A HISTORY OF METHODISM IN KENTUCKY

BY

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VOLUME II
From 1820 to 1846

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In a former volume we sketched the History of Methodism in Kentucky from 1783, the year the first Methodist "Society" in the State was organized, to 1820, the year the Kentucky Conference was authorized by act of the General Conference. Thirty-seven years had intervened between these events, and these years had witnessed many changes in both Church and State. In 1783, when Francis Clark gathered together "less than a dozen members" in the home of John Durham, there were but a few hundred people in all the West.* In 1820, the population in Kentucky alone had

*Since writing Vol. I of this History, the following has been placed in my hands by my friend, Mr. Fletcher Mann, late of Lexington, Ky.: "Perhaps one of the first (Methodist local preachers) to come to Kentucky was Nicholas Reagin, who, with his family, were of those who settled at Bryan's Station, in Fayette county, Ky., in 1779. George Bryan, in his "Story of Bryan's Station," relates: "April 18th (1780) was the first marriage at Bryan's Station. I myself married Miss Elizabeth Reagin, daughter of Nicholas Reagin, a Methodist local preacher. I thought I could not have her own father to marry us, and Parson Eastin, afterwards of Paris, Kentucky, was there, and I got him to perform the ceremony." In a note he says: "Nicholas Reagin and his son George both settled on Davis Fork of Elkhorn." If this be correct, then Nicholas Reagin preceded Rev. Francis Clark to Kentucky by three years, and was, perhaps, the first Methodist in the State.
risen to 564,317. In 1783, Kentucky was still a part of the State of Virginia. Nine years later it took its place in the Union as a separate State, and for twenty-eight years the machinery of State government had been in successful operation. Then, the people of Kentucky were smarting from the defeat administered by the Indians at the disastrous battle of the Blue Licks, fought only the year before. Now, the power of the Indian tribes was forever broken and there was no further danger of a savage invasion.

Still the country was new. In proportion to the size of the State, the population in 1820 was sparse. Much of the soil was yet unoccupied. Towns were small. Very few could boast of as many as a thousand inhabitants. Louisville and Cincinnati were little more than mere villages. No turn-pikes had been built. The only roads were dirt roads—bad at any time, but almost impassable in wet weather. A few stage coach lines had been established, but the palmy days of that once popular mode of travel had not yet arrived. It was fifteen years before the first railroad in Kentucky was put in operation. Steamboats were just now plowing their way along the placid Ohio. There was but little commerce in the State. The soil yielded bountifully, but practically the only market for its rich products was by way of the Mississippi to New Orleans. Nearly everything the people used was grown in their own fields or manufactured in their own homes. The spinning wheel, the loom, the knitting needle, the shoe-maker's bench, the tannery, the cabinet and blacksmith shop were familiar objects to the people of that day.

The financial and political conditions in Kentucky
have seldom been worse than they were in 1820. Financial affairs were chaotic. During and following the second war with Great Britain, cheap money had induced extravagance and wild speculation. As always, this was followed by depression and panic. Everybody was in debt. Everybody needed money and few had it. Banks failed. Their notes became worthless. People were in dire distress. The Legislature, attempting to enact measures of relief, made laws that were either futile or unconstitutional. The courts, when called upon to pass judgment on these laws, were compelled to declare many of them invalid. The distressed people, in their desperation, then wanted to abolish the courts. Even the Constitution itself was endangered. The constitutional provision for the creation of the Court of Appeals was set aside by a mere act of the Legislature, and a new court established. Of course this was illegal and was strenuously resisted. Old and New Court parties took the field, and for a time the distinction between Whig and Democrat was forgotten and only New and Old Court parties were known. Seldom has there been a more bitter political controversy in a State that is noted for such controversies.

It was in the midst of such turmoil and strife that the Kentucky Conference came into being. The Church in Kentucky had grown as well as the State. There were now sixteen thousand Methodists in Kentucky, and the Church was organized and in position to go forward to even greater victories than those that crowned her efforts in the past. Four large Districts were well manned, and strong men were in charge of more than thirty circuits, with a corps of able young
men and local preachers as helpers. Many local preachers, not employed as assistants on circuits, were scattered over the State, ready for any service they could render. The congregations were divided into classes, each under the care of a leader who would look after the welfare of the souls of his class, and lead them in their efforts to save others. No more effective system of spiritual culture and evangelism was ever devised than that of early Methodism. It was an organized and disciplined force, seeking to save the lost, and nurturing young converts like a mother nourishes her child.

