The Preaching of James M'gready; Frontier Revivalist.

Edwin Harold Enzor Jr
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received

ENZOR, Jr., Edwin Harold, 1935–
THE PREACHING OF JAMES M'GREADY;
FRONTIER REVIVALIST.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1964
Speech—Theater

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE PREACHING OF JAMES M'GREADY; FRON TIER REVIVALIST

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Speech

by

Edwin Harold Enzor, Jr.
B.A., David Lipscomb College, 1957
M.A., Abilene Christian College, 1959
May, 1964
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to all who have contributed to the completion of the research and transcription of this dissertation. Particularly, he is indebted to his wife, Norma, for her unstinting assistance and constant encouragement in every phase of this project; to Dr. Waldo W. Braden, who directed the study, provided initial motivation, continuing guidance and criticism; to Drs. Berle Noggle, John Pennybacker, Owen Peterson, and Claude Shaver for counsel and suggestions; and to Dr. Claude Spencer, Curator of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, who made the M'Gready sermons available and shared his knowledge of frontier American religion.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER | PAGE
--- | ---
I. INTRODUCTION | 1
  - M'Gready in American Religious History | 3
  - Major Sources | 17

II. EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION | 27
  - Parentage and Early Years | 27
  - M'Gready's Advanced Education | 38
  - Conclusions | 64

III. CAROLINA REVIVAL DAYS | 67
  - Hampden-Sydney Revival and First Preaching | 67
  - Preaching at Caldwell's Academy | 72
  - Revival in Carolina | 76
  - Effect of the Carolina Period | 82

IV. M'GREASY AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REVIVAL OF 1800 | 85
  - Preliminaries to the Kentucky Revival | 86
  - "A Few Drops Before a Mighty Rain" | 91
  - "A Mighty Rain" | 103
  - Effect of James M'Gready on the Revival of 1800 | 121

V. THE YEARS OF DECLINE | 126
  - Early Presbyterian Opposition | 128
  - Cumberland Presbytery; Liberalism and Education | 130
  - M'Gready and the Cumberland Church | 142
  - Conclusions | 145

VI. THEOLOGICAL AND HOMILETIC VIEWS | 147
  - Calvinism and M'Gready's Theology | 147
  - M'Gready's Independent Religious Views | 159
  - Homiletic Views | 168
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VII. AUDIENCE AND SETTING</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Aspect of Cumberland Audiences</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Development of M'Gready's Meetings</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings of the M'Gready Meetings</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. PREPARATION AND SERMON PROOFS</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Preparation</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Appeal</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical Appeal</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Appeal</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. ARRANGEMENT, STYLE, AND DELIVERY</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Style</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Summary</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Findings as a Result of this Study</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the speaking methods and accomplishments of James M'Gready, one of America's most influential western evangelists. An early leader of the Kentucky Revival of 1800, originator and promoter of the planned camp meeting, M'Gready earned the title of Father of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Basic sources are forty-two sermons in The Posthumous Works of James M'Gready, personal letters, and denominational histories. M'Gready's education is reconstructed from primary evidence and the known practices of John McMillan and Joseph Smith, the Redstone seminarians.

M'Gready's ministerial training uniquely prepared him for successful frontier evangelism. He was taught by College of New Jersey graduates, accomplished ministers who stressed persuasive public address. Throughout his career, M'Gready emphasized three themes: (a) acceptance of the Bible as true and infallible; (b) possible salvation for every sufficiently penitent believer; and (c) the need for a theopathic experience as evidence of salvation. His theological position provided an intense, personalized message.

In 1799 and 1800, M'Gready experimented with methods designed to enhance the effectiveness of his preaching. The result was the evolvement of the "planned camp meeting," a device which provided for the assemblage of large audiences within a propitious setting.
allowing sufficient time to effect changes in audience convictions and attitudes.

Based upon an analysis of twenty-five selected sermons, this study revealed that M'Gready followed a well-defined pattern of speech organization developed through careful preparation. While he prepared manuscript sermons, he had a fluent delivery which gave the impression of thoughtful, impassioned, extemporaneous speaking.

M'Gready began each sermon with a factual introduction based on a Bible text. After previewing his major points, he presented a reasoned discussion which served as a foundation for an emotional conclusion. M'Gready utilized three types of conclusions: (a) framing the last minor discussion division into a conclusion; (b) presenting hypothetical questions; and (c) making an "application," emotionally dominated assertions designed to stress the responsibilities implied by his discussed Bible doctrine.

M'Gready developed his sermons by deductive reasoning, utilizing quotations and allusions from the Bible, his fundamental proof source. While stressing the beneficent social benefits of Christianity, his emotional appeals emphasized an imminent, fiery hell in contrast to the proffered security of heaven. He employed a narrow range of emotional appeals and quoted few secular authorities.

The revivalist's organization and language pattern focused the listener's attention toward one broad religious premise or doctrinal
assertion. Adopting a complex arrangement of minor divisions, he weakened his ability to indoctrinate audiences with a sufficiently large fund of knowledge from which to make enlightened decisions. Yet the very complexity of his speech arrangement gave an impression of abundant proof for the premise under discussion. His involved style, utilizing much Biblical phraseology, gave a tone of religious authenticity, even if the language lacked concreteness.

M'Gready's delivery was an impressive asset to the content of his message. Characteristically dignified and serious, he believed the preacher was God's advocate proclaiming the virtues of the most beneficent cause known to man. His physical appearance and extremely powerful voice augmented the message before thousands under open-air conditions.

M'Gready is representative of those preachers who made the Second Great Awakening a reality on the western frontier. Assuming the validity of current revival philosophy, he synthesized the various elements of the distinctly successful camp meeting, answering the unique demands of his primitive environment. Though the 1800 Revival was short-lived, M'Gready deserves a place in American revival history as the camp-meeting catalyst and in the history of religious public address for his experimentation with speech settings, practical audience evaluation, and, finally, effective sermon presentation.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For some fifteen years after the Revolution the American people continued to improve the lands on the Eastern seacoast and west of the mountains, but the year 1795 marked a general change in the expansion of this nation. For some seventeen years a tide of Americans moved westward until the War of 1812 closed the floodgates. So heavy was the migration into Tennessee and Kentucky that 26,000 pioneers crossed the Cumberland in a period of two months. Within a generation after the adoption of the Constitution, eleven new states had been admitted to the Union. William Warren Sweet observed that "nothing to compare with it is recorded in the history of modern times. With the beginning of the new century the whole nation seemed veritably to be on the move."1


The civilization that these thousands built in the wilderness was initially crude and rough, and the pioneer differed in living habits from his countryman to the East. With the uprooting of his family and the journey to new lands, the settler inevitably uprooted social and religious ties, his very isolation causing a modification of the traditional worship and congregational organization until the population increased. Indeed, the religious atmosphere of the frontier often became so weak that many areas were in danger of losing the traditional religious forms altogether. Bernard Weisberger expressed the reason why Eastern churchmen feared for the souls of the Westerners:

Hundreds of thousands of humans lived in the new settlements without the ministrations of organized religion, hair-hung and breeze-shaken over the vault of hell. More than future life was at stake. The church was a guardian of public morality and good order, a great pier on which stable society rested. But frontiersmen, gambling daily with death, and often energizing themselves with jolts of raw liquor to overcome the malarial squalor of log-cabin life, tended to outrun both written and eternal law. Violence and new settlements were perpetual yokefellows.

Catherine Cleveland showed that the circumstantial barriers such as poverty, distance, illiteracy, Indians, and many other hindrances prevented the bringing of the Christian message to the settler in the

---

3 Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), p. 11. This is one of the better and more recent histories of revivalism in America, dealing with revivalists from Whitefield to Billy Sunday.
West. 4 This is not to say that the frontier did not attract many devout persons who brought with them a staunch faith and who continued the traditions of prayer and worship as best they could. 5

I. M'GREADY IN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The problem for the religious leaders was how to keep alive the faith of the settler, to re-establish the organized church, and to diminish the disorder and moral looseness. One of the answers was the revival and its counterpart, the camp meeting. Lawrence Lacour found that this answer was a uniquely American one. He said:

... revivalism is essentially an American phenomenon that arose in the eighteenth century to meet certain moral and religious needs of a people who were threatened with danger, isolation and moral insensitivity.

Revivalism has been given a strong place in the total story of religion

---

4Catherine Caroline Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805 (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), pp. 1-33. This is a reprint edition of Cleveland's doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Chicago, 1916. Her work is a recognized authority in Kentucky revival history. For the scholar, the original work is better research material.


in American life.⁷ Peter Mode said:

For almost two hundred years it is revivalism more than any other phenomenon that has supplied the landmarks in our religious history—the undulations, upheavals, points of departure, and lines of continuity. It would not be difficult and by no means unsatisfactory to write the history of American Protestantism from the standpoint of its periodic awakenings.⁸

Religion's answer to the frontier problems is known as the Kentucky Revival of 1800 or the Great Revival in the West. Beginning in Logan County, Kentucky, in 1779, it moved into the whole of the Southwest in 1800, and its influence reached virtually the entire American scene before the decade was out. Frank Granville Beardsley summarized its effects when he said:

In view of the remarkable results which attended the Awakening of 1800, its salutary and long-continued influence upon the religious life of the American republic, the wide scope of territory covered and the numbers which were reached by its quickening power, this revival was fully as remarkable as any which has ever refreshed the life of the churches on the American continent.⁹

The Methodist frontier preacher, James B. Finley, an early witness


and later preacher in this revival, called the effect in Kentucky "astonishing," having as its nearest approximation, the revival on the day of Pentecost.  

While the more startling parts of the revival such as conversions, "experiences," "jerks," "holy laugh," "falling exercise," and emotionalized preaching are well known, they fail to tell the whole story. To men of frontier times, the revival was remarkable. The churches grew; the West was evangelized; and whole communities were reformed. Beardsley summarized three effects of the Second Awakening as: (1) the overthrow of infidelity, (2) the spiritual quickening of the churches, and (3) the inauguration of great philanthropic and missionary enterprises.  

Sweet further concluded that improved moral standards and growth in church membership were also products of the revival. 

The early leader in the Kentucky Revival was James M'Gready, 

---

10James B. Finley, Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, or Pioneer Life in the West, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1855), p. 362. Finley later became a highly prominent Methodist leader in that area. The phrase "Day of Pentecost" refers to the Biblical record of Acts of Apostles, Chapter 2, in which the visual and aural appearance of the Holy Spirit is recorded and three thousand are converted in one day. 

11Beardsley, History of American Revivals, p. 99. This was a national observation, but because Logan County was the central western focal point, the analysis would have special application in that region.

12Story of Religion in America, pp. 333-34.
whose influence was strongest between 1797 and 1805. In his book on the camp meeting, Charles Johnson observed that the story of the "seed time of the camp meeting is inextricably connected with one man—the fiery Presbyterian minister, James McGready." Johnson gave M'Gready major credit for the origins of the revival. Catherine C. Cleveland, whose study is probably one of the more complete ones on the revival, said that its origins could best be understood:

...by a study of the men who roused the indifferent Christians from their lethargy and directed the revival which ensued. These leaders were earnest, enthusiastic young men whom no hardship could daunt. Day after day they labored to break the shell of lifeless formality... and to reach the young people and those who made no pretense to orthodox Christianity.

Cleveland found that "the central figure was... James McGready." The name, "Revival of 1800," was earned because in 1800, the revival's influence extended "beyond the bounds of McGready's charge and its

---


14 Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 30-60.

15 Great Revival in the West, p. 37. All subsequent quotations are taken from the dissertation printing of 1916.

16 Ibid.
influence began to be felt through the Cumberland country and beyond."

Current evaluations of James M'Gready run the gamut from unfairness to overworked panegyrical; a few are objective. He is called a "raucous, shouting preacher, indifferent to the restraints of his church . . . ."  

William Warren Sweet describes M'Gready's personal appearance as "exceedingly uncouth . . . , with small piercing eyes, coarse tremulous voice, and so unusual was his general ugliness as to attract attention." But Nelson Blake noted that M'Gready was the initial great power in the Second Awakening. Blake wrote, "The Second Awakening revealed its true force only after it crossed the Appalachians. Its advance agent was the Presbyterian James McGready."


18 Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Early America, A Social and Intellectual History of the American People Through 1865 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), p. 248. Wish is one of the better social historians, but for this statement he gave no support, and the implication is that this was common knowledge.


More recently Walter B. Posey, the regional Presbyterian and Methodist historian, called M'Gready, "the force that changed and revitalized Western life." Lucien V. Rule, a local Presbyterian historian, spoke of spending months and years in research on James M'Gready. In his private manuscript Rule recorded this glowing description:

There was none like him in all the Great West. He stood alone as the towering giant of the Great Revival of 1800. . . . He was a Puritan in his burning censures of the wild revels of the frontier. His searching and stinging rebukes of sin pierced the human soul like a javelin. He believed with mind, heart and soul in the Word of God: that it could and would convince men of sin, of righteousness and coming Judgment. He believed as deeply in what Presbyterians call "Repentance unto Life." He had experienced it and he had no uncertain sound when he preached it. Neither Dante nor Milton ever exceeded him, nor Jonathan Edwards, in portraying the dire lot of lost souls. He had a burning imagination and his word pictures were indeed drawn and delivered with a "Tongue of Fire." 22

When all is evaluated, however, propriety allows the view that James M'Gready was an unusually successful frontier evangelist. Through

21 The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest; 1778-1838 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952), p. 29.

22 Lucien V. Rule, private manuscript, first page. This set of manuscript paging was found in the private files of Mr. Rule for the writer by Mrs. Rule of Goshen, Kentucky. Rule was a member of the Filson Club (historical society) of Louisville, Kentucky, and served as chairman of the Historical Committee of the Synod of Indiana, Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. He passed away in 1948. Much of his historical file material has been deposited with the Filson Club, but none seems to deal with James M'Gready. This manuscript seems to be a continuation of two articles written and published for the Oldham Era (LaGrange, Oldham County, Kentucky), July 11, 1941, and July 18, 1941, dealing with James M'Gready.
the power of the spoken word he strongly influenced his congregations and the communities where he labored. He was independent of mind and method. He introduced the planned camp meeting where both his messages and those of his fellow shirt-sleeve ministers had telling effect. Most Protestant denominations in every part of the nation adopted and extensively used this revival method.

Entering the frontier of Kentucky, M'Gready found conditions that he believed called for immediate reform. The result of his labor was the beginning of a revival that one religious observer evaluated as follows:

Upon the whole, this revival in the west was the most extraordinary that ever visited the Church of Christ, and was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion was at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature was necessary to arrest the attention of a wicked and skeptical people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream. This great work of God did do it. It confounded infidelity and vice into silence, and brought number beyond calculation under the influence of experimental religion and practical piety.  

M'Gready's influence is difficult to determine objectively. Nevertheless, if a man can be termed successful when his hopes and aspirations

---


24 James B. Finley, Autobiography, pp. 368-69. Roscoe C. Buley pointed out the difficulty in measuring revival effectiveness. Regardless of number of converts or of churches established, the cultural and moral force exacted in the lives of participants is most intricate in its effects and therefore almost impossible to define properly. The Old Northwest; Pioneer Period, 1815-1840 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1960), 1, p. 418.
are realized, then M'Gready was a success. Posey found that this frontier evangelist set in motion forces "which within three years completely modified and transformed the spiritual life of Kentucky and Tennessee."  

Contributions of James M'Gready

Basically James M'Gready is credited with three major contributions: (1) his belief in and use of revivalistic preaching techniques, (2) his influence upon the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and (3) the innovation of the planned camp meeting.

Revivalistic preaching. As a revival speaker, M'Gready was reported to be quite successful. Indeed, Sweet called him the "first great Presbyterian frontier revivalist." His belief in public address as a medium of disseminating religious truth allowed him to make free use of the platform. He was a Bible-oriented preacher, rarely using quotations from secular authorities or involved chains of laic testimony. He believed in a personal retributive God and preached both of a literal Heaven and an eternal Hell. He believed these doctrines so completely that no language was too strong when the object was to convert. One Cumberland Presbyterian publication said of him: "Few persons have made a deeper, wider, more permanent impression upon the people of

25Posey, Presbyterian Church in Southwest, p. 23.

