse, "The Rebirth of Millenarianism," in Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660, Peter Toon, ed. (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1970), 56-62. See also James West Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 43.

32. J. F. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy: The Quest for the Millennium in Early American Puritanism," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 32 (April 1975), 233. For more radical expressions of Mede's thought see Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (London: Temple Smith, 1972).

33. Maclear, "New England and the Fifth Monarchy," 225. David H. Watters used Puritan literature and gravestone art to come to a similar conclusion, arguing that millennial thought was a constant, even dominant, theme of New England thought during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See David H. Watters, "With Bodilie Eyes": Eschatological Themes in Puritan Literature and Gravestone Art (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1981). For an opposite opinion on the course of New England eschatological interest see Robert Middlekauff, The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 323.

34. Middlekauff, The Mathers, chap. 10, 18. Davidson, Logic of Millennial Thought, 43. For a wider treatment of millennial thought in seventeenth-century America see H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), chap. 4.

35. Loraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1958), 139.

36. Bloch, Visionary Republic, 131.

37. The rise and influence of postmillennialism has been the subject of often heated debate over the past thirty years. C. C. Goen, in "Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology," Church History 38 (1959), 25-40, first credited Edwards as the father of American postmillennialism. Goen's ideas were expanded by Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), Ernest Lee Tuveson, Redeemer Nation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), J. F. Maclear, "The Republic and the Millennium," in The Religion of the Republic, ed. Elwyn A. Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), and Charles Royster, A Revolutionary People at War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979). Subsequent works by Davidson, Logic of Millennial Thought, 59, and more recently by John F. Wilson, "History, Redemption, and the Millennium," in Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience, Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131-141, have thrown doubt on Goen's conclusion. Other works more broadly cast have refuted much of Heimert's and Tuveson's work as well. See Nathan Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) and, more recently, Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith. Almost all historians currently agree that by the 1790s postmillennialism existed as a full-blown doctrine and that it heavily influenced the home missionary movement. See especially Bloch, Visionary Republic, xiii-xiv, 215-230.

- 38.Boettner, Millennium, 4.
- 39.Bloch, Visionary Republic, 131.
- 40.Boettner, Millennium, 109.
- 41.Ibid., 110.
- 42.Ibid. Davidson, Logic of Millennial Thought, 44.
- 43.Peter Toon, "Introduction," Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660, ed. Peter Toon (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1970), 14-17.
- 44.Ibid., 17.
- 45.Quoted in Heinrich Quistorp, Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), 159-160.
- 46.Ibid., 158-162.
- 47.John Calvin, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, ed. Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1939), 143.
- 48.Ibid.
- 49.Quistorp, Calvin's Doctrine, 159.
- 50.The Scots Confession, ed. G.D. Henderson (Edinburgh: The St. Andrew's Press, 1960), 38, 66.
- 51.A.R. Dallison, "Contemporary Criticism of Millenarianism," in Puritanism, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600-1660, ed. Peter Toon, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1970), 104.
- 52.James Benjamin Green, ed., A Harmony of the Westminster Presbyterian Standards (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1951), 38.
- 53.The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, 150-153.
- 54.Christopher M. Beam, "Millennialism and American Nationalism, 1740-1800," Journal of Presbyterian History 54 (1976), 182-199.
- 55.Davidson, Logic of Millennial Thought, 149n.

56. Bloch only mentioned Tennent twice: once as a preacher of an apocalyptic sermon, and once as the converter, along with Whitefield, of Herman Husband, an ardent millennialist during the Revolution. See Bloch, Visionary Republic, 39, 73.

57. Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 183.

58. McGready, Posthumous Works, 235.

59. James McGready, "On the General Judgement," in Posthumous Works, 129-134.

60. Ibid., 130-131.

61. Ibid., 131.

62. Ibid., 132.

63. Jonathan Edwards and Gilbert Tennent, among others, were well known for their hellfire preaching during the Great Awakening. See Lovejoy, Religious Enthusiasm, 180-181.