The Methodist membership of that day was almost wholly a converted membership. The doctrine of assurance was cardinal among early Methodists. They believed with all their hearts that when one passed from death unto life he ought to know it. They firmly believed that the wonderful gift of salvation ought so to thrill the heart of the saved that they would immediately want to tell the good news to others. Most of them could say with the Psalmist, “I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” Preachers and class-leaders were unwilling to allow a seeker to stop short of this conscious experience of saving grace, and they expected a glad testimony from the person who was thus saved. The six months of probation required of all before admission into full membership sifted out the merely impulsive and unstable, and gave to Methodism a converted membership, conscious of a new life in Christ, and burning with zeal to win others to a like experience.
The religious life and habits of these early Methodists are worthy of note. They prayed more than most people. Nearly all of them would pray when called on, whether in prayer- or class-meetings or in the public congregations. Very many of them had their places of secret devotions to which they resorted daily in order to commune with God. In building his mansion, a wealthy Presbyterian in Central Kentucky built a prayer-room, into which he went every day for a season of prayer. These early Methodists had but few mansions and there was but little room in their cabin homes for prayer closets; but a place in a canebrake or in the depths of a forest answered the needs of their devotional life. Dr. Hinde, the grandfather of Bishop Kavanaugh, built little bark houses at different places over his farm, which became known to his grandchildren as "grandpa's prayer houses." Valentine Cook beat a path from his home at Bethel Academy to the shelving rock on the bluff of the Kentucky river, and left the print of his knees in the ground where he daily wrestled with the Lord. Nearly every Methodist home had family prayers. Night and morning they called the children and servants about the family altar to worship. Preachers usually went to the church from their knees, and when they entered the pulpit always knelt for prayer, while the congregation almost invariably bowed for a moment of silent devotion before taking their seats. Levity and loud talking were entirely out of place in the house of God. When the congregation was called to prayer, the members kneeled down, as did the saints of God in Bible times.

The service of song was inspiring. The people sang. The singing may not at all times have been in accord with the rules, but, like the negro spirituals, it
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was melody. If the books were few, the preacher "lined" the hymn, and the people sang. There were no choirs. There were no organs. In so far as we have information, the first organ to be installed in a Methodist Church in America was at Portland, Maine, in 1836. The editor of The Western Christian Advocate in a long editorial bitterly laments "such departures from the Discipline," and expresses himself as having thought "that there was no congregation of Methodists in the Union who would tolerate such a glaring invasion of the institutions of our Church."* Most of the preachers of that day sang, and usually led the congregations in this service. If not, some good man or woman would be selected as leader. For the most part the hymns were stately, dignified, spiritual, and expressive of deep religious emotion and profound theological truth. But the point we wish to emphasize is, that the Methodists were a singing people, a people with a "new song" in their mouths, "even praise unto God."

The doctrines held by the Methodists appealed to the common sense of the people. God was not a whimsical, heartless Being, loving and wishing the salvation of a few, and consigning all others to eternal damnation, merely because He did not will to save them. The God preached by the Methodists was a God who loved all men and "was not willing that any should perish." The reason why men were lost was because they "would not." They preached a Christ who died for all, and whose atonement was sufficient for all, of they would only come to him. Man, according to their teachings, when created by the Almighty, was endowed with free-

*Western Christian Advocate, Sept. 9, 1836.
dom of choice, and it was possible for him "to choose life and live," or to choose death and perish. Christ had power to save to the uttermost all that came unto God by him. These teachings met a responsiveness on the part of men who knew that they were responsible for their sins, and that they were unsaved because they had rejected the Savior.

The organization of the membership into classes and the class-meeting were distinctive features of Methodism when the Kentucky Conference began. Attendance upon the class-meetings was obligatory. William Burke had over one hundred names stricken from the rolls of the Danville circuit for non-attendance upon the class-meetings. The coming together of small groups for the purpose of talking over their religious experiences, of praying for and exhorting one another, and of receiving instruction in the way of godliness from their more experienced leaders, was indeed a school of religious education that has never been surpassed among any people.

"But," asks the reader, "were they not emotional, and noisy? Were not the preachers vehement and loud? Were not the people given to shouting and to other demonstrations of various kinds?" In many instances, Yes. But these things were not confined to the Methodists. Indeed, the Methodists were more moderate and held their emotions under better control than some others. What the world calls "extravagances" almost invariably appear where there is deep spirituality. It was so in Bible times; it is so now. Religion stirs the emotions as few other things do; yet it is not the only thing that stirs the emotions. We have never known a camp meeting where there were as much noise and excessive demonstration as in a politi-
cal convention, nor have we seen religious fervor exceed the fervor of a horse race or a foot-ball game. Deep feeling naturally seeks to express itself through physical manifestations, and there was deep feeling on the part of the early Methodists. This fact cannot be denied, and no apologies are necessary for it. In the great revival at the beginning of the nineteenth century, shouting and physical demonstrations and other so-called extravagances, were just as common among Baptists and Presbyterians as among the Methodists. But let this be said: among these early Methodists religion was not merely an emotionality; a very high standard of ethical living was set before the people and Methodists were expected to conform their lives to these high standards.