26Sweet, Revivalism in America, p. 122.
the great interior valley than James M'Gready."

In 1795, the settlements in Kentucky were divided between northern and southern geographical sections. To the north the settlers clustered about such towns as Paris and Lexington. In the south, the Cumberland region embraced Southern Kentucky and Middle Tennessee including the area west of the Cumberland mountain, bordered on the north by the Green River and extending indefinitely to the south. The area between the northern population clusters and the southern settlements was a virtual wilderness. M'Gready's work and greatest influence was in the Cumberland, which was sometimes known as the Green River country, after the state line was established dividing Kentucky and Tennessee.

Cumberland Presbyterian Church. M'Gready is remembered by the Cumberland Presbyterians as one who during the Carolina years (1790-1795) and the Cumberland years (1796-1807) taught young men

---

27 J. Berrien Lindsley, "Sources and Sketches of Cumberland Presbyterian History: No. XI, James M'Gready, His Character and Work," The Theological Medium, VIII(1877) #3, p. 294. Lindsley's articles on Cumberland sources began in 1875 and ran continuously until October, 1879. They are one of the best starting places for early historical materials dealing with the revival.

revival preaching philosophy. J. Berrien Lindsley wrote:

In the Transylvania and Cumberland Presbyteries [Kentucky], it is very evident that he was the guide and instructor of the large body of men thrust into the Master's vineyard by the great revival. Even after many of these became the framers and fathers of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, they still looked upon him in this light. Nothing need be added to this statement to make the verdict true, that few, if any, among theological professors have exerted greater influence upon the ministry of the American Church than has James M'Gready.\textsuperscript{29}

The Cumberland Presbyterians arose as a result of needs and standards for ministerial education. Formed in 1810, this denomination was intensely revival minded. Springing from the dissolved Cumberland Presbytery of the Kentucky Synod, they refused to recognize Synod authority and became a separate denomination. Although M'Gready made his peace with the Synod in 1807, the founders of the Cumberland denomination always looked upon him as their "spiritual father." John Vant Stephens, Professor of Church History at both Lebanon Theological Seminary (Cumberland Presbyterian) and at Lane Theological Seminary after the reunion of 1910,\textsuperscript{30} wrote in his study of the beginnings of the Cumberland group that:

The Rev. James McGready, the father of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, remained in the Presbyterian Church, just as John Wesley, the Father of Methodism, remained in

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{30}For details of this reunion in Presbyterian ranks, see Stephens, The Organic Union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Cincinnati: The Lane Seminary Building, 1943).
the Church of England. Mr. McGready took very little interest
in the Council, and declined to enter an Independent Presbytery,
though to the end of his life he was in sympathy with the
Independent movement. 31

Sweet saw the Cumberland defection as part of a revolt against
Calvinistic orthodoxy which included the Cumberlands arising from the
preaching of McGready; the Christian movement of Bourbon County,
Kentucky, under Barton Warren Stone; and the Western Virginia effort
of the reformers, Thomas and Alexander Campbell. He concluded that
"all of them arose in an atmosphere of highly emotional revivalism,
and all were conscientious attempts to meet more adequately the
religious needs of the new west." 32 Of the three, the Cumberland
Presbyterians were characterized by more emotionalized revivalism.
The others preached reform of basic Christianity in doctrine and
organization.

Peter Cartwright felt that his denomination, the Methodists, and
the Cumberland Presbyterians received the major share of the converts

31 John Vant Stephens, Genesis of the Cumberland Presbyterian
Church (Cincinnati: Lane Seminary Building, 1941), p. 72.


33 For a general history of the Stone and Campbell movements,
see Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, The Disciples of
Christ, A History (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1948),
pp. 93-285. Both Stone and Campbell argued for a return to New
Testament authority, practice, and church organization in defiance of
denominational creed and synodical authority. The movement
emphasized conversion, but highly endorsed basic changes in practice
and thought of prevailing religious communions.
from the Revival of 1800. In his Religion and the Development of American Culture, Sweet held that those churches which met the frontier needs and challenges most effectively "were those which utilized revivalistic methods."

M'Gready predominantly was concerned with converting souls, to the displacement of basic church reform or doctrinal controversy. Perhaps this evangelistic concern best explains his reason for not entering a schismatic Presbytery and also the ultimate return of most of the Cumberland Presbyterian body to the Presbyterian Church. Fundamental and lasting differences did not exist, while issues of expediency did.

The planned camp meeting. Peter G. Mode has written that "the first four decades of the nineteenth century was an era of almost continual turmoil of local revivals, because it was dominated by the institution of the camp meeting." Spontaneous camp meetings or services "on the ground" had been known for many years, perhaps even for the whole history of Christianity. But the West provided a need

34 W. P. Strickland (ed.), The Autobiography of a Circuit Rider, Peter Cartwright (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1857), p. 48. Cartwright was an early Logan County convert, possibly under influence from M'Gready, who rose to high standing in the Methodist Church. He was an eyewitness of M'Gready and became an able preacher in the revival.

35 Religion in the Development of American Culture, p. 146.

36 Frontier Spirit in American Christianity, p. 56.

37 See William Speer, The Great Revival of 1800 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1872), pp. 1-40. They were held
which the camp meeting peculiarly answered. Distance tended to negate the attendance of settlers at meetings; small cabins limited hospitality, while the need for sociability and mass worship still remained.

Abundant camping areas naturally led to the settler who brought his family in a wagon loaded with shelter and food. But it remained for M'Gready to see the possibility of such meetings over a several day period of time. In July, 1800, at Gasper River meeting house the first "planned camp meeting" was held—a meeting for which M'Gready had sent out invitations over the whole Kentucky frontier. His meetings had the peculiar flavor of uniting denominational hands, both Presbyterian and Methodist ministers working together. This meeting was a "sensational success" according to Charles A. Johnson, the historian of the camp meeting. He recorded its effect on the religious patterns of the West:

The sensational success of Gasper River quickly led to the staging of other camp meetings by Presbyterian and Methodist preachers who had marveled at its power. Encampment after encampment drew huge crowds. The pioneers, now awakened to their need of religion, were enthralled by this new religious device. With its sociability, its simplicity, its emotional magnetism transmitted through four or five days of fervent oratory, shouting, group singing, and the inspired prayer of preachers and worshippers alike, the camp meeting found a ready acceptance in the settled areas of Kentucky and Tennessee.

in the Redstone area of Pennsylvania where M'Gready was educated. Riverside, open-air services are noted in the early church era. See Acts 16:13.

38 Sweet, Revivalism in America, p. 122.
40 Ibid.
Later camp meetings came to be known more for the lack of sanctity than for its presence. The pragmatic advantages offered by this method of evangelism, however, made it almost a permanent part of the American scene. Mode pointed out its advantages to the frontier minister:

... it probably offered the most practical solution of the urgent religious needs of the undeveloped frontier. It fitted readily into the itinerant system of Methodism. It protected earnest but untrained preachers drafted by the urgency of the times, from the strain of constant ministry to a single congregation. A mere handful of preachers were able to distribute their services over a vast area that otherwise would have no spiritual ministration whatever.\footnote{Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit in American Christianity}, pp. 54-55.}

For M'Gready and other camp meeting speakers, the innovation of the camp meeting proved a great advantage. Here could be gathered thousands of persons, under advantageous circumstances with time to establish a mental "set" and allowing religious teaching to become concentrated as well as high pressure.

\textbf{Purpose of Study}

The success of M'Gready probably rests upon his ability as a public speaker. His period of outstanding speech effectiveness was relatively short, covering approximately the years 1797-1805. After the revival and after his semi-schismatic relationship with the Cumberland Presbytery, many of his own body held him suspect, and
his success was less pronounced. By his own admission he did not have unusual power after the middle of the first decade of the nineteenth century. This study attempts to analyze those qualities in the speaking technique of James M'Gready which contributed to his success in the field of religious public address in the period from 1797 to 1805. The study also attempts to discover and analyze those elements inherent in speaker, audience, and speaking situation which lent support to his message. Further, an attempt is made to analyze both the logical-emotive proofs of the message and the language techniques which M'Gready adopted as a platform communicator.

II. MAJOR SOURCES

Primary historical materials for the life and work of James M'Gready are becoming increasingly scarce. However, many existing secondary sources are based upon sources no longer extant. In 1846, some thirty years after M'Gready's death, William Henry Foote reported that "there has been no memoir of this man given to the world; but it is not right for the church community to let his memory perish." The fact that James M'Gready was sympathetic to the Cumberland

\[42^\text{M'Gready died in 1817 but was an active minister until his death.}\]

denomination led to a certain odium being attached to him in the parent body, and because he did not join with the Cumberland group, he has not received proper historical attention from either society. The view of Foote in 1846 is still true in 1964.

However, certain letters of M'Gready are preserved in the libraries of the University of Chicago (Durrett Collection), the Presbyterian Historical Society of Philadelphia, and the Western Theological Seminary of Pittsburgh. Eight letters and two articles have been found.

Sermon material is more readily available. Following the death of her father, the eldest daughter of M'Gready gave her father's sermon manuscripts to James Smith of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The manuscripts were for M'Gready's personal use and not prepared for publication.

44 Robert Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky; with a Preliminary Sketch of the Churches in the Valley of Virginia (New York: Robert Carter, 1847). This is an example of one of the more valid studies of early church history in Kentucky written by a Presbyterian in which praise for M'Gready is outweighed by an abundance of material dealing with every weakness that his life evidenced. An obvious attempt is evident to cheapen his life and efforts.

45 Letter of James Smith to Archibald Cameron (May 13, 1843). This is now a part of the Durrett Collection at the University of Chicago.

46 James M'Gready, The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious M'Gready, ed. James Smith (Louisville: W. W. Worsley, 1831), p. vi. Smith acknowledged that the manuscripts were for private use. They show evidence of specific locations or audience applications which would not be desirable for reading audiences, indicating that Smith did not alter the original wording.
In the introduction to the *Works*, Smith stated that the published M'Gready sermons were chosen from many manuscripts. "Most of the sermons, in this volume," Smith said, however, "were preached by the Author during the revival . . . although some of them were slightly altered by him, at a subsequent period . . . ." Smith apparently did not tamper with the M'Gready manuscripts, either by editorial remarks, deletion or addition of words, or paragraphs. Indeed, the opposite is evident. M'Gready's involved style emerges, and his strict Calvinism is stated without editorial comment. The Calvinism brought criticism to James Smith, a Cumberland Presbyterian, between 1831 and 1833, but he did not change his editorial policy in the second volume, published in 1833. In view of the fact that Smith was working on a major publication, his *History of the Christian Church*, at the time he edited the *Works*, it appears that his editing consisted of the preparation of an introduction, a table of contents, and such transcription as required for typography. He probably considered M'Gready's *Works* a desirable addend to his *History*, an apologetic treatment of the events leading to the establishment of the Cumberland denomination.

---


49 Smith, *History of the Christian Church from Its Origin to the Present Time; compiled from Various Authors, including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Drawn from Authentic Documents* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835).
M'Gready's laborious preparation of his sermon manuscripts shows an evident intent to deliver his remarks in the prepared form. One can reliably state, therefore, that the ideas presented in the Works are those of the frontier evangelist. Moreover, the language of the sermons appears authentic, for the sermons not only illustrate M'Gready's pattern of thought, but also his stylistic characteristics. It can reasonably be assumed that the forty-two published manuscript sermons of M'Gready are reliable textual material for a speech study.


Fortunately, the educational career of James M'Gready can be followed through a study of the sources and conclusions of Dwight Guthrie whose John McMillan, Apostle of Presbyterianism in the West is both recent and objective. Combined with the records of Redstone Presbytery (deposited with the Philadelphia office of the Presbyterian Historical Society), they give a record of M'Gready's Pennsylvania education days from approximately 1782 to 1790.


The period of his Carolina career (1790-1795) is best reported by William Henry Foote in his *Sketches of North Carolina*. Foote recorded that his sources were largely from three men who were personally acquainted with M’Gready. One of them, Ebenezer B. Currie, was a pupil in the home of M’Gready and was able to observe his study habits and ministerial accomplishments. Foote says of them, that they "all speak of things they saw and heard and knew." Therefore, the study of William Foote is a major source for the 1790-1795 period. Unfortunately, the records of the Orange Presbytery, with which M’Gready affiliated in North Carolina, were destroyed.

When James M’Gready moved into Logan County, Kentucky, and the revival began in his churches (1797), it then spread through the entire Kentucky and Tennessee region. Beginning on January 7, 1800, the *Tennessee Gazette* was published in Nashville (about forty miles from M’Gready). Not one single reference between 1800 and 1805 has

---

52 This is the only treatment of length that attempts to trace with any completeness the life of M’Gready. However, a large part of the chapter is devoted to the influence of the Revival of 1800 in North Carolina.

53 Others were Reverend James Hall, D.D., and S. E. McCorkle, D.D., who were the prominent authorities for the events in the revival. Both were prominent in North Carolina Presbyterian history during the period 1800-1820.

54 See Extracts from the minutes of the synods of Carolina and North Carolina pertaining to the Presbytery of Orange, 1788-1826, p. 1. This manuscript is in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. One volume remains of records dating from 1795, the year M’Gready moved west.
been found in it bearing upon the Revival of 1800 in general or James M'Gready in particular. Other Kentucky newspapers were equally lacking in religious information. In his study of Barton Warren Stone, another Kentucky revival participant, Evan Ulrey found that the Northern Kentucky newspapers confined themselves to foreign news or nonreligious items of interest. This was certainly true of the Gazette which allowed the most important local religious event in a decade to pass without a single reference.

Regretfully, one significant source of information on the life and preaching of James M'Gready is presently lost. One of the first schools established by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was the Lebanon Theological Seminary at Lebanon, Tennessee. Here were deposited many manuscript records dealing with the Revival of 1800, written by personal acquaintances of M'Gready, members of his congregations, and others with whom he associated in the Cumberland Presbytery prior to his withdrawal in 1807. Apparently, the manuscripts which Smith used for publishing M'Gready's Works were deposited here also. The school continued until 1909, after which it

55 The Gazette was a four-page weekly. The Library of Congress has an almost complete file which was reviewed. Four Kentucky papers publishing some five hundred issues between 1788 and 1804 did not mention the revivals. See Walter Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 25.

merged with Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Lane continued until 1932 when it affiliated with McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois. No record of these materials nor of any Lebanon Seminary papers can be found there. Extensive correspondence to Cumberland schools, state and local historical repositories, as well as Presbyterian sources has given no indication that they still exist.

In 1835, shortly after publishing the two-volume set of M'Gready's Works, James Smith published his History of the Christian Church . . . Drawn from Authentic Documents. Using the documents at Lebanon, he compiled what is largely an apology for the existence of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church as a separate Presbyterian denomination. Consequently, he focused attention on the 1800 revival as the Cumberland body sprang from these events. Prior to publication, a review committee of the Cumberland Presbyterian General Assembly passed on the accuracy of the Smith work. As Benjamin McDonnell said, "... most of whom [review board] had been eyewitnesses of these great events . . . . Their report indorses the accuracy of this

A correspondence check of significant historical organizations and theological libraries in the region failed to locate any single set of manuscripts known to have been a part of this resource fund. This indicates that they have been disposed of as one lot.

History of the Christian Church.
portion of the history in every particular." Primarily McDonnell's
statement applies to those events surrounding M'Gready's meetings
from 1797 to 1801. Even recognizing the secondary nature of the Smith
history, its authority for this period seems substantial.