64. McGready, Posthumous Works, 134.

65. See, for instance, Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith, 221-222.

66. McGready, Posthumous Works, 132.

67. Ibid., 134.

68. Ibid., 156.

69. Ibid., 157.

70. Ibid., 134.

71. Ibid., 157.

72. Ibid., 39.

73. Ibid., 345.

74. Ibid., 156-157.

75. Ibid., 345-346.

76. Ibid., 346.

77. Ibid., 347.

- 78.Ibid., 345.
- 79.Ibid., 128.
- 80.Ibid., 41.
- 81.Ibid., 347.
- 82.Ibid., 133-134, 416.
- 83.Ibid., 223.
- 84.Ibid, 223-224.
- 85.Ibid., 224-225.
- 86.Ibid., 225-226.
- 87.Ibid., 226-227.
- 88.Ibid., 422.
- 89.Ibid., 422-427.
- 90.Boles, Great Revival, 101.
- 91.McGready, Posthumous Works, 419.
- 92.Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 260-261.
- 93.McGready, Posthumous Works, 491.
- 94.Ibid., 491-492.
- 95.Davidson, Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, 255.
- 96."James McGready to Archibald Cameron," November 6, 1811. Typescript copy from the James McGready file, Manuscripts Section, Western Kentucky University. Original at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 97.McGready, Posthumous Works, 120-121.
- 98.Ibid., 447-448.
- 99.Ibid., 317.
- 100.This information is sketchy at best. It comes from Littleton Groom's unpublished work "History of Salem Presbyterian Church" (1969), 10-11, note 16. (See note 8, above.) The typescript copy can be found at the Kentucky

Historical Society, Frankfort. For evidence, Groom cited a letter from McGready to Joshua L. Wilson of Cincinnati, dated December 15, 1813. According to Groom, this letter can be found in the Joshua L. Wilson file at the University of Kentucky Archives. Unfortunately, an extensive search of this 100,000 item collection failed to turn up the letter. In the context of McGready's own comments about his successes, or lack thereof, in Henderson, Groom's story is believable, if not verifiable.

101. McGready had expressed to John Lyle as early as 1805 his frustration over Methodist inroads into Presbyterian congregations as well as the general population. See Lyle, Diary and Journal, 5.

102. John F. Schermerhorn and Samuel J. Mills, "A Correct View of that Part of the United States which lies West of the Allegheny Mountains," in To Win the West, Missionary Viewpoints, 1814-1815 (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 30-31. Samuel J. Mills and Daniel Smith, "Report of a Missionary Tour," in To Win the West, Missionary Viewpoints, 1814-1815 (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 15-16.

103. Rudolph, Hoosier Zion, 30.

104. Quoted in *ibid.*, 30.

105. James McGready to Samuel J. Mills, 27 April 1815, in To Win the West, Missionary Viewpoints, 1814-1815 (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 51-53.

106. Rudolph, Hoosier Zion, 30-31, 44.

107. Cartwright, Autobiography, 204.

108. Weekly Recorder (Chillicothe, Ohio), January 30, 1818; Western Monitor (Lexington, Ky.), January 24, 1818.

109. Weekly Recorder (Chillicothe, Ohio), January 30, 1818.

Epilogue

The study of early American religion, and the field of intellectual history in general, have enjoyed something of a rebirth in recent years. That rebirth has been most recently apparent in the publication of Jon Butler's Awash in a Sea of Faith and Nathan Hatch's Democratization of American Christianity. Both authors present innovative analyses of early American religion. Both likewise illustrate the problem of James McGready. In Butler's work he does not appear; in Hatch's he is miscategorized. Hatch's and Butler's approaches to McGready are symptomatic of a longstanding confusion about McGready, his theology, and his career.

The confusion may have resulted because historians found it difficult to conceive of a frontier Calvinist revivalist. Jonathan Edwards is understandable: he was a latter-day Puritan operating in Congregational New England. McGready, however, lived and preached on the newly-opened trans-Appalachian frontier with, as far as any historians until recently knew, no Calvinist revivalist past on which to draw. His willingness to work alongside and associate himself with preachers of other denominations--especially Arminian Baptists and Methodists--indicated to some

historians that he could not have been too serious about his Calvinism. And yet when given the opportunity to bolt tradition and join a frontier church, he stayed with the old. Given this set of seeming contradictions, most historians, until recently, have chosen either to ignore McGready (being unsure what to make of him) or to place him squarely in the revivalist camp and ignore his later life. What most historians have seen in McGready's life and theology is contradiction and disunity. Such a conclusion will no longer stand.

McGready's life was unified because his faith and thought were unified. This dissertation has made a series of investigations into his theology. Taken collectively they point to an overall unity and consistency in his thinking. Confluence rather than contradiction characterizes McGready's theology. From his understanding of conversion to that of the second coming, McGready's theology centered in one fundamental belief--the supremacy and sovereignty of God in all things. Humans could not convert themselves, nor could they sustain their Christian walk, nor could they bring about the second coming of Christ through their efforts. All of these, indeed all of life, depended on the will and work of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. All truth comes from God; all knowledge comes from God; all life comes from God. These ideas were as old as Presbyterianism, as old as Calvin, or even Augustine or

Paul.