It is true that Methodist preachers were sometimes vehement and loud. "Small thunder and bronchitis" were not uncommon among them. These natural expressions of earnestness were sometimes indulged too far, but the zeal and anxiety to win souls which were back of this vehemence could not be doubted. Then again it must be remembered that these men were laboring among an emotional and untutored people; and those who know human nature know that such a people are reached only through some display of emotionality. If those who have so persistently sought to discredit Methodism, and have so decried "perspiration" and "tears," had put a little more of these things into their preaching they would have been more successful in awakening sinners and leading men to Christ! Undoubtedly there were in those early days of our Church some fanaticism and extravagance which are to be deplored; but we of this day are in far greater danger of low temperature than of high. Freezing is more to be
feared than fervency!

Though there had been great progress in both Church and State, serving circuits in Kentucky in 1820 was still difficult and dangerous. There were still great stretches of unbroken forests through which the circuit rider must make his way as best he could. These forests were threaded with bridle paths, which frequently forked in various directions, and often a new preacher was at a loss to know which road to take. It was a custom in those days for him to carry with him a hatchet or a "marking iron" with which to blaze the trees so as to find his direction the next time he made his round. During the first year of his ministry, Bishop Kavanaugh, traveling the Little Sandy circuit, is said to have got his marks confused, and on more than one occasion took the wrong road, and got lost in the woods! The fare was hard and the accommodations poor. An old preacher who traveled a circuit in 1825, told the writer of sleeping next to the wall in a log house, where the cracks between the logs were without chinking. During the night it rained and froze as it fell. In the morning a solid cake of ice covered his beard! He also told of feasting on the flesh of a young panther, and of waiting until a man killed and dressed a hog before he could have his breakfast. In many places not only was the fare hard, but the salaries were distressingly low. In 1821, Benjamin T. Crouch, a young man who stood in the very front rank of the Conference, received in all only thirty-eight dollars for his year's work. Henry B. Bascom, for eight months on Madison circuit, received twenty-five dollars. The highest salary paid that year was paid to Peter Cartwright, $236. Very frequently the preacher was paid in produce, or something made in the home—
wheat, corn, linen, linsey woolsey, bear skins, otter skins—all are listed as payments on the salaries of preachers in old records of the Church. Hardship and sacrifice were still the lot of the Methodist itinerant.

Few men could, for more than a few years, endure the strain upon their strength. To become an itinerant preacher in 1820 was, to many, a sure road to martyrdom. Yet, men dedicated themselves to this work, gladly enduring the afflictions and counting not their lives dear unto themselves, if they could only reach and save the lost. It was heroic. It was a magnificent devotion to a great cause. Washington and his ragged, hungry men at Valley Forge exhibited no greater heroism than did these men. The foreign mission field never required greater sacrifice or more heroic devotion than did this field in the expanding West.

As already stated, there were about thirty circuits and stations in Kentucky at the time the Kentucky Conference came into being. The State is now divided into one hundred and twenty counties. This was an average of four of our present-day counties to the circuit. But some of these circuits were much larger, having as many as thirty preaching places each. Many of these preaching places were in private houses, or halls, or schoolhouses. Courthouses were popular places of worship. Open air meetings were common when the weather would permit. Nor was there always an organized "society" where there was a preaching place. The preachers were still pioneers, and when there was an opening in any new community, a regular appointment was made in the hope that at some future time an organization could be effected. This was true in Frankfort and in other towns. There was regular
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Methodist preaching in Frankfort long before there was a Methodist Church in that place. In fact there was no meeting house of any kind in the Capitol of the State until 1812, when a "union" church was built out of the proceeds of a lottery authorized for the purpose by the Legislature of Kentucky!

The following statement from Dr. Steven's History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, throws light upon the condition of the Church throughout the United States in 1820. He says:

The Church now advanced with increasing prosperity. The statistical exhibit of Methodism in 1820 astonished not only the Church, but the country. It was evident that a great religious power had, after little more than half a century, been permanently established in the nation, not only with a practical system and auxiliary agencies of unparalleled efficiency, but sustained and propelled forward by hosts of the common people, the best bone and sinew of the republic—and that all other religious denominations, however antecedent, were thereafter to take secondary rank to it, numerically at least, a fact of which Methodists themselves could not fail to be vividly conscious, and which might have a critical effect on that humble devotion to religious life and work which had made them thus far successful. Their leaders saw the peril, and incessantly admonished them to "rejoice with trembling." The aggregate returns show that there were now 273,858 members in the Church, with between nine and ten hundred itinerant preachers. In the sixteen years of this period there was a gain of no less than 158,447 members, and of more than 500 preachers. In the twenty years of the century the increase was 208,964 members, and 617 preachers; the former had much more than quadrupled, and the latter much more than trebled.