A second history, published in 1888 by Benjamin W. McDonnell,
History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, utilized the same
primary sources. Further, some of his sources appear to be men
who had comprised the Smith review board who later added to the fund
of primary materials at Lebanon. One of these, illustrative of the
sources which McDonnell used, was the autobiography of Robert Bell.
Bell had endorsed the Smith history and McDonnell says: "There is in
my possession a manuscript autobiography of the Rev. Robert Bell.
He was present at all McGready's sacramental meetings from 1797 to
1800."61

These two histories contain materials which pay unusual interest
to James M'Gready and the Kentucky Revival. Where the histories
quote participants, they are primary sources for this study, and the
conclusions derived from this evidence appear to be reliable.

59Benjamin W. McDonnell, History of the Cumberland
Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the
Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), p. 16.

60Ibid.

61History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 17.
Another body of significant materials is found in the records of
the Transylvania Presbytery, with which M'Gready affiliated when he
arrived in Kentucky in 1796, and those of the Cumberland Presby-
tery through 1806. These records deal with his official activities
during the revival period and, with the records of the Kentucky Synod,
show the progressive declining nature of his relations with
Presbyterian authority until 1807.

Wherever desirable, personal letters and eyewitness accounts
of the revival and M'Gready's preaching are introduced.

This study is divided into two parts. The first portion attempts
to trace the development of the speaker through his education and to
indicate his work during the revival period. The second portion
attempts to analyze those factors of speaker, speech, setting, and
audience which contributed to his success as a public speaker. The

62 William Warren Sweet, The Presbyterians, 1783-1840, A
Collection of Source Materials, Vol. II of Religion on the American
Sweet calls these records, extracted in this volume, "the most
important single document for the history of early western Presbyterian-
ism." For all practical purposes the records are complete in this
volume, as only the normal presbytery business which has no historical
significance is withheld.

63 Minutes of the "Original" Cumberland Presbytery, 1802-1806,
Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Print-
ing Co., 1906). This is a centennial publication, but even now is quite
rare.

64 The Synod released M'Gready from censure when he made
proper acknowledgments in 1807.
fundamental question is, "What factors in these four areas were significant in the pulpit speaking and pulpit success of James M'Gready?"
CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

The M'Gready family formed a part of the Scotch-Irish immigrant tide that flooded the colonies at the rate of 12,000 a year between 1720 and 1776. By the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Scotch-Irish totaled one-sixth of the colonial population, lending their peculiar strength to the American matrix, according to Frederick Jackson Turner, who said:

Followers of John Knox, they had the contentious individualism and revolutionary temper that seem natural to Scotch Presbyterianism. They were brought up on the Old Testament, and in the doctrine of government by covenant or compact.

1. PARENTAGE AND EARLY YEARS

The tradition of the M'Gready family holds that James was born

---


in 1758 in Scotland and was brought to this country while a child. In direct contradiction, James Smith, historian for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, said that M'Gready was born in North Carolina in 1763 "of responsible parents, who had emigrated from Ireland." Davidson, a Presbyterian historian, recorded M'Gready's birth near the Monongahela River in Western Pennsylvania in 1763. These conflicting accounts all suggest that his parents were Scotch-Irish, newly migrated to America. Furthermore, they apparently moved from the seacoast to inland Pennsylvania to Guilford County, North Carolina, in the years 1763-1770.

Foote reported that the M'Greadys settled near Greensboro about 1767 in the congregation of David Caldwell, the famous preacher-educator of Buffalo congregation. Foote continued, "Here James passed part of his boyish days, and part of his youth, in such labor,

4 Lucien V. Rule, "Glimpses of Rev. James McGready, Thunderbolt of God," The Oldham Era /LaGrange, Oldham County, Kentucky/, July 11, 1941, p. 6. Rule's informational source was Mrs. J. A. Priest, a great granddaughter of James M'Gready, who took an active interest in the history of the revivalist. Her information was apparently taken from family Bible records and family papers. Rule quoted a letter from her dated February 11, 1941.

5 James Smith, History of the Christian Church from Its Origin to the Present Time: Compiled from Various Authors, Including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), p. 561.

as persons of no very extensive property were, in those years, accustomed to in Carolina."  

Samuel M. Rankin, whose history of Buffalo congregation is based on such evidence as gravestones, deeds of trust, and recollections, gave McGready's parents as James and Jean McGready who located near Greensboro about 1778, recently arrived from Pennsylvania.

The first seventeen years in the life of James McGready are obscure. One difference between young McGready and his fellows may have been hinted through his own comment, recorded by Smith and Foote, that he never omitted private prayer from the age of seven, that he had refrained from "outbreaking" sins, profane swearing,

---

7William Henry Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, Historical and Biographical, Illustrative of the Principles of a Portion of Her Early Settlers (New York: Robert Carter, 1846), p. 368. Foote has one of the better biographies. His sources are for the most part long-time Carolina residents and eyewitnesses of the events which he records. Buffalo congregation consisted of conservative Presbyterians in distinction from the Alamance group which was liberal, following the revivalistic tendencies of Whitefield and the Great Awakening issues. Both congregations were congenial in relations, with Caldwell serving as the unifying link. It is rather a paradox that the parents of James McGready may be assumed to have been conservative toward revivalism. Sallie W. Stockard, The History of Guilford County, North Carolina (Knoxville: Gaut-Ogden Co., 1902), p. 117.

8Rankin recorded that they bought a farm on Brush Creek. The children of the union were William, John, James, David, Samuel, Moses, Juda, Aaron, Israel, and Hannah. History of Buffalo Presbyterian Church (Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone & Co., 1934), p. 48. The author does not reveal his source and is inconsistent in his factual record concerning McGready. Later he recorded that the McGready family arrived in North Carolina soon after 1763, p. 151.
intoxication, Sabbath-breaking, and other excesses. As a result of these unique habits, he looked upon himself as "sanctified" from birth. Such evidence strongly suggests religious parents and a church-oriented youth. At the age of seventeen he united with the Presbyterian Church, a process which required acknowledgment of belief in the doctrines of the Bible (a rigid belief in its historical and doctrinal authority after careful study), of the formulary, and the Westminster Assembly Catechism. The Catechism was regularly and reverently taught to the children of all faithful Presbyterian communicants.

Soon after David Caldwell arrived in Guilford County in 1767, he opened a school to augment his income. Perhaps M'Gready studied under Caldwell or tutors who studied in Caldwell Academy. If true,


11Foote records that Caldwell had fifty to sixty students in his academy at times. As he was in operation during the period that M'Gready was in his primary school years and that he served the congregation with which the M'Gready family affiliated indicate that M'Gready's education would have been the ministerial concern of Caldwell, even if the teacher of Buffalo did not personally serve as the instructor. One could assume that no teacher would have been selected for M'Gready that did not meet the standards of David Caldwell. See Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 235. Ethel S. Arnett states definitely that M'Gready was a student under Caldwell prior to the Pennsylvania period, but gives no source. Greensboro, North Carolina, The County Seat of Guilford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), p. 119.
then in 1791 when M'Gready returned and preached to Caldwell's students, the prior relationship explains the ready acceptance of a former student. Nevertheless, his early education tended to form serious religious convictions and to prepare M'Gready for more advanced theological and classical studies.

Soon after M'Gready united with the Presbyterian Church, a visit from an uncle who had settled in Pennsylvania provided new direction for the future evangelist. Feeling that the young man showed promise, this uncle asked permission for James to accompany him to Pennsylvania in order to enroll in the new log college seminary of Washington County, Pennsylvania. Accepting the invitation dates for M'Gready's birth, he was just reaching his majority and moved to Pennsylvania, there associating with the Presbyterian Redstone Presbytery.

Presbyterian Conditions; Advantages and Disadvantages

The period immediately after the Revolutionary War found

---

12 Guilford County, largely on the reputation of David Caldwell, achieved a new record for reasonably high colonial educational standards. Apparently both Quaker and Presbyterian educational facilities appeared even in colonial days. Caldwell established his classical school in 1766 or 1767, demanding finished grammar students. Stockard, *History of Guilford County, North Carolina*, p. 78.

M'Gready's denomination with a variety of strengths and weaknesses.

Walter Posey stated:

The Presbyterian Church emerged from the American Revolution as the best organized and the strongest of all Protestant churches in America. From two standpoints it was in a most favorable position for westward expansion and growth. It had been a frontier church from the moment it was introduced to the colonies; and it was essentially missionary in character. Its government was readily adaptable to frontier needs and demands, and, in order to carry forward its program, few adjustments in organization were necessary . . . . By the absence of an overhead authority the local church was a strong unit, and this separateness or individuality appealed to a democratic folk whose spirit was congenial with liberty.  

At the same time that they possessed structural advantages, Presbyterian doctrines and ministerial customs tended to counter such positive factors.

The first major disadvantage was the lack of a theology which satisfied the liberty consciousness of the settler. In his study of


15 Walter Brownlow Posey, The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest: 1778-1838 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952), p. 124. This study deals with the Southwest as frontier and combines recent findings with objectivity. The contextual setting of this summary indicates that the republican organizational system of frontier Presbyterians was hampered by traditionalism far more than the organizations of either Methodist or Baptist groups.
Jonathan Edwards, Perry Miller pointed out that the dictums of strict Calvinism required readjustments in pastoral preaching techniques and religious philosophy to appeal to a mass audience. E. B. Crisman, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, noted that the Calvinist preaching in this period was "cold, technical preaching manifesting but a small amount of interest for the sinner's case." Miller pointed out:

In the realm of objective fact, salvation was conceived by the Puritans as the transfer of a balance on the divine ledger, wherein God arbitrarily accepted another's payment for the debt which all men owed Him by the sin of Adam, and condemned those for whom the debt was not paid, though in life there might be little to distinguish one from another. The Calvinist sermon on justification or salvation required tedious argumentation and involved chains of scriptural quotations. For the poorly educated and practical backwoodsman, this preaching was unsatisfactory. It was not altogether satisfying for the tidewater colonist either, for Harvey Wish has pointed out that the New England sermons often left considerable hope for salvation by directing the

16 Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959), pp. 133-64. The chapter on "Revivalism" points out the gradual accommodations made by Presbyterian, Puritan, and Congregational Calvinist groups to meet the needs of religious communicants and the mass mind.


18 Jonathan Edwards, p. 75.
listener toward good living—indicative of possible salvation—and by seeking emotionally induced "conversion experiences."  

Ministerial custom also hindered growth. The Presbyterian minister was called by invitation to serve one or more churches. He did little circuit work, choosing to remain close to his own congregation. As frontier homes were often miles apart, this practice tended to weaken seriously the Presbyterian ability to "compete for souls." Further, Posey has pointed out that the average Presbyterian minister had become static and needed the stirring of a genuine revivalist to overcome an almost natural lethargy.

For these reasons or to answer these necessities, the frontier presbyteries became testing grounds for the Presbyterians or, as Sweet has pointed out, the whole region between the Alleghenies and the western plains became an "experimental laboratory" in which to test new methods. One such testing ground was Redstone Presbytery.

---


20 Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 23.

21 William Warren Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 97. Developing this point, Sweet says: "East of the mountains, Old World patterns to a large degree persisted; in the middle west new patterns emerged, and the religious bodies which met the problems of the west most adequately by developing new patterns were destined not only to be the largest but also the most typically American churches in the nation."
Redstone Presbytery

Almost from its birth, Redstone Presbytery attempted to provide a ministry for the trans-Allegheny frontier. Within months of presbyterial organization, schools were established, designed to train young ministers. Dwight Guthrie concluded that ministerial education "must have been one of the important problems . . . discussed at the organizational meeting of Redstone Presbytery." 22

The Presbytery history notes that:

The outpouring of the Spirit had led young men to consider the duty of preaching Christ. But there were no available facilities for education. The pastors though burdened with the labor needed to help support their families with the care of planting & fostering the infant churches in the wilderness & looking after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, heroically undertook this new work of educating the young. 23

Although the first seven members of the Presbytery were College of New Jersey graduates who valued a college-educated ministry, they undertook to provide an adequate education in the West. 24

After the Revolution all denominations urgently needed a

---

22 William Wilson McKinney (ed.), The Presbyterian Valley; Two Hundred Years of Presbyterianism in the Upper Ohio Valley (Pittsburgh: Davis & Warde, Inc., 1958), p. 33. This cooperative history is one of the better sources for Redstone's part in Ohio Valley Presbyterianism.

23 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten), pp. 9-10.

24 McKinney (ed.), Presbyterian Valley, p. 18. At the time of publication of this text, McKinney was president of Presbyterian Historical Society of the Upper Ohio Valley. He is an authority on Presbyterian history in the Pittsburgh environs.
ministerial supply. Until 1784, three years after the first Redstone meeting, there was no theological seminary in America.25 Harvard and Yale had professorships of theology and concentrated on training the ministry, but ministerial educational facilities were seriously lacking. Sweet reported that the great majority of the American Congregational and Presbyterian ministers "... who received any special instruction in theology were dependent upon the efforts of private teachers."26 This private tutor method was an arrangement between a practicing minister and a student, while the action in Redstone was a distinct Presbytery effort to meet their pressing problem. In his study of presbyterial schools, William Shewmaker made these distinctions between their philosophy and other training methods:

1. This education attempted to meet the need for general education with theology the crowning feature of the curriculum.

2. They were a midway element between the private instructor form of training and the regular college. "Private colleges,

25Jesse Johnson, "Early Theological Education West of the Alleghanies," Papers of the American Society of Church History, Second Series, V, p. 123. New Brunswick Seminary opened in 1784 in New York City. Harvard and Yale both had professorships of divinity by 1767, while other professorships in eastern schools were in practice chairs of theology.

26Sweet, Religion in American Culture, p. 175. The log college was a direct effort to counter this need. Such schools were private with the Presbyterians taking an active lead in such efforts. Numbered among these schools were the Neshaminy school of William Tennent, John Blair's at Fagg's Manor, and James Findley's at Nottingham, Maryland, as well as others, including the Redstone school.
with departments of divinity, might not be an inappropriate description. . . .”

3. They taught the theology course to all enrolled, indicating complete emphasis on preacher preparation.

No evidence establishes the date of M'Gready's arrival in Western Pennsylvania, but Guthrie found the earliest record of his presence in 1782. It appears, therefore, that either the education decision made by Redstone had been anticipated for some months or that the uncle of James M'Gready had started for North Carolina late in the year 1781. In either event, he encouraged the young man to travel to Pennsylvania before the schools actually existed or before the quality of their education could be determined. M'Gready made a wise educational choice and it appears that Redstone felt the same, for Smith, the Redstone historian, said: "If Mr. Smith, of Buffalo, and Mr. M'Millan and the Old Presbytery of Redstone, had done nothing more than train such a man as M'Gready, they had not lived

27 William Orpheus Shewmaker, "The Training of the Protestant Ministry in the United States of America, Before the Establishment of Theological Seminaries," Papers of the American Society of Church History, Second Series, VI (1921), pp. 157-58. As in the case of the schools of John McMillan and Joseph Smith, these schools were often the beginnings of later colleges. The establishment of colleges, offering broader educational foundations, determined the deterioration of these academy colleges.

28 Ibid. Shewmaker notes that while theology was taught to all enrollees, such instruction was the "crowning feature" of the potential minister's education. See p. 157.
in vain."

II. M'GREADY'S ADVANCED EDUCATION

John McMillan of Chartiers

John McMillan has been named the "Apostle of Presbyterianism in the West." McKinney, a Presbyterian historian, accepted the designation, while Ezra Hall Gillett called McMillan the "patriarch of the Presbytery, the father of Cannonsburg Academy and Jefferson College, impetuous and almost irresistible in his appeals and denunciations." McKinney made the following appraisal of this man:

Endowed with tireless energy, resolute determination, and unconquerable will power, he used his remarkable gifts of body, mind, and soul for the glory of God and the advancement of Presbyterianism.

---

29 Smith, Old Redstone, p. 364. Joseph Smith, the author of this volume, is the grandson of the teacher at Redstone.


31 McKinney calls the Guthrie work "definitive" and accepts the fact of the title. See McKinney's Chapter 12 in The Presbyterian Valley, p. 296.