Why then, if God orders all things and the lives of all people, should one commit one's life to revivalism? McGready's answer was simple: out of obedience to God's commands and truths contained in the Bible and out of love for the Messiah who he believed had saved him from eternal death. McGready knew that as a minister God had given him a very specific command--to preach, in season and out of season. But for what purpose? Because God, through his own counsel and design, had ordained preaching to be the primary vehicle for conversion. McGready's Calvinism gave him assurance that his work would not be in vain for two reasons: in preaching he obeyed and therefore pleased God, and since God indicated in his word that he did choose many, McGready could have a reasonable measure of confidence that his work would be used to bring souls into the kingdom. Braced with that knowledge, he pursued his life as best he could following the intellectual understanding that he held.

McGready's faith and theology did not play out in the ivory towers of academia, but in the laboratory of life. One way to detect confusion and contradiction within someone is to compare his life with his ideas and note the continuity or lack thereof between the two. McGready's life and ideas worked together well. Raised, educated, and converted in a traditional Presbyterian revivalist setting, McGready remained true to that tradition throughout his

life. In working for revivalism he drew on the theological and ceremonial traditions of his Scottish forebears. By rejecting the new Cumberland Church he indicated his theological allegiance to the Calvinism of the old church. As a missionary in Indiana he toiled thanklessly not to help create an earthly paradise but to assist God's elect in finding the heavenly one. In all these things McGready worked not as an innovator and a changer but as a preserver and practitioner of a two-hundred-year-old history of Presbyterian revivalism.

Other ministers from other denominations during and after McGready's life appropriated and changed the revivalist theology and forms used by McGready and created the modern American revivalist--emotional, evangelical, and, more often than not, Arminian. By that group James McGready has been looked to as a father and brother, but in that group McGready does not fit. Instead, he belongs with Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards, James Glenndining, and the Calvinist revivalism of Scotland and Ulster. McGready's heart and mind belonged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Historians study individuals partly to come to a better understanding about the period in which they lived. McGready's life provides several insights about early America. First, McGready and his life was made possible

only by the transmission of Old World ideas and forms to the New World. The theology of the Tennents and McGready did not initially appear on the virgin shores of America but in the rugged glens of Scotland some two thousand miles away. As historians constantly search for the newness of America and the American character, McGready is a helpful reminder to be always mindful of a perhaps undiscovered Old World heritage.

Second, McGready's life and work symbolize the tenacity with which those ideas and forms survived and even prospered in the New World. In the case of McGready, they were transferred both through mass revivalism during the Great Awakening and by the efforts of individual ministers through personal education. Although the colonial setting and the frontier often did change or alter Old World notions, still those notions often managed to survive and thrive in the New World.

Third, McGready's experience reminds intellectual historians not to ignore the oral aspect of the transmission of ideas. Intellectual historians of the eighteenth century have tended to focus on the published writings of authors such as Jefferson, Paine, or Montesquieu in their search for the eighteenth-century mind. McGready's experience indicates that ideas in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could just as easily be preserved and transmitted through individual speakers as through published works.

Indeed, if the relative failure of Deism and success of Revivalism in the nineteenth century is any indication, oral transmission of thought may have been more effective than written.

Finally, McGready's life and experience symbolize the power of the intellectual forces unleashed by the American Revolution and the establishment of the Federal Union. As Nathan Hatch has eloquently described, when the American people loosed themselves from the political bonds of deference and Federalism and took up the egalitarian ideas first of Jefferson and later of Jackson, they loosed themselves from similar religious bonds as well. In that maelstrom of change known as the early national period McGready labored to bring salvation to the people using the theology and forms handed down to him from previous generations just as John Adams sought to bring political order to the country using the type of deferential politics known to his colonial fathers. Neither was successful against the egalitarian tide. Adams was dumped from the presidency in 1800; McGready was ejected from the mainstream of revivalism after 1807.

Historians have overwhelmingly treated James McGready as part of the new revivalism of the nineteenth century, but what this and other recent works have argued is that in reality he stood at the end of an older line of revivalism rather than at the head of the new. His life and theology

both point to such a conclusion, but it is one that has escaped most historians until very recently. The life of James McGready therefore serves well as a reminder to historians that just when we think a subject is closed and finished, a new way to understand our topic may appear. This study of McGready is hopefully not an ending point but a springboard for new studies in early American history.

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