The General Conference which met in Baltimore, May 1, 1820, was a notable session. Several of the measures then adopted must receive brief notice in these pages as they vitally affected the work in this State. But the act which first concerns us was the act establishing the Kentucky Conference. As the reader of our first volume is aware, Kentucky had, for eight years, been divided between the Ohio and Tennessee
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Conferences. So great was the growth of the work in the West that further division was imperative. The Ohio Conference had sent up a petition asking for this further division. The Committee on Boundaries recommended, and the General Conference adopted, the following:

The Kentucky Conference shall include the Kentucky, Salt River, Green River, and Cumberland Districts, and that part of the State of Virginia, including the Green Brier, and Monroe circuits, heretofore belonging to the Baltimore Conference, and the Kanawha and Middle Island circuits, heretofore belonging to the Ohio Conference.

This method of defining the boundaries by Districts and circuits, gives one a very imperfect idea of the geographical limits of the new Conference. A study of these districts and circuits reveals the fact that the newly formed Kentucky Conference embraced all the State of Kentucky, a large part of Middle Tennessee, and approximately half of the present State of West Virginia. Dr. McFerrin, in his History of Methodism in Tennessee, says this division "left all that part of the State of Tennessee north of Cumberland river in the Kentucky Conference; so, also, Dover and Dickson circuits, lying between the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers." The Guyandotte circuit was already a part of the Kentucky District and this, together with the four other very large circuits in West Virginia, put fully half of that State in the Kentucky Conference.

The total membership of the new Conference is given as 17,254 white, and 2,113 colored members. Of these there were in the State of Kentucky, 14,035 whites, and 1,635 colored persons.

The boundaries of the four Districts that made up the greater part of the Conference were determined chiefly by water courses. The Kentucky District em-
braced all of the State lying between the Kentucky and Ohio rivers, included the Big Sandy Valley, and reached far out into West Virginia. It extended from Carrollton, Kentucky, on the west, to the vicinity of Charleston, West Virginia, on the east. Besides the five circuits in Virginia, it included the Newport, Licking, Lexington, Mount Sterling, Hinkston, Limestone, Fleming, Little Sandy, John’s Creek, and Georgetown circuits and Lexington Station.

The Salt River District, roughly speaking, included all between the Kentucky River on the north and east, and the Salt River on the south and west. It extended from Carrollton to the mouth of Salt River, at West Point, and took in the Cumberland River section about Harlan, Barboursville and Williamsburg, thus reaching entirely across the State. It included the Cumberland, Madison, Danville, Salt River, Shelby, Jefferson, Franklin, and Louisville circuits.

The Green River District lay west of Salt River, and besides the Breckinridge, Hartford, Henderson, Livingston, Hopkinsville, and Christian circuits in Kentucky, reached far enough south to take in the Red River, Dover, Dickson, and Tennessee circuits, in Tennessee.

The Cumberland District lay chiefly along the middle Cumberland River, embracing Somerset, Wayne, Goose Creek, Fountain Head, Bowling Green, Barren, Green River, and Roaring River circuits, thus covering a large territory in both Kentucky and Tennessee. From this the reader may get some idea of the location and extent of the new Conference.

The General Conference of 1820 was both interesting and exciting. Quite a number of things transpired that were of moment to our work in Kentucky. Be-
sides creating the Kentucky Conference, the Book Concern in Cincinnati was established. Prior to this time all our publishing interests were in New York; but the Book Concern in Cincinnati brought a large part of this business to the West, much to the convenience of the people of this growing section. Martin Ruter was elected Agent of the new Concern, thus bringing to the West this very extraordinary man, whom we shall frequently meet as we advance with our narrative. Our own Marcus Lindsay was the contending candidate for the new agency, and was defeated by only two votes.

The preparation of a new Hymn and Tune Book was ordered. The Hymnal which was put out in obedience to this order served the Church for many years.

Another measure evidenced the aggressiveness and forward-looking spirit of the Church. A resolution was adopted, calling upon each Annual Conference to take up the work of establishing educational institutions within its bounds. These were greatly needed. Our public school system was not then developed. There were no public high schools, and very few private schools of higher grade. It was in response to this resolution that Augusta College was brought into being.