33 McKinney, The Presbyterian Valley, p. 21. McMillan not only was an outstanding Presbytery leader, evangelist, and private teacher, but he assumed the presidency of Jefferson College at its opening in 1794 and continued to serve his church with distinction until his death in 1833.
The influence of McMillan on James M'Gready seems almost impossible to overemphasize. From the standpoints of personality, public address technique, theology, and dedication, the resemblance between teacher and student is remarkable.

John McMillan, D.D. was the second man to stay "upon the ground" or to settle within the grounds of Redstone. He had been educated at the log college of John Blair and Robert Smith in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, before entering Princeton in 1770. After graduation (1772), he was licensed by the Presbytery of New Castle in 1774 at the age of twenty-two and first visited the Redstone district in 1775.

In the files of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, McMillan's autobiography shows that prior to his residence in Redstone, he made plans to provide ministerial education west of the mountains.
McMillan said:

Accordingly I collected a few who gave evidence of piety and instructed them in the knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, some of whom became useful, and others eminent ministers of the gospel—viz Turner Hughes, John Brice, James McGready, William Swan, Samuel Porter, and Thomas Marquis, all these I boarded and taught without any compensation, except about forty dollars which Mr. Swan gave to my wife, after he was settled in the ministry. 38

Clarence E. Macartney eulogized the McMillan school as "one of the first theological seminaries, not only west of the mountains, but in the United States." 39

The exact date when John McMillan opened his school is still in question. The Presbytery accepted generally the view of J. I. Brownson, that it may have opened as early as 1780, but closed after two years when Thaddeus Dod opened his classical school at Ten Mile. Later evidence indicates that it probably opened in 1782, suggesting that James M'Gready was one of its first students, entering that year. 40 John McMillan probably continued to operate with a few in the hands of McMillan's successor at Chartiers, Mr. Leake. McMillan recorded that Smith said, "Though some men of piety and talents may go to a new country at first, yet if they are not careful to raise up others, the country will not be well supplied."

38 Ibid.


40 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten), p. 10.

students until 1785 when he discontinued operation in favor of the Smith school at Upper Buffalo.

**M'Gready's residence with McMillan.** The author of *Old Redstone* records that James M'Gready was "placed with Dr. McMillan, and obtained employment for a season as an assistant on the farm—a temporary arrangement, no doubt, until he could regularly begin his studies." This would also seem to be a convenient arrangement, beyond the consideration of finances, in view of McMillan's practice to examine his students for "evidence of piety." He did not know M'Gready, and the period of farm labor allowed time, first, to examine the young man's ability to continue in an advanced school and, secondly, to determine his "piety." M'Gready studied and worked on the McMillan farm from 1782 to 1785. It appears that until 1785,

---


43 Smith, *Old Redstone*, p. 361. Smith does not indicate how long this "season" was to last. Events that he records next in his narrative happened apparently in 1785, so the term must be used in a very loose sense. William Buell Sprague also comments on the residency with McMillan, but does not indicate how long this lasted. He does not, in fact, indicate that M'Gready studied with McMillan until after he studied with Smith. See *Annals of the American Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of Various Denominations, From the Early Settlement of the Country to the Close of the year Eighteen Hundred and fifty-five* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1858), III, p. 278.

44 Taken from volume of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Library of Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pennsylvania. The volume was found on the McMillan homestead. Further information is indicated later in the text.
McGready studied only with McMillan, working as a farm laborer to pay for his education. Though it is said that the young men who attended McMillan's first school were often boarded, lodged, and taught without charge, the example of McGready indicates that this denoted cash payment, with contributions of time and physical labor being expected of the young scholars.

McMillan's educational curriculum. John McMillan was admitted to the College of New Jersey in 1770 at the age of nineteen and graduated in 1772. Previously, he studied in the "log college" of Robert Smith, Pequea, Pennsylvania. After graduation he studied theology with Smith, until licensed to preach in 1774. As information regarding the early curriculum of the Chartiers school is scarce, a study of McMillan's own education reveals the educational system with which he was experienced.

McMillan had studied with Robert Smith at Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in a log college. Frederick Beasley, also a former student of Smith, described this study program as follows:

It was the custom of the school to require the pupils not merely to dip into the Latin and Greek classics, or pass in rapid transition from one to the other, by which means a very


superficial knowledge of any is obtained, but when once they had commenced an author, to read carefully and attentively the entire work . . . Latin was ^ habitual language of the school . . . When any class had advanced in its course the members of it were permitted to enter into voluntary competition for pre-eminence. 47

John McMillan's own experience with Smith indicates the quality of this educational philosophy. For admission to Princeton in 1769, the candidate had to: (a) translate Virgil and Cicero into English; (b) write correct, grammatical Latin; (c) translate any portion of the New Testament Gospels from Greek into Latin or English; and (d) solve basic arithmetic problems. McMillan entered as a sophomore.

John MacLean described the Princeton educational system. In many particulars it followed the example of European colleges:

The students are divided into four distinct classes, which are called Freshman, the Sophomore, the Junior, and the Senior. . . . The Freshman year is spent in the Latin and Greek languages, particularly in reading Horace, Cicero's orations, the Greek Testament, Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon's Cyropoedia. In the Sophomore year they still prosecute the study of languages, particularly Homer, Longinus, etc., and enter upon the mathematics. They continue their mathematical studies throughout the Junior year, and also pass through a course of natural and moral philosophy, metaphysics, chronology, etc.; and the greater number especially such as are educating for the service of the church are initiated into

47 Taken from his introduction to a volume of Stanhope Smith's sermons as cited in Guthrie, John McMillan, p. 12. Stanhope was one of the famous preaching sons of Robert Smith. See also Jacob Newton Beam, "Dr. Robert Smith's Academy at Pequea, Pennsylvania," Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society, VIII, pp. 145-61.

48 Guthrie, John McMillan, p. 188.
Hebrew... The Senior year is entirely employed in reviews and composition. They now revise the most improving parts of Latin and Greek Classics, part of the Hebrew Bible, and all the arts and sciences. The weekly course of disputation is continued which was also carried through the preceding year. They discuss two or three theses in a week, some in syllogistic and others in the forensic always being performed in the English.

Although the emphasis is obviously placed on classical language and philosophy, significant attention is paid to the classical speech writers and critics. McMillan had attended the College of New Jersey during the presidency of John Witherspoon. Even if he had not listened to the lectures on oratory or "eloquence," he probably was well acquainted with Witherspoon's views through the copies circulated by Princeton students, and could have taught James M'Gready from the unpublished lectures.

In April, 1787, some eighteen months after concluding his first study with John McMillan, James M'Gready passed the examinations of Redstone Presbytery in logic, moral philosophy, Latin, and Greek. Apparently M'Gready's training followed the general scheme of the

49 John MacLean, History of the College of New Jersey (Princeton: University Press, 1910), pp. 266-67. Guthrie observed that, in the early teaching period, McMillan had the students preparing for the ministry "follow as well as might be the course he had followed." John McMillan, p. 188.

50 The lectures of Witherspoon had been delivered first about the time of the Revolution, but were not published until 1802. However, Wilson B. Paul found that various students had copies or class notes which were circulated prior to publication. See Wilson B. Paul, "John Witherspoon's Theory and Practice of Public Speaking" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1940), pp. 1-15.
Princeton school. All of the men who examined M'Gready were College of New Jersey alumni, further suggesting that his education was examined critically and from a Princeton viewpoint.

A letter in the writer's possession from Dwight Guthrie of Grove City College, Pennsylvania, dated June 25, 1963. He states concerning texts used by McMillan, "If the exact texts used in that college from 1780 to 1800 are known then the answer is not far away. There was no abundance of texts in those days nor was there any inclination to depart from established practices."

Because of a fire, John McMillan was forced in 1780 to replenish his library with books. Some idea of the type of volumes that he would have considered desirable is given by the list of books approved for use in grammar schools of Transylvania Presbytery in 1795, a year before M'Gready arrived in the area. As the Kentucky men were of similar background, their choice would have been close to that of the Redstone educators.

"On the Latin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wittenhalls Grammar, --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screvellius Lexicon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Testament with Latin translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucian's Dialogues with Murphy's notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophon's Cyropaedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer's Iliad, 1st volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longinus upon the Sublime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennet's Roman Antiquities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potter's Greek Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmes' Rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dilworth's Arithmetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watts' Logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone's Euclid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair's Lectures on Eloquence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowth's English Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witherspoon's, Hutchinsons or Smith's Moral Phil. &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For transactions concerning the Transylvania school see William Warren Sweet, _The Presbyterians_, p. 148.
Recently, in the attic of the old McMillan home, there was found a volume which is significant in a study of M'Gready's education. The book is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, published approximately in 1750, which contains marginal notes of several of McMillan's students. On page 443 there is the inscription: "James McGready Legit hunc Librum in Decembro 1783 & nunc legit Dialogos Liciani, June 1785. James M'Gready read this book in December, 1783, and now reads the Dialogues of Lucius, June, 1785." Further, on page 153 is written: "James McGready finished Ovid's Metamorphoses, Feb. 4, A. D. 1784." These notations show that John McMillan followed the regimens of his former schools. Secondly, they indicate that, according to the standards of the Robert Smith school, M'Gready was an advanced student in Latin by the first of 1784 and was advancing into what was the freshman year studies of the College of New Jersey. This brought him into the studies of Cicero's orations, Horace, and perhaps other classical rhetorical writers, if the Princeton program was continued.

*Joseph Smith of Buffalo*

According to William McKinney, Joseph Smith began the

---

52 This volume is now in the library of Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pennsylvania.

53 Ibid.
"first school for ministers in Western Pennsylvania." It is probably correct that Smith's kitchen school was the only school open in 1785, which is the date of McKinney's source, but McMillan had been training young men for the ministry prior to Smith's opening. Further, it is true that M'Gready entered the school of Smith in late 1785 and continued with him for approximately eighteen months before transferring back to study with McMillan. The grandson of the Buffalo minister records that M'Gready "hastened through his literary and theological studies" with McMillan after leaving the school at Buffalo.

As M'Gready had previously studied under John McMillan, what was the contribution of Smith to the education of the future Kentucky revivalist and, specifically, what was his contribution to M'Gready as a platform orator. First, Smith assisted in the overall mental development of the future preacher; secondly, he convinced M'Gready of the need for a specific conversion experience; and thirdly, he provided a clear example of vivid, dynamic, revival preaching.

---

54 McKinney, Presbyterian Valley, p. 23. McKinney takes as his proof a quotation that there were no ministerial training schools in the fall of 1785. This, however, does not prove that schools or training was not provided for ministers prior to that time.

55 Smith, Old Redstone, pp. 361-62. See also Richard Beard, Brief Biographical Sketches, p. 8. Smith first went to Western Pennsylvania in 1779 to serve Buffalo and Cross Creek congregations. His name was signed by 203 names, indicating considerable Presbyterian power in the area. He was born in Nottingham, Maryland, in 1736, and was licensed by New Castle Presbytery in 1767 after Princeton graduation in 1764. At age forty-four he came to Redstone area. He died in 1792.
The curriculum of Smith's school emphasized the classical languages, the natural sciences, and natural and moral philosophy. By 1785, the year of Smith's opening, M'Gready was already an advanced classical language scholar, and it seems probable that Smith introduced the North Carolinian to science and philosophy. This instruction is difficult to evaluate from the standpoint of its effect on M'Gready's speaking. It added to his reservoir of information and gave him, if recognized by a listening audience, a degree of ethical appeal. But these departments of knowledge are rarely, if ever, referred to in his sermon manuscripts, and it is doubtful that this period of study can be called significant.

The second contribution of Joseph Smith was in his vivid example of revivalistic preaching. The Presbytery history recorded that a revival continued at Buffalo and Cross Creek from the time Smith became their minister in 1780 until his death in 1792. This assertion seems forced, but it is true that Smith was an impressive

56 McKinney (ed.), The Presbyterian Valley, p. 2. See Augustine Theodore Norton, History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois (St. Louis: W. S. Bryan, 1879), I, p. 22. Norton indicates that Smith taught Latin to M'Gready, but he gave no evidence, and previously indicated evidence tends to disprove this. Since M'Gready passed the Presbytery examination in "Latin and Greek languages and metaphysics, logic and moral philosophy, mathematics and natural philosophy" some eighteen months (April, 1787) after he began studying with Smith, evidence indicates that Smith probably was responsible for M'Gready's knowledge of the latter areas. For student examination schedules, see Minutes of Redstone Presbytery.

57 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten) pp. 4-5.
preacher who earned the title, "hell-fire Smith.”  

Significantly, he dealt to a great extent with the beauties of Heaven and the overpowering fear motivations of Hell. Samuel Porter, a student of Smith and a classmate of M'Gready, described Smith's preaching as follows:

I never heard a man who could so completely, as Mr. Smith, unbar the gates of Hell, & make me look down into the dark, bottomless abyss, or like him could so throw open the gates of heaven & let me glance at the insufferable brightness of the great white throne. 59

William Sprague illustrated the fearless manner in which Smith preached the revival theme. While on a journey to a General Assembly meeting (no date given), Smith stopped at an apparently quiescent congregation where he was asked to preach, but cautioned to be moderate. Sprague noted:

Mr. Smith, after giving out an impressive hymn, and offering an unusually fervent prayer, arose to preach; and as he arose, cried out with a strong voice, "Fire, Fire, Fire!" The congregation, alarmed and agitated, glanced towards every part of the building, above and around. "If the very mention of the word," continued the preacher, "so startles you, --if the mere apprehension of it excited by the voice of a stranger so disturbs you, what will it be to encounter the reality? 'Who can dwell with the everlasting burnings?' This is my text." He delivered one of his most thoroughly awakening discourses. . . . 60


59 Quoted in the handwritten Brief History of Redstone Presbyterian, p. 5. Porter was a native of the area who entered Smith's school with M'Gready and later presided at M'Gready's wedding. He remained in the Western Pennsylvania region.

60 Sprague, Annals, III, p. 279.
Sprague comments that this sermon resulted in a revival in the congregation. The story suggests Smith's unconventional methods to overcome lethargy or indifference in church-going audiences. Such observations by M'Gready tended to confirm the belief that a speech means or method that succeeded in arousing the "sinner" was the desirable one for the moment.

The third and most important contribution of Smith was in connection with M'Gready's first theopathy. Thaddeus Blake, apologist for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, described the peculiar turn taken in M'Gready's revival sermons when Blake said that after the conversion experience, M'Gready's preaching message "entirely changed."

Blake stated that M'Gready then:

\[\ldots\] spoke in thunder tones to the sinner, saying "Ye must be born again." He also insisted upon time and place religion—that sinners should know the time when and the place where they were converted. Such preaching in those days, as a matter of course, awakened terrible opposition. \[\ldots\]

\[\textsuperscript{61}\] Thaddeus C. Blake, The Old Log House, A History and Defense of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1879), p. 20. Blake's history has been generally accepted as authoritative in Cumberland circles. For this type of emphasis in M'Gready's early Kentucky era, see Franceway R. Cossitt, The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing. One of the Fathers and Founders of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. To which is Added Remarks on Davidson's History, or, a Review of His Chapters on the Revival of 1800, and His History of the Cumberland Presbyterians. With an Appendix (Louisville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1853), pp. 40-45.

\[\textsuperscript{62}\] Blake, The Old Log House, p. 20.
Later, in years following the Kentucky Revival, M'Gready said that the event ranked with but two others in his life. He stated:

... many have been the glorious days of the outpouring of the Spirit of God, bestowed upon our wretched world, to the salvation of millions. Three of these great days of the Son of Man I have witnessed. One, on the Monongahela, where I first felt the all-conquering power of the love of Jesus, which to all eternity I shall never forget, was at a Sacrament on the morning of a Sabbath in 1786. The second in North Carolina, in 1789. The third in Kentucky, from 1797 to 1802. And may I ever lie the lowest, humblest creature in the dust, when I reflect that the Lord made use of me, mean and unworthy, to begin the glorious work in both these blessed seasons. I rejoice at the prospect. I expect to meet with many souls in heaven, who were my spiritual children in both these revivals.63

This experience was apparently preceded by a period of preparation.

William Henry Foote suggests that M'Gready was conscious of a psychological void in his religious thinking, having overheard a conversation of two traveling companions who questioned M'Gready's salvation. Consequently, he commenced:

... a thorough examination of his principles of belief, after examination, he was satisfied that they were correct. Of his practice, it appeared to him that he loved what the Scripture required, and turned away from those things the word of God forbade. Thus far he felt safe. But when he came to examine his feelings, to try them by such passages as being "filled with the spirit; filled with joy; filled with the Holy Ghost..." it seemed to him that he did not understand these things experimentally... He had no rest in

63 James M'Gready, The Posthumous Works of James M'Gready, ed. James Smith (Louisville: W. W. Worsley, 1831), 1, p. 40. This is from a sermon, "The Lord Jesus Christ, a Mighty Conqueror." Smith, apparently using this quotation as his source, states that M'Gready was "savingly converted to God" at a sacramental meeting in 1786. History of the Christian Church, p. 562.
his soul till he believed Christ gave him peace in believing, and his heart tasted some of the joys of the Holy Ghost. 64

M'Gready's religious theopathy resulted from a sacramental sermon by Joseph Smith. 65 Whatever the explanation of such religious experiences, this occurrence deepened M'Gready's belief that the sinner must seek a specific religio-emotional release from feelings of guilt and the fear of Hell. Furthermore, the misled believer must be examined, for M'Gready reached the conclusion that he was not saved while holding the proper principles of belief and engaging in correct religious practices (Presbyterian standards). Consequently, he relied on emotionally loaded appeals to heighten the possibility for such theopathies in his audiences. In his sermon on the "Qualifications and Duties of a Minister of the Gospel," he stated that the preacher's duty was to preach "all the counsel of God." He defined preaching as follows:

... every possible means to alarm and awaken Christless sinners from their security /false/, and bring them to a sense of their danger and guilt. He /the minister/ must use every argument to convince them of the horrors of an unconverted state; he must tell them the worst of their case—roar the

64Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 369. Also see Smith, History of the Christian Church, pp. 560-62.

65Such experiences sometimes came spontaneously or after long periods of prayer and meditation. These were often extremely trying mentally and were sometimes called the process of "praying through." In theory, the soul was prepared, and then a revelatory expression of mental-spiritual nature told the seeker that he was "redeemed."
thunders of Sinai in their ears, and flash the lightnings of Jehovah's vengeance in their faces. 66

Proper beliefs or "Christian conduct" constituted no guarantee of salvation. A conversion experience, apparent to one's mental and emotional processes, proved that salvation had been granted.

Theological Education Under John McMillan

The requirements of Presbyterianism provided that candidates for the ministry have either bachelor or master of arts degrees or have suitable proof of having completed a regular educational course. In order to examine candidates, presbyteries were given the right to test the educational qualifications of young men who aspired to their ministry. Vitally interested in developing capable as well as educated preachers, the Redstone examinations were rigorous. McKinney stated that though the first twelve men which Redstone examined did not have a Princeton education, they had "as its equivalent an education imparted from the mind and soul of devoted pastors who knew what was the essential equipment for a successful ministry on the frontier." 67 Beginning with April 19, 1787, M'Gready was examined for the ministry, becoming licensed on August 13, 1788. 68

---

66Works, I, p. 316. M'Gready gave as his reason that no one would see his house burning and his family about to die without using every power of body and mind to awaken them.

67The Presbyterian Valley, p. 19.

68Minutes of Redstone Presbytery, pp. 29-31.
Between April, 1787, and August, 1788, he continued his studies with McMillan under the supervision of the other members of Redstone.

In the library of Washington and Jefferson College, the original manuscripts of McMillan's theology lectures are extant. These lectures, 130 sermons, his Journal and Diary, together with his yearly expense accounts at Chartiers are primary material for a study of his teaching techniques and for the education that James M'Gready received at his log school. Matthew Brown, who came to serve as the successor to McMillan at Washington College, summarized the education form as follows:

... written lectures, containing a complete system of theology. The system the students transcribed, and were expected to recite literally. The system itself was excellent, containing a concise discussion of all the principle doctrines, with copious notes and quotations from scripture. It was concise condensed, *multum in parvo*, lucid, and forcible.

Bennett summarized the benefits to the students as an accurate understanding of important doctrines and their supporting arguments and a full knowledge of the Old and New Testaments.

---

69Guthrie's biography on McMillan contains a portion of the Journal and reproduces much of the expense record. About six of the sermons are at Philadelphia with the Presbyterian Historical Society, but most are located at the Washington and Jefferson College Library, Washington, Pennsylvania.

70Quoted by Joseph Smith in *Old Redstone*. The original theology lectures are at Washington and Jefferson College.

McMillan does not seem to have been a widely read scholar except in Biblical studies. The lectures contain almost countless references to the Scriptures, and the first half, about 120 pages, mentions no other authority. He did show a knowledge of classical history and philosophy. He once quoted Socrates, once paraphrased Cicero, and named four of the early Christian figures. His lectures were closely reasoned, logical presentations of Presbyterian-viewed Biblical doctrine. As Guthrie concluded, "McMillan did know his logic-books and his Bible." The limited citations from outside authority as proof of Christian doctrines indicate McMillan's conviction that secular supporting materials were of secondary importance. This period probably did not alter M'Gready's religious convictions, but it reinforced them, with McMillan's lectures serving as a reservoir of logical proofs.

Another contribution to M'Gready's speaking was the opportunity for the preparation and delivery of sermons to actual audiences as well as before a highly critical review board of practicing ministers, experience radically different from the training of the modern seminary student whose addresses are often before captive student audiences.

---

72 Guthrie, John McMillan, p. 189.
73 M'Gready accepted the Old and New Testaments as the authoritative revealed will of God. This was the common belief of Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, the three most numerous denominations in the West. As a result, scriptural proofs were considered logical and authoritative without argument.
At Redstone, after the initial examinations were over, each candidate was assigned one or more difficult Biblical passages to explain or to develop into a sermon for delivery before the presbytery. McKinney indicated the rigorous nature of this experience as follows:

Much time was devoted at the meetings of Presbytery to the careful examination of these young men as they appeared before Presbytery for systematic trials and testings in preparation for licensure and ordination. No small part of that training was practice in preaching and sermon preparation. To pass an examination in experimental religion before seven fervent evangelists and to preach before seven learned Princeton graduates were severe tests for the young men whose only academic preparation was in the schools which these preachers were themselves conducting. These examinations were supplemented by assigned preaching responsibilities in the various places which had no minister. The requests for preaching were always greater than the ordained men could answer. Thus the young candidates for the ministry were kept busy, while at the same time they received invaluable training in the school of experience.

McKinney (ed.), The Presbyterian Valley, p. 18. M'Gready's record before the Presbytery follows the order of:

a. April 19, 1787. Examined on "experimental acquaintance with religion, cases of conscious, logic and moral philosophy" and the classic languages, Latin and Greek.
b. August 23, 1787. Examined on natural philosophy and theology. He presented an exegesis on "An sit concursus Dei cum omnibus hominum actionibus?" This had been assigned on April 20, 1787. He was assigned a homily on Romans 3:31 (relation between faith and law in Christian theology).
c. December 12, 1787. Examined on systematic divinity.
d. April 16, 1788. Delivered lecture assigned by Presbytery.
e. April 18, 1788. Delivered sermon on Romans 5:20 (difficult passage involving discussion on relationship in Christian theology between law, grace, and sin).
f. August 13, 1788. Licensed to preach and preaching appointments arranged extending through October.

It should be noted that each of the trials of M'Gready was sustained by the Presbytery as successful and that at no time does a question appear as to his merit as a student or classical scholar. See Minutes of Redstone Presbytery, pp. 30-35.
The teacher-student associations which occurred while teacher and student rode long hours together to reach preaching appointments gave opportunity for observation and criticism in public address. Between 1781 and 1785, McMillan's Journal shows that he preached at an average of nine different supply points a year. While M'Gready studied theology, McMillan probably enlisted his assistance in worship services, allowing him to gain experience in platform speaking. After M'Gready's licensure, the Presbytery assigned him numerous "supplies" throughout the fall of that year, after which he returned to North Carolina.

The period from April, 1787, to October, 1788, furnished a variety of benefits to this young man. He learned those arguments which confirmed him as a Calvinist and a conservative regarding Biblical revelation. He acquired a form of invention and arrangement which emphasized Bible proofs. He had further opportunities to observe the preaching techniques of McMillan and others, and was examined in sermon construction and delivery. Finally, he experienced the practical aspects of speaking before Presbyterian congregations in the area. The result was a theological and public address training which provided James M'Gready with a solid

---

76 Taken from John McMillan's Journal as reproduced in Guthrie, John McMillan, pp. 221-28.
77 Smith, Old Redstone, p. 362.
theoretical and practical foundation for his preaching career. Given the limitations of frontier educational facilities, the pedagogical system of the Redstone educators was efficient and practical. Indeed, the men they trained were specifically adapted to Presbyterian ministerial life on the frontier.

Revivals in Redstone. The Kentucky Revival ended for M'Gready in unhappiness because he participated in certain "excesses." It is interesting, therefore, to note his experience with revivals in Pennsylvania. For if he could be charged with undue excess in his preaching and in what he allowed to happen on the camp ground (assuming he could have stopped it), then the same charge should apply to Redstone men under similar circumstances.

Interestingly, the Redstone area had been the scene of numerous revivals prior to its formation into a Presbytery and had enjoyed them during the period of M'Gready's stay and after he returned to North Carolina. The Presbytery history shows that from the late 1770's, revivals had been frequent. In 1778, Indian pressure drove the settlers of Washington County into nearby Vance's Fort. "There God's spirit was poured out in copious showers" records the history in definite revival language. The record shows over a thousand persons were converted in congregations of the Redstone district from

78 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten), p. 9.
1781 to 1787.  

Dave Elliott wrote that during the residency of M'Gready in the Redstone area, a revival began in 1781 under Smith and continued for six or seven years; McMillan had a revival continuing at the same time at Chartiers congregation. M'Gready, therefore, was educated in a revival atmosphere.

Later, the Presbytery records show that from 1795 to 1799, a "series" of gracious visitations were enjoyed by the churches generally throughout western Pa. Angier March recorded a letter of August, 1799, stating that a revival in the congregation of McMillan and others in the immediate area was "accompanied with various exercises." During the Kentucky Revival days, therefore, the same "exercises" or "excesses" (depending on definition) were taking place in the very congregation of M'Gready's old mentor.

From 1799 to 1807, M'Gready was castigated because he approved of the physical phenomena such as falling, jerks, involuntary vocal

---

79 Ibid.


81 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten), p. 9.

82 Angier March, Increase of Piety or the Revival of Religion in the United States of America Containing Several Interesting Letters Not Before Published (Newburyport, 1802) pp. 41-48. This very rare book is one of the many small pamphlets which were circulated during the Second Great Awakening and is extremely interesting for grasping a tone or tenor that prevailed in religious circles.
utterances, and others. But the Redstone record indicates that he was schooled through observation to think these occurrences possible and perhaps desirable. The handwritten history of the Presbytery shows that about 1778, the Redstone churches witnessed the "falling exercise," and, as the record continues, "These were often observed in churches now in Washington co. [sic]."83 An eyewitness described these phenomena and others as follows:

I have seen men & women in solemn attitude, pondering the truths which were presented, fall in a moment from their seats or off their feet as helpless as though they had been shot & lie from 10 to 15 or 20 minutes or longer as motionless as a person in sound sleep. At other times the whole frame would be thrown into a state of agitation as seemingly to endanger the safety of the subject; & yet in a moment this agitation would cease & the person arise in the full possession of all his bodily senses & take his seat composed & solemn without the least sensation of pain or uneasiness.84

These same phenomena were duplicated numbers of times in Kentucky during the Revival of 1800. That they occurred in Pennsylvania during revival periods, exactly when James M'Gready was preparing for a preaching career, strongly suggests that he was acquainted with them and observed their acceptance by the men he respected.

The biographer of McMillan, Dwight Guthrie, considered M'Gready a fanatic.85 During the Kentucky revival days of M'Gready,

83 Brief History of Redstone Presbytery (Handwritten), pp. 8-9.
84 Ibid.
85 John McMillan, pp. 60-72.
however, the same types of excitement and physical phenomena appeared in McMillan's churches. Furthermore, during 1800 and 1801, Mc'Gready corresponded with his former teacher, describing the results of his labors in Kentucky.  

Indeed, Guthrie says of McMillan's reaction:

He probably never expected to see at a revival in his church what he did see; yet he did not doubt the religious nature of these actions once he had seen them. If he had known more of the laws of psychology, he would have realized that the strange reports from the West and South did affect the emotion of his own people.

Saying that McMillan was not to be stampeded into the Kentucky fanaticism, Guthrie points out that McMillan examined with care those who desired to become Presbyterians after experiencing these things. He noted that after the excitation calmed, those who still expressed faith and desired to be instructed in the Scriptures were "welcomed into fellowship . . . ." However, the letter of 1801 from Mc'Gready to McMillan indicates the care that the Kentuckian took in these matters, and that he decidedly did not consider an emotional experience as equivalent to salvation. 

---

86 Letter to John McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801). This letter is now in the library of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. It describes the revival in Logan County during 1800 and 1801.

87 Guthrie, John McMillan, p. 69.

88 Ibid. Guthrie believes McMillan felt that the Holy Spirit instigated these physical phenomena to make the sinner conscious of his condition.

89 Also see Mc'Gready's "Vindication of the Exercises in the Revival of 1800," Works, II, pp. 341-59. He held that the exercises
caution, but not of kind or even degree. In many ways the same charges made against the emotionalism of the M'Gready camp meetings, and of his willingness to accept them, apply as well to the revivals of the Princeton-trained (and in the case of McMillan, college president) educators of Washington County.

In view of later events, it has been assumed that M'Gready was extremely liberal in his views in comparison with other Calvinist ministers. As Posey shows, this statement is probably true of the Presbyterian ministry of the early Tennessee-Kentucky frontier. He concluded:

The learned minister studied God's Word as a basis for the preparation for all sermons. He preached a stern doctrine of election, predestination, and limited salvation. His three desires were to glorify God, to bring righteousness among men, and to establish a temperate society. To attain these ends, he needed divine grace and help. Any minister who believed piety and learning inseparable naturally revolted against excesses of revivals and questioned the propriety of worship which seemed to contain extreme enthusiasm, hypocrisy, and even witchcraft. 90

If M'Gready was liberal in relation to the Kentucky-Tennessee Presbyterian minister, it does not follow that he was liberal in comparison to the Redstone ministry. M'Gready believed in a Biblical basis for sermon preparation and the same doctrine as his Kentucky

---

were evidences of Holy Spirit blessing and that they should produce proper changes in life. The experience of physical agitation was a prompt toward a spiritual and mental change in the sinner.

90Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 124.
fellows, but he did not believe that piety and education were inseparable from emotion and what he considered to be evidence of Holy Spirit visitation. To believe otherwise would reject the providence for which he prayed.

Quality of M'Gready's ministerial education. M'Gready was a frontiersman, brought up in frontier surroundings and educated by men who had adapted to it. The schools of Redstone were third generation log colleges. The quality of education excelled, if measured by the work of men they trained. One historian noted that "almost without exception, these men students went out as missionaries and pastors, preached an awakening Gospel..." and were strong factors in bringing the Second Awakening into being. 91

"Log college" philosophy strongly affected the education of ministers in this country prior to c. 1800. Shewmaker concluded:

Their effect on the training of the ministry was as marked as it was evident. They maintained the standard of an educated ministry, and furnished at least an approximate attainment to it, at a time when, and in regions where, that standard was threatened by the very circumstances in which many of the churches were of necessity existing. At the same time their work was directed toward meeting the needs which were produced, and made clearly manifest, by these circumstances and conditions. The men who conducted them were enthusiastic students, and in certain cases, if not always, accomplished scholars, at least according to the standards of their time; and they were energetic ministers, anxious for a ready, active, equipped and efficient ministry.