Again, the Church was becoming missionary conscious. Prior to this time Methodism was itself a missionary movement. Following close upon the heels of the pioneer, the circuit rider carried the gospel to the farthest outposts established by the white man. As early as 1785, a collection was taken with which to send two preachers into Canada, and the following year fifty-four pounds were expended, a part of which was used to defray the expenses of Haw and Ogden as
missionaries to Kentucky. Work had been done among the negro slaves, and Coke, Asbury, and a few others had occasionally preached to the Indians; but no organized and systematic effort had been made by the Church as a whole to establish and maintain missions to any but our own people who had moved into new territory. In 1819, following up the work of the mulatto, John Stewart, the Ohio Conference had begun its work among the Wyandotte Indians, but this was purely a Conference enterprise and did not enlist the efforts of the whole Church. Under the lead of Bishop Coke, missionary societies had been established among the Wesleyans in England for the purpose of sending the gospel to foreign parts, and other denominations in this country were beginning work among the Indians; but the Methodist Church was only now awaking to its duty in this respect. A year before this General Conference met in Baltimore, a “Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America” had been organized by the Methodists in New York City. Dropping that part of the title referring to the publication of Bibles, (which work, for the time, was turned over to the American Bible Society), this General Conference approved and adopted as its own the Constitution of the New York Society, and made that Society the Parent Society of the whole Church. It also adopted resolutions urging that auxiliary societies be organized in each Annual Conference. The response to this was prompt and enthusiastic throughout the Church, and from that day the Methodist Episcopal Church in America has been a missionary Church. The movement was on a purely voluntary basis, no assessments or apportionments being made. All funds were raised by voluntary offerings and mem-
bership fees. The payment of two dollars a year constituted one a member of the Society, and twenty dollars paid at one time made one a life member.

This General Conference also provided that a District Conference should be held annually in each Presiding Elder's District. It was not, however, the District Conference with which we are familiar. It was rather a local preachers' Conference, composed of local preachers who had been licensed as much as two years, and concerned itself only with local preachers' affairs. Prior to this time, the power to grant and renew licenses; to recommend for local orders and for admission on trial in Annual Conferences, and to pass upon the character and conduct of local preachers, was vested in the Quarterly Conference, a body composed largely of laymen—stewards, trustees, class-leaders, etc. Many of the local preachers were men of age and experience, often having served as members of Annual Conferences, and there was a good deal of dissatisfaction because their ministerial standing was not in the hands of men of their own official grade. It was to meet this dissatisfaction that this District Conference was devised. But the plan did not work well. Local preachers themselves were not pleased with it, and later it was set aside entirely. Yet for nearly two decades all the preachers admitted into our Conferences came recommended by these District meetings of local preachers.

But the most exciting issue before the body was the ever-recurring Presiding Elder question. The Presiding Eldership has been a veritable apple of discord in American Methodism. Scarcely a session of the General Conference has been held since the Church was organized that has not had this question before it in
some form. In 1800, "Brother Ormond moved, that the yearly Conference be authorized by this General Conference to nominate and elect their own president elders." which motion was "negatived." In 1804, "after a long debate, the motion 'That there be no Presiding Elders,' was lost." In 1808, "the vote being taken on the motion for electing presiding elders, there were ayes, 52; nays, 73. Lost." In 1812, a more formidable effort was made to make the office elective, and was defeated by the close vote of 45 to 42. In 1816, the majority against the measure was more decisive, 63 to 38. In 1820, the question reached its acutest stage, and occasioned one of the bitterest controversies that ever occurred in a General Conference.

In this Conference, quite a large number of strong men, especially from the East, were in favor of electing the Presiding Elder in the Annual Conference, and a resolution was brought forward to this effect. A hot debate, running over several days, ensued. Much feeling was manifested, and a split in the Church seemed imminent. Finally, a committee was appointed to see if the matter could not, in some way, be accommodated, and this committee brought in what was called a compromise measure, providing that whenever a Presiding Elder was needed, the Bishop should nominate three men for the place, and the Conference should elect one of the three to be the Presiding Elder. Under the plea that this was a compromise measure, that it would satisfy the so-called "radical" element, and thus secure peace and unity in the Church, a goodly number who were opposed to the change were induced to vote for it, and the measure was adopted.

But Bishop McKendree and Joshua Soule were yet to be heard from. On account of seriously impaired
health, Bishop McKendree was not able to remain in the Conference room, but was in the country seeking quiet and rest. Peter Cartwright tells of visiting his room immediately after the measure was adopted, and says that the Bishop wept and declared that the Church was ruined unless the action of the General Conference be changed. Joshua Soule had been elected to the office of Bishop a few days before, but had not yet been ordained. It was he who had written the Restrictive Rules limiting the powers of the General Conference, and, confident that this measure violated the third Restrictive Rule, felt that he could not conscientiously carry out the unconstitutional measure, and promptly notified the Conference to this effect. Bishop McKendree returned to the city, called the other Bishops together, and declared to them his opinion that the enactment was unconstitutional. Bishop Roberts was of the same opinion. "Bishop George chose to be silent." McKendree then took up the matter with the General Conference, and, according to the statement of Jacob Young,

At the request of Bishop McKendree, the Conference resolved itself into a committee of the whole, and the Bishop took the floor as a debater, and advanced such arguments as no one attempted to answer. At the close of Bishop McKendree's speech, a motion was made by some one voting in the majority, to reconsider the vote by which the resolution passed the General Conference. This was powerfully resisted by some of the strongest men on the floor, and when they found it would prevail, they left the house and broke the quorum. It was a most trying hour for the Conference. The next day the subject came up again, and several of the members who were in favor of a reconsideration, being absent when the vote was taken, it was a tie . . . and the motion was lost.