Judging by the positions attained, and the work done, not only in the ministry, but in other vocations as well, by many of those who obtained their training in these schools, we have to conclude that the training afforded by them must have been, in a large measure, a very good substitute for that given by the colleges of the time, with whose graduates the pupils of these schools easily sustained a critical comparison. 92

III. CONCLUSIONS

When M'Gready completed his stay at Redstone in the fall of 1788, he possessed an advanced education by frontier standards. In 1785, he had the apparent proficiency in languages of a Princeton freshman, and yet this was augmented by about eighteen months of study with Joseph Smith. Later M'Gready spent a number of months in theological study under McMillan who apparently viewed M'Gready as an excellent scholar, judging from his position as tutor in McMillan's school. Such an education was a recognized frontier accomplishment, providing M'Gready with a relatively good reputation in the regions he served.

From the standpoint of preparation for preaching, the Redstone period provided some significant advantages. M'Gready was taught classical languages after the Princeton method and probably enjoyed a

92 Shewmaker, "Training of Protestant Ministry," pp. 158-59. At the conclusion of his article, Shewmaker says that in a comparison of careers, the log college graduate would hardly be "at all inferior to those who were trained in the same period by the professors of divinity . . . in colleges." This observation applies to privately trained ministers as well. See pp. 166-67.
good knowledge of Cicero and other speech writers and critics. His
teacher, McMillan, had a strong regard for logic, certainly
acquainting his students with this discipline, informally if not formally,
through his closely reasoned theology. From the standpoint of speech
training and practice, M'Gready sat as listener and student-critic of
able frontier Presbyterian evangelists. He was under the supervision
of these same men at the close of the period and was required to stand
homiletic and logic examinations before Princeton-trained ministers.
This training, plus the practice, before religious audiences, with
criticism from accomplished pulpit speakers was a rather complete
form of preacher education.

The training of James M'Gready prepared him specifically for
revivalism. All of his teachers were active revivalists. He viewed
their techniques and results, becoming increasingly schooled in the
use of emotional appeals and uncomplicated argument. He probably
saw the "exercises" and heard no serious questioning of their divine
validity. His teachers knew of these phenomena and accepted them as
evidence of supernatural causatives. M'Gready could hardly be
expected to do otherwise. His instructors preached for conviction,
for results, in the form of penitent listeners, and relied on emotional
appeal. They were Calvinists, but they were not men who chilled
audiences with theological treatises beyond audience understanding.

When M'Gready traveled from Pennsylvania to North Carolina in
the winter of 1788-89, he was a man prepared to preach
evangelistically. He wanted results and had been uniquely taught a method of achieving them. As Bernard Weisberger stated:

When the Great Awakening sputtered out before the Revolution, these colleges /log colleges/ remained, helping to keep the sparks alive. Now, with the new nation established, the fire was ready to blaze again. M'Gready, himself a log-college graduate, was one of the first to blow on it. 93

---

CHAPTER III

CAROLINA REVIVAL DAYS

When M'Gready turned toward the home of his parents in the winter of 1788, he probably was planning to return to Redstone. The journey to Guilford County, North Carolina, was close to four hundred miles over difficult roads in the dead of winter. Leaving approximately the first of November, he was at Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden, Virginia, near the first of the year.

I. HAMPDEN-SYDNEY REVIVAL AND FIRST PREACHING

Hampden-Sydney, founded by the Presbyterians in 1776, was incorporated by the Virginia legislature in 1783. John Blair Smith, son of Robert Smith (Pequea teacher of John McMillan), had recently assumed the presidency and was conducting a revival with William Graham. Because numbers of students and local citizens had been

---

1At the time of leaving the Presbytery (Oct. 22, 1788), he only asked for leave. Further, every indication is that he was anticipating ordination as he was making rapid progress to that goal. He apparently found an opportune time to make a trip home.

2Joseph Smith, Old Redstone, or Historical Sketches of Western Presbyterianism, Its Early Ministers, Its Perilous Times and Its First Records (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854), p. 362. This was about seventy-five miles from home.

3John Blair and Stanhope were the more famous sons of Robert Smith of Pequea. They were Princeton graduates.
converted, religion was the topic of much conversation. Apparently for some time, perhaps two months or more, M'Gready viewed the revival techniques and probably preached in the nearby congregations. Foote noted that M'Gready became "inspired by what he saw . . . and traveled on to Guilford, fired with zeal . . . ." 4 Sometime during 1789 occurred the second theopathy which M'Gready considered a visitation of the Holy Spirit. 5

Orange Presbytery into which M'Gready now moved was responsible for Presbyterian efforts in the northern highlands of North Carolina. The Presbytery was especially active in the more populous counties of Orange and Guilford. Unfortunately, all records of the Presbytery prior to 1827 were destroyed by fire, excepting one volume of records dating from 1795 to 1812. 6 M'Gready left North Carolina

4 Joseph Smith said that the revival had spread "far and wide" in the Virginia Piedmont. See Old Redstone, p. 362. For full account of the revival see William Henry Foote, Sketches of Virginia; Historical and Biographical. Second Series (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1855). This experience confirmed further the revival tendencies of M'Gready's Redstone education and demonstrated that such techniques were completely respectable among Eastern-educated ministerial graduates.

5 The second of the experiences occurred either at Hampden-Sydney or during the first months in the bounds of Orange Presbytery. M'Gready merely mentioned that it occurred in the year 1789. Perhaps he referred to the revival at Caldwell's academy.

in 1795 and the Presbytery evidence is of no help in recording his Carolina ministry. His work, however, was significant; and local historians, as well as people affected by his preaching, did record some of his influence. Apparently, he entered the Orange district in late winter or early spring of 1789 and quickly presented himself as a licensee from Redstone. He immediately accepted the Stoney Creek (River) and Haw River congregations. By the first of 1790, he was involved in a significant revival at the school of David Caldwell, a short distance from his charges.

Near one of his charges, the new young minister was present for a funeral, and an incident occurred which illustrates his independent morality views. Whiskey flowed freely on such occasions, virtually every farm having a still of its own, and often the minister of the local church was called upon to offer a prayer prior to refreshment time. This honor was extended to the returned licensee. "No," came the retort, "I will not be guilty of insulting God by asking a blessing upon what I know to be wrong." This rebuke apparently

7 Presbyterians procedures required that ministers serving in a locale be assigned by the presiding presbytery. As M'Gready was preaching regularly in the Redstone district by late 1789, it is assumed that he followed the proper procedures. See Ezra H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Revised edition (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1864), I, p. 234.

8 Hanford A. Edson spoke of the occasion as one where "usual unstinted dispensation of whiskey" was to be observed.
offended some present and conflict seemed imminent. Foote's witnesses remembered:

A great sensation was produced, and McGready stood up for his defence, a champion not to be despised, large in form, some six feet high, of prominent features, grave in demeanor, solemn in speech, plain and neat in his style of dress, unaffected in his manners, with a powerful voice, and somewhat ungainly in his address, with the appearance of great weight and bodily strength. The incident illustrates his narrow social and moral code, and furnishes the first description of the revivalist.

Considerable opposition arose against M'Gready's preaching, for his ideas ran counter to many social practices. Gillett, a Presbyterian historian, noted that "M'Gready's unsparing denunciations of wickedness, and his terrible appeals which won him the title of 'Boanerges' Son of Thunder," rendered him, while popular with some, greatly obnoxious to others." M'Gready gained support, however, in the person of William Hodge, whom he influenced to re-enter ministerial study in 1789. Hodge was soon licensed by Orange and, accepting

---


Gillett, History of Presbyterian Church, I, p. 234.

Ibid. William Hodge was educated by Caldwell and was licensed in 1789 or 1790. In 1800, he moved west and served Shiloh congregation some 50 miles east of Nashville. In harmony with M'Gready, he later was considered a leader of the schismatic Cumberland group.
the nearby Hawfields and Cross Roads congregations, worked cooperatively with M'Gready. Foote noted that they were "heart and hand" in cooperation in both doctrine and method, but differed in "their temperament and their manner of dispensing the gospel." In contrast to M'Gready's title, Hodge received the name, "Son of Consolation." During this first period of his ministry, M'Gready demonstrated his unique approach to preaching. He demanded that his communicants know the place and time when their conversion had occurred.

He differed from his Presbyterian colleagues in that while they taught such conversion experiences should occur, they were not necessary for admission to communion or other divine services. M'Gready taught that in addition to being religious and attending to the normal religious duties, it was necessary to have some specific evidence of being one of the Calvinist "elect." He was in the unenviable position


13 Ibid.

14 James Smith, *History of the Christian Church from Its Origin to the Present Time; Compiled from Various Authors, Including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents* (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), p. 562.


16 Traditional Calvinists have consistently affirmed that by divine degree only certain men, apart from their choice, "are predestined into everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." Further, the Confession of Faith stated that this determination was "so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."
of teaching that many supposedly saved persons were not so after all and that they were destined for eternal damnation. Many were insulted, and when M'Gready accompanied this thrust at cherished religious hopes with his harsh denunciations, opposition appeared as a normal reaction. Nevertheless, Smith found that large assemblies gathered for his services and "many precious souls passed from death unto life," indicating that some were satisfying M'Gready's requirements.17

II. PREACHING AT CALDWELL'S ACADEMY

Since 1763, David Caldwell had operated his Academy. Almost immediately after returning from Pennsylvania, M'Gready visited the school and renewed his acquaintance with his former minister. Caldwell obviously found him spiritually and educationally satisfactory, for he allowed M'Gready to preach to the students. A revival ensued, so successful that by February, 1790, more than half of the student body

The state of the non-elect was considered most unfortunate. The Confession affirms that the non-elect, "although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operation of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature. . . ." The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, adopted by the General Synod in 1729, amended and ratified in 1788, and amended in 1887 and 1903 (Philadelphia: 1939), pp. 15, 46-47.

17 Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 562. The phrase is a religious one, indicating that such persons had passed from spiritual damnation to spiritual life.
claimed conversion, and the converts were rising early each day for spontaneous prayer services. M'Gready was a regular visitor at the Academy during the years from 1789 to 1795. On one occasion he called for the more "serious" students, speaking to them of religion, and affected them so that they left his presence converted. Foote recorded that M'Gready became a "favorite" with the students. As a result of the Academy revival, ten to twelve young men entered the ministry, some of whom became prominent in the Revival of 1800.

The effect of his first year in North Carolina was significant. First, M'Gready established himself as a minister of power, possessing a fearless determination to preach what he considered truth. Secondly, he secured the support of at least two influential ministers; and, thirdly, he became attached to a group of young men through whom the revival-reform views were carried to the Orange regions and later into Kentucky-Tennessee. By February, 1791, M'Gready appeared at


19Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, pp. 373-74. Apparently Mrs. Caldwell was highly influential in the students' lives also, as Foote recorded that a current saying in the area was, "Dr. Caldwell makes the scholars, and Mrs. Caldwell makes the ministers." pp. 235-36.

a sacramental service on the Sandy River in Virginia\textsuperscript{21} to preach in
the company of John B. Smith and three other prominent Presbyterian
ministers. M'Gready's ability as a preaching minister had been
quickly established.

Barton Warren Stone, who entered the Caldwell school in 1790,
heard M'Gready. In his autobiography, Stone described the appear-
ance and particularly the preaching of M'Gready by saying:

A crowd of people had assembled--the preacher came--it
James McGready, whom I had never seen before. He rose
and looked around on the assembly. His person was not
prepossessing, not his appearance interesting, except his
remarkable gravity, and small piercing eyes. His coarse
tremulous voice excited in me the idea of something unearthly.
His gestures were sui generis, the perfect reverse of
elegance. Everything appeared by him, forgotten, but the
salvation of souls. Such earnestness--such zeal--such
powerful persuasion, enforced by the joys of heaven and
miseries of hell, I had never witnessed before. My mind
was chained by him, and followed him closely in his rounds
of heaven, earth and hell, with feelings indescribable. His
concluding remarks were addressed to the sinner to flee the
wrath to come without delay. Never before had I
comparatively felt the force of truth. Such was my excite-
ment, that had I been standing, I should have probably sunk

\textsuperscript{21}Stone, Biography, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{22}The three were Cairy Allen, James Blythe, and Robert
Marshall, all of whom were prominent in the Virginia revival.

\textsuperscript{23}Stone became an outstanding leader of the "Restoration
Movement" in cooperation with Thomas and Alexander Campbell and
others. For his work, see Charles C. Ware, Barton Warren Stone,
Pathfinder of Christian Union, a Story of His Life and Times
(St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1932), and William G. West, Barton W.
Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity (Nashville: The
Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954). For a rhetorical study,
see Evan Ulrey, "The Preaching of Barton Warren Stone" (unpublished
to the floor under the impression.24

Stone wrote his autobiography much later at a time when years should have lent candor to his appraisal. Later, in 1791, Stone heard M'Gready again. In his description of M'Gready's address on the subject, "Thou Art Weighed in the Balances and Art Found Wanting," Stone noted the direct way in which M'Gready utilized stunning appeals and personal comparisons. Stone wrote:

In the evening the honest J. M'Gready addressed the people. . . . He went through all the legal works of the sinner—all the hiding places of the hypocrite—all the resting places of the deceived—he drew the character of the regenerated in the deepest colors, and thundered divine anathemas against every other.25

The impression made upon Stone illustrates the early power of the young and zealous licentiate from Redstone. Nevertheless, this description and his early success point up M'Gready's effectiveness in public address at the first of his ministry. Further, M'Gready began his public speaking career with the message that characterized him all his life.

24Stone, Biography, p. 8.

25Ibid., pp. 9-10. Stone was to find a form of religious relief through the counsel of William Hodge, whose sermons on the love of God appealed to the needs of Stone. M'Gready used extreme wording at times in his North Carolina sermons. Foote recorded that M'Gready informed hypocritical sacramental communicants that "an unworthy communicant in such circumstances as yours, is more offensive to Almighty God than a loathsome carcase /sic/ crawling with vermin set before a dainty prince." Sketches of North Carolina, p. 372.
III. REVIVAL IN CAROLINA

Within a year after returning to Carolina, M'Gready married, was preaching for two congregations regularly, and was about to open a school at his home. Although he was not ordained until 1793, he began a reform movement in his congregation and community which, by 1791, was being called "McGrady's revival."

Success of Revival

M'Gready believed that the life of the Christian bore specific marks; one of these was the avoidance of practices which he considered sinful, which ranged from dancing, horse-racing and intemperance to

26 He is recorded to have married Miss Nancy Thompson and then to have moved to a home three to four miles below High Rock, Guilford County, a spot midway between his two congregations. Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 373. M'Gready and his wife had six daughters, two of which died in infancy. Mrs. J. A. Priest's letter to Lucien Rule, Oldham Era (July 11, 1942), p. 6.

27 The school is not defined, but probably was an introductory classical school which Foote says was taught principally by James M'Gready's brother, also an advanced student. Sketches of North Carolina, p. 373.

28 Extracts from the Minutes of the Synod of Carolina, p. 93.

sabbath breaking and duelling. Moreover, as Timothy Dwight stated, the Revolution had "unhinged the principles, the morality and the religion of this country more than could have been done by a peace of forty years." Free thought was in vogue after the Revolution, and infidelity began to creep into the region. These "evils," combined with the usual minister's need to awaken sinners from "formality and deadness" were the targets of M'Gready's oratory. Though preaching to the Haw River and Stone Creek congregations, he visited the surrounding regions as far away as southern Virginia. Foote recorded that "wherever . . . he preached in the neighboring charges, the excitement on the subject of religion was great, and the inquiry about experimental godliness became very general."


33 Stone, *Biography*, p. 9. Gillett said of his preaching in this period, "Solemn, earnest, direct, overwhelming in his appeals, and pungent in his dealing with the conscience, he was a man toward whom none could assume an attitude of indifference. . . . Revivals commenced in different places, and the tide of overflowing iniquity was arrested." *History of the Presbyterian Church*, I, p. 360.