It was now fully ascertained that there was a clear majority opposed to the resolution, and they were determined not to be over-ruled by the minority, therefore they moved to suspend the resolution for four years. This raised such a tumult that the vote could not be taken. During the confused scene a brother took his pencil and paper, passed through the whole Conference,
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receiving all the names that were in favor of suspension, and while there were three or four on the floor speaking at the same time, he held up his paper, and cried with a loud voice, "Here are forty-seven names in favor of suspension!" This stilled the tumult, and the members all resumed their seats. The vote was then taken, and passed by a large majority. Bishop Soule tendered his resignation, which was accepted—the Journals were read, and the Conference adjourned sine die.

Peter Cartwright, who was a member of this General Conference and an active participant in the controversy, confirms these statements of Mr. Young. He says:

Motion after motion was made, and resolution after resolution was introduced, debate followed debate, for days, not to say weeks. . . . Finally, they (the "radical" element) concentrated all their arguments to make presiding elders elective; but on counting noses, they found we had a majority, though small; and rather than be defeated, they moved for a committee of compromise. Strong men from each side were chosen; they patched up a sham compromise, as almost all compromises are, in Church and State. The committee reported in favor, whenever a presiding elder was needed for a District, the Bishop should have the right to nominate three persons and the Conference have the right to elect one of the three. . . . This report having passed, the radicals had a real jubilee. It was the entering wedge to many other revolutionary projects; and they began to pour them in at a mighty rate. . . . In the meantime, I visited the room of Bishop McKendree, who was too feeble to preside in the Conference. He wept, and said this compromise would ruin the Church forever if not changed, and advised that we make a united effort to suspend these rules or regulations for four years, and we counted the votes, and found we could do it, and introduced a resolution to that effect. And now the war began afresh, and after debating the resolution for several days, the radicals found that if the vote was put we would carry it, and they determined to break the quorum of the house, and for two or three times they succeeded. Bishop Roberts at length rebuked them sharply, and said, "If you cannot defeat the measure honorably, you ought not to do it at all. Now," said he, "keep your seats and vote like men." This awed several of them, and they kept their seats; the vote was put and carried, and these obnoxious rules were suspended for four years.

Thus for the time being, the General Conference disposed of one of the most irritating questions that ever came before it. But it was only for a time. The
"suspended resolutions" were before two subsequent General Conferences, and were, together with other "reform" measures, the occasion of the organization of the Methodist Protestant Church in 1830. We shall meet with the question again and again. The Church is still tinkering with it. The present generation should know something of the history of this perennial controversy. The movement to make the Presiding Elder subject to election by the Annual Conference was clearly unconstitutional and subversive of a fundamental principle which underlies all ideas of responsibility. Under our system of government, Bishops are amenable to the General Conference, and are the only persons responsible to that body for the administration of its laws and the carrying out of its program. The General Conference has no other agents whom it can hold responsible for these things. There is no one else to exercise a general superintendency throughout the Church. From the beginning, long before the delegated General Conference was provided for, the Bishops had exercised this general superintendency by means of the presiding elders. The Bishops were few in numbers, and clearly they could not personally be in every part of the expanding Church to see that the rules and regulations of the General Conference were carried out. They could do this only by means of agents who were responsible to them. The presiding elder was the Bishop's agent. Appointed by the Bishop, he was expected to do in his District exactly what the Bishop would do if present. He was responsible to the Bishop for his administration, and thus the Bishop could be held responsible to the General Conference. One cannot justly be held accountable for the acts of one whom he has not appointed his agent and who is not respon-
sible to him. To transfer the power of appointment from the Bishop to the Annual Conference clearly makes the Presiding Elder the agent of the Annual Conference and not of the Bishop, and the General Conference cannot hold the Bishop responsible for the administration, in the Districts, of persons who are not responsible to him. This "changes the plan of our itinerant general superintendency,"—a plan which had been in operation for twenty-four years when the third Restrictive Rule was adopted, which forbids the delegated General Conference from doing this. According to McKendree's view, this breaking down the constitution of the Church would destroy the whole system of the Church's government.