34 Sketches of *North Carolina*, p. 373.
This type of preaching did not always suit the frontiersmen; but while opposition was building, the revival of 1791 spread through churches at Hawfields, Cross Roads, Alamance, Buffalo, Stone Creek, Bethlehem, Haw River, Eno, Granville, and along the Dan and Hico rivers. The inclusion of Caldwell's congregations and Hodge's charges indicates their cooperation in this revival. M'Gready's presence in February, 1791, with the revivalists of southern Virginia, at the Sandy River sacramental meeting indicates that they were cooperating in this form of area-wide evangelism. Indeed, the joint efforts of men of both Synods (Carolina and Virginia) resulted in the establishment of good relations in a poorly settled country. The loss of the Orange Presbytery records and the usual custom of ministers to assign divine reasons for religious events make it difficult to determine the results of M'Gready's preaching during the revival. It has never been considered comparable to the Kentucky Revival, but it was unusual in Carolina and, for M'Gready, was highly significant in solidifying his Pennsylvania revival impressions.

Opposition to Revival

An element of discontent began to creep into the local churches, especially in the "home" congregations where the reform preaching had


36 Some disunity had apparently evolved which the twin revivals brought into harmony. Sketches of North Carolina, p. 375.
been constant over a period of years. He was charged with "running people distracted, diverting their attention from necessary avocations; and creating in the minds of decent, orderly, moral people, unnecessary alarm about the eternal destiny of their souls." As Gillett observed, "The bold and almost defiant tone of McGready made him many enemies. . . ." Apparently, his last few years in Carolina were unpleasant, especially at Stone Creek, where insults and threats left no doubt that some had the most hostile intent if he continued his present course.

McGready was a liberal evangelical, and, because of his views, other reasons for opposition arose. Since the days of George Whitefield, Presbyterianism had been divided into "New Lights" and "Old Lights," a distinction based on liberalism in doctrine and worship practice. The New Lights favored new innovations and evangelism, while the Old Lights saw these as digressions from Biblical authority and a move toward Arminianism. Although McGready had been first trained in a conservative congregation, he was an aggressive New Sider. One of the distinctions between the two positions was the

37James Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 563.

38History of the Presbyterian Church, I, p. 360.

use of "Watt's Hymnal" which did not confine itself to the Psalms of David. David Caldwell served both Buffalo congregation and Alamance. Conciliatory in views, he sang the Old Testament psalms at Buffalo (Old) and utilized the Watt's hymns at Alamance (New). \(^{40}\) M'Gready, however, used the Watt's hymns in the Old Side churches, especially at Stone Creek. The hymn question was sent to Presbytery for arbitration and then to Synod which passed the issue to the Presbyterian General Assembly. The Revival of 1800, however, furnished the unity which eventually settled the issues. \(^{41}\)

Though difficult to appreciate, the question was complicated by tradition and personal sentiment. Men were definite in their convictions and just as definite in their practices. The fact that M'Gready pushed an innovation in an area where even the Carolina Synod refused to take a position indicates the intense feelings he aroused.

The most famous incident in the Carolina days resulted from M'Gready's "harsh" preaching at Stone Creek. In typically ministerial fashion, Foote charged those from "some families of wealth and influence" as follows:

\[
\sqrt{\text{they}} \ldots \text{made a bonfire of the pulpit near the church, and left in the clerk's seat a letter written with blood, warning}
\]

\(^{40}\) Samuel Meek Rankin, History of Buffalo Presbyterian Church and Her People (Greensboro: Jos. J. Stone & Co., 1934), pp. 117-18.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 146.
him that unless he [M'Gready] 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. 42

A different account is given by Alexander Finley, a local Kentucky historian, who related that at one of M'Gready's meetings a "mob" tore up the pulpit and warned him to quit preaching his doctrines or leave the country. This record, however, gives no proof and probably should be discounted.

However, James Smith completed the story of the incident with data indicating that it came from an eyewitness. Smith said that on the Sunday following the incident, M'Gready opened the worship service with the following lines from the hymnal:

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 they 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;

---

42 Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 375.

43 Alexander C. Finley, The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky., Which is to some extent a History of Western Kentucky (Russellville, Ky.: Gaines & Barclay, Publishers, 1879), 1, pp. 9-10.
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.  

M'Gready chose as his scripture of the morning the words of Jesus Christ mourning the Jewish rejection of His Messiahship.  

For the student of public address, the incident affords an excellent study of adaptation to setting and audience. Several writers have suggested that this incident caused M'Gready to move west in 1796, but the sermon text indicates that he persisted in his "bold and defiant tone."

IV. EFFECT OF THE CAROLINA PERIOD

In local religious history, the events of "McGrady's revival"

---

44 Smith, History of the Christian Church, pp. 563-64.


46 Alexander Finley spoke of him as a "despised ... obscure man fleeing for safety to the West ...." History of Russellville, I, p. 54. See Robert Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Ky.; with a Preliminary Sketch of the Churches in the Valley of Va. (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), p. 132. This respected Presbyterian history spoke of his leaving North Carolina as a "consequence of the odium which his unsparing censures had drawn upon him ...." Yet Davidson noted that he had been invited to Kentucky by former hearers (p. 132). It appears strange that M'Gready would have made such an address as recorded if in a state of fear, and also strange that he would go to an even more difficult field.
were significant, for local historians saw it as the second revival in the region since the Revolution and apparently the most successful.\(^{47}\) The effect on James M'Gready, however, is difficult to determine. He left almost no personal record pertaining to these years. Carolina historians record the narrative events, but they do not indicate M'Gready's personal progress as a man, a theologian, or as a speaker.

The significance to M'Gready is a matter of conjecture. He found early in his career that he possessed the ability to move men through the medium of public address. Further, he experimented during this first speaking period with various methods of speech development and presentation. He preached his peculiar doctrine of time and place conversion as a dominant theme; evidently it was the product of his Pennsylvania theology training. M'Gready cooperated with ministers from the local region; he worked with both Presbyterian and Methodist ministers in Kentucky and showed his cooperative spirit in Carolina.

His major message emphases appeared. He preached evangelistic sermons at the school of a Presbyterian minister, a school attended by many young men who were destined for the ministry. He indicated his determination to preach for solid conversions as opposed to what he considered invalid religious security. He developed his

\(^{47}\) Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 375. The first revival had not been in the same area, but rather in Iredell County. Foote specifically noted that in this 1791 revival, there were "no unusual appearances or exercises."
direct method of pointing out the social sins of his auditors, making no attempt to soften his convictions or his language. This was both an indication of his theology and his philosophy of public address.

Ultimately, this period was the training ground where the theory taught at Redstone and his observations when converted were tested. The views he gained from the revivalists at Hampden-Sydney were also tried. He must have found most or all of them satisfactory for they were the bases upon which he built in Kentucky.
CHAPTER IV

M'GREADY AND THE BEGINNING OF THE REVIVAL OF 1800

The desire for new lands caused many pioneer families to move regularly. As the eighteenth century closed, the migratory goal of many settlers was the lush lands of the Cumberland. Between 1790 and 1800, the population growth in Kentucky and Tennessee was fantastic, increasing by almost 225,000.¹

The Presbyterians had difficulty keeping up with the tide westward; many of their members moved into areas where ministers and congregations did not exist.² Before the turn of the century, their leaders recognized the urgent need for religious instruction in these new settlements,³ for when James M'Gready arrived in Logan County, Kentucky, in the fall of 1796, he was one of an estimated four hundred new settlers who entered Kentucky each day. In 1790, the population of the territory was 73,677, but by 1800 over 220,000 settlers were in

¹Ezra Hall Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1864), I, p. 403. About twenty thousand persons arrived each year.


the state. 4 Logan County was formed in 1792, the same year Kentucky became a state, being predominantly settled by Virginians and North Carolinians. 5

From 1780 to 1795, Indian incursions hindered Cumberland settlement, but after 1795, little Indian difficulty remained. 6 Robert Davidson, a Kentucky Presbyterian historian, found that after the dangers subsided, some of M'Gready's former parishioners invited him to move west. 7 Stopping near Knoxville, he preached for several months with considerable effect before settling in the Cumberland. 8

I. PRELIMINARIES TO THE KENTUCKY REVIVAL

First Teaching and Preaching

During the early 1790's, Logan County was practically devoid of


5 The county was named for Benjamin Logan who moved to Kentucky in 1776 and represented the region at the Constitutional Conventions of 1791 and 1799. See Edward Coffman, The Story of Logan County (Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1962).


8 James Smith, History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; Compiled from Various Authors, Including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), pp. 555-60.
educational facilities. Following the example of many of his contemporaries, McGready supplemented his ministerial income by teaching school, becoming the first "language teacher" in the region. How long he taught is not known, but probably not longer than one or two years, for as Finley, a local historian, noted, "McGready soon had as much business at preaching as he could do, and so he could do no more teaching."  

All early references to the Logan community speak of the torpidity of its religion. Apparently this apathy existed at McGready's first charge, the Red River Presbyterian Church located some ten miles south of Russellville. Immediately McGready began an attack on the social and religious practices of his charges. Attaching the stigma of eternal retribution to improper social practices, McGready waged

---

9 Alexander C. Finley, The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky., Which is to some extent a History of Western Kentucky (Russellville, Ky.: Gaines & Barclay, Publishers, 1879), I, p. ii; Coffman, Logan County, pp. 116-17. Both authors indicate an unusual number of educated and genteel people among the first settlers in Logan County. Both argue that McGready's pupils were the children of Kentucky's leading families, but the argument appears forced.

10 Finley, History of Russellville, I, p. 35.

11 Coffman, Logan County, pp. 74-75. In 1798, McGready bought a home nearer to Russellville and more central to his congregations. The County officials still used the home as late as 1923. See Finley, History of Russellville, I, p. 11.

public warfare. The effect, according to Posey, was the beginning of a spiritual revolution that transformed "the spiritual life of Kentucky and Tennessee."\(^{13}\) Within a year M'Gready had such influence that one source suggests:

... when one came upon a crowd of McGready's older people, they were weeping and talking about their souls. And if you encountered his young people, either singly or in groups, it was the same. They spoke only of the need of the soul's salvation.\(^{14}\)

Ministerial Techniques

By 1797, M'Gready divided his energies among three congregations, Gasper, Red and Muddy Rivers. Red River was his major charge, while the other two were smaller, "infant" congregations. In order to locate more centrally, he purchased a farm near Russellville.\(^{15}\)

According to Charles Johnson, a historian of the camp meeting, M'Gready utilized three methods: (1) impassioned preaching, (2) diligent pastoral work, and (3) an artful prayer covenant.\(^{16}\) His preaching duties were the normal ones of regular pulpit ministry. A biyearly celebration of the Lord's Supper supplemented the Sunday meetings.

---

\(^{13}\) Posey, Presbyterian Church, pp. 23-24.


\(^{15}\) Gaines Cooksey, "Historic Homes of Russellville," The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, XXVII (1929), p. 660. Mrs. Cooksey states the date as 1795 which is obviously incorrect.

\(^{16}\) Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 33.
These occasions usually commenced on Friday and continued through Sunday with only the local membership allowed to participate. For the religious activities of the congregations, such "sacramental" meetings were high points of the year.

As a pastor-preacher M'Gready traveled extensively between distant cabins and his charges. At each cabin he stopped to inquire about the religious welfare of the family, whether Presbyterian or not. When circumstance allowed, he prayed and presented them with a religious tract or testament. In the height of the revival he said that to chronicle "more private occasions" (as opposed to camp meetings) required a whole volume. As Sweet observed in his Revivalism in America, to "personalize religion is to emotionalize it."^19


18 Letter to Thomas Coke in The Methodist Magazine for the Year 1803; Being a Continuation of the Arminian Magazine, First Published by the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises, on General Redemption, XXVI (London, 1803), pp. 183-84. Posey remarked that generally Presbyterian ministers did little itinerating or visiting at distances. Their principal concern was to hold and attract local Presbyterians. See Presbyterian Church, p. 23.

In a year he established two congregations and was the leader of the Presbyterians in his area. Although Gasper River enjoyed a small revival in May, 1797, the fall found what M'Gready called "a general coldness and religious stupidity" which lasted until the next spring. To counter this relaxation, M'Gready introduced his prayer pact, which took the form of a written covenant, binding those who subscribed to a regular regimen of devotions in anticipation of "the outpouring of his spirit." After a declaration of faith, the covenant stated:

Therefore, we bind ourselves to observe the third Saturday 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 Saturday evening, beginning at the setting of the sun, and one half hour every Sabbath morning, at the rising of the sun, in pleading with God to revive his work.

Whatever the spiritual effect of such a pact, the obvious social and emotive consequences were to keep alive the felt need for a

---


21M'Gready to Coke, p. 181.

22Robert Donnell, Thoughts on Various Subjects (Louisville: Board of Publication, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1854), pp. 215-16; also Smith, History of the Christian Church, pp. 565-66.
Effect of the Preparatory Year

The period 1796-1797 which served as a prelude to the revival was important in the life of M'Gready. By 1800, E. L. Starling found that the outlaws were being driven from the country, and responsible citizens were attempting to establish a more stable society. He said:

... it was not to be denied that the untiring labors of Mr. McGready, and those who assisted him had been the means of restoring the country to law and order, and regulating rude ways to a proper observance of moral and true business principles. The looseness, which had hitherto governed men and women in their character and actions, had given way to the more refined and virtuous teachings of the preachers....

Accurate measuring of preaching effect is always difficult, but whether M'Gready and his fellow ministers and reformers did affect the pioneer society was never questioned.

II. "A FEW DROPS BEFORE A MIGHTY RAIN..."

The term "Revival of 1800" was applied to the Kentucky "Awakening" because its influences spread that year beyond the Cumberland. M'Gready saw the revival in two parts. He said the awakening reached its height in 1800 and the "mighty rain" began to pour. He felt that the preceding three years were the preparation,

23 Davidso?, History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, p. 133.

when the "few drops" fell in his congregations. Furthermore, the

camp meeting began its influence in 1800 at Gasper River when "people

were attracted from all the country round about by the vivid and

compelling revivalistic preaching of James M'Gready." In reality,

M'Gready's part in the awakening began in 1797, but before it was over

mass evangelism was patterned after the camp meeting, and the frontier

had a new denomination. As Benjamin W. McDonnold, Cumberland

Presbyterian historian, stated, "Our origin was in the revival . . . .

It began in 1797."  

In 1801, James M'Gready wrote four personal chronicles of the

revival's progress. Generally, he attempted to describe his personal


26 William Warren Sweet, Religion in the Development of American

Culture, 1765-1840 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952),

pp. 148-49.

27 Benjamin W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland

Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland

Presbyterian Church, 1888), p. 10.

28 The most famous of these records was a letter sent to Samuel

Ramsey of Knox County, Tennessee, dated October 23, 1801. Ramsey

forwarded it to the New York Missionary Magazine, where it received

national circulation. See New York Missionary Magazine, III (No. 2)

pp. 155-59. Smith reproduced the letter as "Narrative of the


ix-xvi. All subsequent references to this chronicle will be cited as

"Narrative." The second most complete M'Gready history is his letter

to John McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801). This letter is in the library of

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The third record is M'Gready's

letter to Thomas Coke (previously cited), written at the request of John

McGee. The least significant chronicle is his opening division of the


341-55.
involvement with it in the Cumberland area. He largely confined himself to the "sacramental" meetings which he called the "most remarkable seasons." 29

Although this analysis deals with the influence of M'Gready upon the Revival of 1800, a study of his life during this period is a review of much of the early revival. As Richard Beard said, "... a history of Mr. McGready would be a history of the revival ... he was its most earnest advocate, and powerful promoter." 30

Significantly, the Gasper River congregation opened the revival. M'Gready noted that the first evidence appeared during the May sacramental meeting. He recorded:

A woman, who had been a professor, in full communion with the church, found her old hope false and delusive--she was struck with deep conviction, and in a few days was filled with joy and peace in believing. 31

M'Gready reported that she began visiting friends and relations, pleading with them to seek the "new birth" experience. The effect benefited M'Gready's preaching, for it seemed to prove the message which he had been advocating since his arrival. McDonnell reported that many were "coming to him about their spiritual


31 M'Gready, "Narrative," pp. ix-x.
condition." The revivalist recorded that during the summer an additional ten converts resulted from the woman's testimonials and his intensified preaching.