An incident or two occurring about this time must close this chapter. Every Kentuckian is familiar with the name of Simon Kenton. As one of our great old pioneers, he ranks next to Daniel Boone. While Henderson and Harrod were founding Boonesboro and Harrodsburg, Kenton and his companion, Thomas Williams, were planting corn in Mason county. They cleared a piece of ground not far from Maysville, planted corn, and it is claimed that, "as a result of this planting, Kenton and Williams ate the first roasting-ears ever grown and eaten in Kentucky by white men." Kenton later established "Simon Kenton's Station," three miles southwest of Maysville, and became the most renowned Indian fighter and protector of the whites in that part of the State. In his Autobiography, James B. Finley says: "He was truly the master spirit of the times in that region of country. He was looked up to by all as the great defender of the inhabitants, always on the qui vive, and ready to fly at a moment's warning to the place of danger, for the protection of
the scattered families in the wilderness. Providence seems to have raised up this man for a special purpose; and his eventful life, and the many wonderful and almost miraculous deliverances, in which he was preserved amid the greatest perils and dangers, are confirmatory of the fact that he was a child of Providence."

While everybody knows of Simon Kenton, the pioneer, not so many know of his religious experience. The old man had removed to Ohio and settled in, or near, Urbana. In the fall of 1819, he attended a camp meeting on the waters of Mad River, where he was gloriously converted. Finley tells the story as follows:

Simon Kenton was the friend and benefactor of his race, and lived respected and beloved by all who knew him. In the latter part of his life he embraced religion; and it may not be improper here to relate the circumstances of his conversion. In the fall of 1819, Gen. Kenton and my father met at a camp meeting on the waters of Mad river, after a separation of many years. Their early acquaintance in Kentucky rendered this interview interesting to both of them. The meeting had been in progress for several days without any great excitement until Sabbath evening, when it pleased God to pour out his Spirit in a remarkable manner. Many were awakened, and among the number were several of the General's relatives. It was not long till their awakening was followed by conversion. The old hero was a witness to these scenes. He had faced danger and death in every form with an unquailed eye and unfaltering courage, but the tears and sobs of penitence, and the outbursts of rapturous joy from "souls renewed and sins forgiven," proved too strong for the hardy veteran and the tear was seen to kindle the eye and start down the furrow of his manly cheek.

On Monday morning he asked my father to retire with him to the woods. To this he readily consented, and, as they were passing along in silence and the song of the worshipper had died upon their ears, addressing my father he said: "Mr. Finley, I am going to communicate to you some things which I want you to promise me you will never divulge." My father replied, "If it will not affect any but ourselves, then I promise to keep it forever." By this time they were far from the encampment in the depths of the forest. They were alone; no eye could see them and no ear could hear them, but the eye and ear of the great Omnipresent. Sitting down on a log, the General com-
menced to tell the story of his heart and disclose its wretched-ness; what a great sinner he had been, and how merciful was God in preserving him amid all the conflicts and dangers of the wilderness. While he thus unburdened his heart and told the anguish of his sin-stricken soul, his lip quivered and the tears of penitence fell from his weeping eyes. They both fell to the earth, and, prostrate, cried aloud to God for mercy and salvation. The penitent was pointed to Jesus as the Almighty Saviour; and after a long and agonizing struggle, the gate of eternal life was entered, and

“Hymns of joy proclaimed through heaven
The triumphs of a soul forgiven.”

Then from the old veteran, who immediately sprang to his feet, there went up a shout toward heaven which made the woods resound with its gladness. Leaving my father he started for the camp, like the man healed at the Beautiful Gate, leaping, and praising God, so that the faster and farther he went, the louder did he shout glory to God. His appearance startled the whole encampment; and when my father arrived, he found an immense crowd gathered around him, to whom he was declaring the goodness of God, and his power to save. Approaching him, my father said, “General, I thought we were to keep this matter secret!” He instantly replied, “O, it is too glorious for that. If I had all the world here I would tell of the goodness and mercy of God.”

Finley adds: “At this time he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, and lived a consistent, happy Christian, and died in the open sunshine of a Savior’s love.” In a semi-centennial sermon preached before the Kentucky Conference of the M. E. Church, at Maysville, Kentucky, September 30, 1881, Rev. John G. Bruce relates this affecting incident concerning Simon Kenton. Said he:

In 1833, I attended a camp meeting in Logan county, Ohio, at which were about one hundred and fifty Wyandotte Indians; among them Mononcue, a local preacher. Special services were held for them in the afternoons. The communion was administered at 3 o’clock on Sabbath, at the close of which Mononcue was asked to make an address to the white people. This had to be done through an interpreter. Sitting in the pulpit was General Simon Kenton, an old man, leaning on his staff, and carrying on his body the scar of many a wound received at the hands of these red men, who had tracked him in blood and by him been tracked in blood. Mononcue spoke in a somewhat elevated and nervous style, of the influence of the gospel, and its happy
effects upon those who embraced it. Turning with a grand abruptness to the women seated on his left, he said, "The time was, my white sisters, when you trembled at the sound of Mononcure's step. It was well! for Mononcure came with tomahawk and scalping knife, knowing only the war-song and dance; but these men, (turning to the preachers behind him) found us in the depths of my native forest, worshipping in the temples of my fathers; they told me of the cross of Christ by which the enmity of man to man is destroyed. I ran to that cross and buried the tomahawk and scalping knife, and today you greet Mononcure as a brother!" General Kenton, who was all attention, bathed in tears, sprang to his feet shouting, "What hath God wrought! Who could have thought it!" caught Mononcure in his arms, and these old warriors, who had each struggled on the plains, or in the copse for each other's life, subdued by the truth, stood in tender embrace, "reconciled by love divine."

It was while returning from the General Conference of 1820 that Peter Cartwright had one of those unique experiences that could occur with no one else. He and Jesse Walker were traveling together making the journey from Baltimore on horseback, and had spent the night at Crab Orchard, Kentucky. The next day they separated, Walker going into Tennessee to visit some friends, and Cartwright continuing his journey toward his home in Christian county. We shall let him tell the story:

Saturday night came on and found me in a strange region of country, and in the hills, knobs, and spurs of the Cumberland Mountains. I greatly desired to stop on the approaching Sabbath, and spend it with a Christian people; but I was now in a region of country where there was no gospel minister for many miles around, and where, as I learned, many of the scattered population had never heard a gospel sermon in all their lives, and where the inhabitants knew no Sabbath, only to hunt and visit, drink and dance. Thus lonesome and pensive, late in the evening I hailed a tolerably decent house, and the landlord kept entertainment. I rode up and asked for quarters. The gentleman said I could stay, but he was afraid I would not enjoy myself very much as a traveler, inasmuch as they had a party meeting there that night to have a little dance. I inquired how far it was to a decent house of entertainment on the road; he said seven miles. I told him if he would treat me civilly and feed my horse well, by his leave I would stay. He assured me I should be treated civilly. I dismounted and went in. The people collected, a large company. I saw there was not much
drinking going on.

I quietly took my seat in one corner of the house, and the dance commenced. I sat quietly musing, a total stranger, and greatly desired to preach to this people. Finally I concluded to spend the next day (Sabbath) there, and ask the privilege to preach to them. I had hardly settled this point in my mind, when a beautiful, ruddy young lady walked very gracefully up to me, dropped a handsome courtesy, and pleasantly, with winning smiles, invited me out to take a dance with her. I can scarcely describe my thoughts or feelings on that occasion. However, in a moment I resolved on a desperate experiment. I rose as gracefully as I could; I will not say with some emotion, but with many emotions. The young lady moved to my right side; I grasped her right hand with my right hand while she leaned her left arm on mine. In this position we walked on the floor. The whole company seemed pleased at this act of politeness in the young lady, shown to a stranger. The colored man, who was the fiddler, began to put his fiddle in the best order. I then spoke to the fiddler to hold a moment, and added that for several years I had not undertaken any matter of importance without first asking the blessing of God upon it, and I desired now to ask the blessing of God upon this beautiful young lady and the whole company, that had shown such an act of politeness to a total stranger.

Here I grasped the young lady's hand tightly, and said, "Let us all kneel down and pray;" and then instantly dropped on my knees, and commenced praying with all the power of soul and body I could command. The young lady tried to get loose from me, but I held her tight. Presently she fell on her knees. Some of the company kneeled, some stood, some fell, some sat still, all looked curious. The fiddler ran off into the kitchen, saying, "Lord a marcy, what de matter? What is dat mean?"

While praying some wept, and wept out loud, and some cried for mercy. I rose from my knees and began an exhortation, after which I sang a hymn. The young lady who invited me on the floor lay prostrate, crying for mercy. I exhorted again. I sang and prayed nearly all night. About fifteen of that company professed religion; our meeting lasted next day and next night, and as many more were powerfully converted. I organized a society, took thirty-two into the Church, and sent them a preacher. My landlord was appointed leader, which post he held for many years. This was the commencement of a great and glorious revival of religion in that region of country, and several of the young men converted at this Methodist preacher dance became useful ministers of Jesus Christ.

It goes without the saying that only a Peter Cartwright could carry through such a "desperate experiment." To have attempted such a thing would have been, in any other man, the very acme of folly. But
Peter was a psychologist. He correctly estimated his crowd. He says himself that “in some conditions of society I should have failed; in others would have been mobbed; in others I should have been considered a lunatic.” But in a community like this, the people unsophisticated, impressionable, and not gospel hardened, such a bold and unexpected attack on the sinful, carried out by a masterful man like Cartwright, might hope for success. But without a strong conviction of divine leadership, we would not advise any other man to try the experiment.