This beginning visibly supported the message of M'Gready. Although he recorded that a "general deadness" crept into the church during the fall, the previous experience was sufficient to lead the congregation into the prayer pact already mentioned. Opposition was quieted, and expectation was created. Each day and week and year, M'Gready seemed to gain additional force.

1798

In 1798, M'Gready was involved in three sacramental meetings where "experimental religion" effects appeared. On the fourth Sunday of July, the Lord's Supper was celebrated at Gasper River. The "Lord appeared in Majesty and Power," according to M'Gready. Virtually every home was affected, and McDonnold recorded that for weeks:

Secular business was forgotten, and men under deep convictions spent the days alone in the woods, weeping and praying.

---

32 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 11.

33 M'Gready, "Narrative," pp. ix-x.

34 Ibid., p. x.

35 Finley, History of Russellville, I, pp. 11-12.

36 M'Gready to Coke, pp. 181-82. The inference is that some audience member was under a feeling or conviction which, for M'Gready, was divine in nature. See also M'Gready, "Narrative," p. x.
Groups that met in the houses talked of eternity, and wept together over their ruined condition. 37

Each sacramental meeting became the springboard for the next. The first Sunday in September, Muddy River congregation met for its sacramental service. According to the minister, the "Lord graciously poured forth his spirit, to the awakening of many careless sinners." 38

Here and at the Red River meeting (probably in October), the intensity of the religious devotions increased. Many became concerned with their soul's salvation, 39 one eyewitness reporting that "salvation" dominated the thinking of the community. 40 The congregation's desire for the new birth experience lent impetus to each sermon. 41 Few,

37 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 11. One of the charges made against M'Gready was that he distracted persons from their normal business. He did not deny such a charge, but said that these people were so concerned about their soul's condition that they had no thought to give to "worldly business." M'Gready, "Narrative," I, p. x.

38 M'Gready, "Narrative," p. x.

39 Ibid.

40 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 11-12. By late fall of 1798, the revival began to spread all over the Logan district. At private assemblies and in secret places, the people of Logan became vitally concerned about the state of their salvation. McDonnold called this "revival" one without "preaching, without public meetings, without any high pressure methods" (p. 11). These were obvious effects of the preaching of the past two years.

41 M'Gready, "Narrative," p. x. M'Gready said that "awakening work went on with power under every sermon. The people seemed to hear, as for eternity."
however, experienced "regeneration." One result was an intensification of emotional prayer, but another was a negative reaction to such heightened emotionalism.

James Balch, a Presbyterian minister recently migrated from Orange Presbytery, provided the first significant opposition to M'Gready. With two members of M'Gready's Muddy River congregation, Balch spoke out openly during the closing months of 1798. By 1799, he organized other conservative Presbyterian ministers of the region. Finley summarized three reasons for this opposition: first, Balch believed that M'Gready preached Arminianism; second, Balch openly opposed the noise and confusion associated with the frontier meetings; and, third, Balch personally desired a congregation. By

42 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 11-12. M'Gready makes no such statement.

43 Coffman, History of Logan County, p. 58. M'Gready mentions that Balch joined forces with a "Mr. R," one of the local people, "Narrative," p. x. Coffman mentioned Benjamin Sawyers, a North Carolinian, who arrived in Logan in 1797 and finding M'Gready's sermons and methods distasteful, became instrumental in bringing Balch to the region. The nature of their opposition is seen in the contrast that Coffman makes with David Sawyers, the brother of Benjamin. Coffman said that David was "calm" in the opposition, regarding the M'Gready faction as "erring brethren and fanatics."

44 The Presbyterian ministry was evenly divided over the revival. In opposition were Thomas Craighead, James Balch, John Bowman, Samuel Donnell, and Terah Templin, who were known as the anti-revival party by 1802.

45 Finley, History of Russellville, I, p. 49. Finley is generally in accord with the revival. His estimate of Balch was that he "was a man of ordinary intellect, but with as good an education as his intellect could grasp."
the latter end of 1799, the Presbyterian ministry of Transylvania was divided over the advisability of revivals. 46

Balch ridiculed the revival preacher; moving from home to home, he gathered the dissenters. Concerning Balch and his dissension, M'Gready said:

.. ./Balch/ involved our infant churches in confusion, disputation, &c. opposed the doctrines preached here; ridiculed the whole work of the revival; formed a considerable party, &c. &c. In a few weeks this seemed to have put a final stop to the whole work, and our infant congregation remained in a state of deadness and darkness from the fall, through the winter, and until the month of July, 1799. . . . 47

The influence of Balch was probably confined to the Muddy River congregation, while Red River and other nearby churches supported M'Gready. By fall the awakening spread to other congregations in Cumberland and its environs. 48

1799

In July, 1799, M'Gready attended a sacramental service at Red River. Generally, these meetings were conducted during the latter part of the week, concluding with the Lord's Supper service on Sunday. But M'Gready significantly recorded that the audience was

46 McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 39-40.


visibly affected on Monday. He wrote:

This was a very solemn time throughout. On Monday the power of God seemed to fill the congregation; the boldest, daring sinners in the country covered their faces and wept bitterly. After the congregation was dismissed, a large number of people stayed about the doors, unwilling to go away. Some of the ministers proposed to me to collect the people in the meeting-house again, and perform prayer with them, accordingly we went in, and joined in prayer and exhortation. The mighty power of God came amongst us like a shower from the everlasting hills--God's people were quickened and comforted; yea, some of them were filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Sinners were powerfully alarmed and some precious souls were brought to feel the pardoning love of Jesus.49

Considering that M'Gready's report was written prior to any great opposition, it seems evident that the M'Gready meetings by 1799 extended over a period of days and utilized the services of several ministers. The reopening of the services indicates a constant appraisal of audience feelings. M'Gready specifically mentioned that only a portion of the ministers considered opening the services again. He indicated, therefore, that certain of the opposition party either participated in the services or observed his preaching and methods. He did not identify the number of converts, but he suggested "a very general awakening of the unconverted; and a few precious souls felt happy in the pardoning love of Jesus."50

49 "Narrative," p. xi. Smith indicates that M'Gready led in directing the activities inside the building. History of Christian Church, p. 568.

50 "Narrative," p. xi.
However, at Gasper River in August, M'Gready claimed twenty converts, with "great numbers" being "struck to the ground and made to cry for mercy, as the condemned malefactor would for a pardon."\(^{51}\)

By this time, John Rankin had assumed the ministerial duties at Gasper.\(^{52}\) Although Rankin later became a Shaker, he and M'Gready were in complete agreement, and M'Gready spoke of him as a "precious instrument in the hand of God."\(^{53}\)

M'Gready reported that Monday of the Gasper meeting was particularly unusual. M'Gready, the visiting minister, used Hebrews 11:16 as his text for "a plain gospel sermon" on "The Better Country."\(^{54}\) He recorded that "a great solemnity continued during the sermon" which was followed by an exhortation from Rankin. However, M'Gready noted:

\[
\ldots \text{the people all kept their seats for a considerable space, whilst awful solemnity appeared in the countenances of a large majority. Presently several persons under deep convictions broke forth into a loud outcry--many fell to the ground, lay powerless, groaning, praying and crying for}
\]


\(^{52}\)Rankin later became the first Shaker convert of any significance in lower Kentucky. In 1798, he came into Logan County. He was an ardent revival Presbyterian until his defection to the Shakers in 1807-8.

\(^{53}\)"Narrative," p. xi.

\(^{54}\)The text was, "But now they [faithful Old Testament heroes] 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." Such a text provides means for discussion of a variety of themes.
He interpreted this emotionalism as the power of God in a "visible" form.

For the first time at one of his meetings, M'Gready records the "falling" exercise which was accompanied by "shouting." McDonnold, a Cumberland historian, views this meeting as the first occurrence of a physical "exercise." Men fell to the floor and, although "entirely conscious," remained prostrate and unmoving for hours at a time. When the sensation passed, they arose "with shouts of victory on their tongues." Two hypotheses have been offered to explain this behavior. The neuro-psychological explanation stressing the physical reaction to emotional stimuli has been suggested by those who saw no supernatural interposition. But the "believer," like James Smith,  

55 "Narrative," pp. xi-xii.  
56 M'Gready, "Vindication," Works, II, p. 345. In the nationally published history, he blandly reported that "many" fell, perhaps indicating that such behavior occurred before. See "Narrative," pp. xi-xii.  
57 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 12.  
58 Ibid., p. 12.  
59 For a general treatment of the various views on these phenomenon, see Frederick Morgan Davenport, Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals. A classic work dealing with religious experiences of many varieties is William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, A Study of Human Nature (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1961). More recent studies of religious psychology are helpful, such as Orlo Strunk, Jr. (ed.),
interpreted this action as entirely divine. Smith wrote:

... some had such clear views of the corruptions of their hearts, the sinfulness of their lives, and their exposure to misery, that they were constrained to cry for mercy; some were so overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and the presence of that Holy God against whom they had rebelled, that they fell from their seats upon the floor, and there lay in agony, pleading for the pardon, of their innumerable transgressions. Such were the heart piercing influences of the Holy Spirit, that not only those who made no profession of an interest in the blood of Christ were thus affected, but some who were members of the church were overwhelmed with the presence of God, and could not withstand the mighty influence of the truth ... . 60

For one, like Smith, who accepted a Holy Spirit intervention, the cause was clear--man's guilt consciousness was overcome by the Holy Spirit and the appeals presented by a divinely assisted preacher.

M'Gready carefully mentioned that these outbursts, entirely spontaneous, occurred after the services concluded. He obviously wished to counter the charges of poor decorum in his services. Equal to the demands of the moment, however, M'Gready "passed through the multitude," counseled and gave assistance as he could. 61 M'Gready recorded:

As I passed through the multitude, a woman, lying in awful


60 History of the Christian Church, p. 569.

61 "Narrative," pp. xi-xii. Smith reported that "the ministers" went to the assistance of the audience. See History of the Christian Church, p. 569.
distress, called me to her. Said she, "I lived in your congregation in Carolina; I was a professor, and often went to the communion; but I was deceived; I have no religion; I am going to hell."\(^{62}\)

M'Gready offered another illustration of a "convicted" person, an old man who:

\[\text{work of our souls is yet}
\begin{align*}
\text{will all be damned.}^{63}& \text{lived prayerless, ungodly lives; the work of our souls is yet to begin; we must get religion, or we will all be damned.}^{63}
\end{align*}
\]

M'Gready obviously presented these instances as typical of two types of persons; the first, those who were "unsaved religious professors" and the second, those who had never professed spiritual salvation.

He observed that "time would fail me to mention every instance of this kind."\(^{64}\) "Slain" persons on the floor; "convicted" persons crying out for heavenly withheld grace; whole families pleading for the assistance of a minister; a person shouting loudly that he had been blessed with the saving unction--gave a composite picture of the 1799 meeting. It is little wonder, as McDonnold reported, this strange sight "drew vast crowds to McGready's meetings."\(^{65}\)

M'Gready mentioned another sacramental session during 1799,

\[\text{---}^{66}\]

\(\text{62}^{62}\)"Narrative," pp. xi-xii.

\(\text{63}^{63}\)Ibid.

\(\text{64}^{64}\)"Narrative," pp. xi-xii.

\(\text{65}^{65}\)McDonnold, \textit{Cumberland Presbyterian Church}, p. 12.
at Little Muddy River in September. Of this meeting, he wrote,
"The circumstances of it were equal, if not superior to those of
Gasper River." 66

During these months another precedent-setting circumstance
occurred. A family which had recently migrated from North Carolina
heard of the Gasper meeting and determined to attend the next
M'Gready service. Usually, local church members took into their
homes those who came from a distance. This family, however, had
no friends nearby and expeditiously came in a wagon to camp during
the services. According to McDonnold, "their example was followed
by several families," 67 which in effect made the Red River session
of 1800 an unplanned camp meeting.

The events of the previous three years had prepared the frontier
settlements to expect the camp meeting extravagances. The story of
the Gasper and Muddy River meetings was told through the entire
region during the winter of 1799-1800. By 1800, the whole region
expected these phenomena to happen, and many were eager to parti-
cipate.

III. "A MIGHTY RAIN. . . ."

James M'Gready was associated with ten different meetings

66 "Narrative," p. xii.
67 McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 12.
during 1800. He began visiting other congregations, forming an informal camp-meeting circuit, and, by the end of the year, claimed a total of 340 converts. In 1800 and 1801, he was at the height of his popularity. His letters were printed in national magazines; he corresponded with Methodist leaders in the East; he was on cordial terms with other Presbyterian ministers. Finley stated, "His fame spread everywhere--amid the mountains and on the Atlantic slope, thousands clapped their hands for his success, and read the news of his triumphs with exultation." 68

1800

M'Gready opened the sacramental season in June at Red River in what he called "the greatest time we have ever seen before." 69 Five ministers were present, four of them Presbyterian and one a Methodist. John McGee, the Methodist, came with his brother William, whose association with M'Gready dated from the Carolina days. 70 Though of different communions, William, a liberal Presbyterian from Shiloh

68 Finley, History of Russellville, I, pp. 54-55.

69 "Narrative," p. xii.

70 The McGee brothers were North Carolinians. William McGee was one of those converted in the North Carolina revival. The Orange Presbytery licensed him in 1792, and he moved to Tennessee in 1794 but was not active until 1800. He later became a Cumberland Presbyterian. John McGee joined the Methodists. See John B. M'Ferrin, History of Methodism in Tennessee (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1869), I, pp. 290-99.
County (now Smith), Tennessee, united with his brother for meetings in sparsely populated western Kentucky and Ohio. On the way, the brothers stopped for the Red River sacrament. Generally, ministers of the same faith cooperated as illustrated by M'Gready's previous custom, but rarely did this cooperation cross denominational lines. 71

Nevertheless, at this meeting M'Gready invited John McGee to speak on Sunday afternoon. 72 After Red River, interdenominational

71 McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 18-19. Especially was this true between Methodists and Presbyterians as each was suspicious of the other's salvation.

72 John McGee later dated the Red River events in 1799, but he obviously was mistaken as to the chronology, an understandable mistake as his record was written in 1820. The original letter is dated June 23, 1820, and was addressed to Thomas L. Douglass, presiding Elder of the Nashville District, Methodist Church. McGee stated that in 1799, he and William, his brother, agreed to the tour. This was taken as evidence that the events recorded occurred in that year. It is entirely possible that he referred only to the agreement and not the tour itself. Nevertheless, Methodist historians, using the McGee document as primary evidence, have dated the Red River and Gasper River events in 1799. See Albert H. Redford, The History of Methodism in Kentucky (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1868), I, p. 265; and Thomas Marshal Smith, Legends of the War of Independence and Earlier Settlement in the West (Louisville: J. F. Brennan, 1855), pp. 371-81. McDonnold and Coffman examined this point and found it to be incorrect in view of McGee's relation of 1800 events in the same year as 1799 events. See McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 15-18; and Coffman, History of Logan County, pp. 80-81. The view which supports M'Gready's date chronology was accepted by Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting; Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), pp. 30-34; Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River, The Story of the Great Revivalists and Their Impact Upon Religion in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), pp. 24-25; and William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), pp. 328-29. The original McGee letter was published in the Methodist Magazine, Vol. IV, pp. 189-91, and extracts herein used are from the reprint in Redford, History of Methodism, I, pp. 267-72.
fellowship became a significant feature of M'Gready's meetings. His conviction that election did not recognize denominational lines explains his conduct. In a sermon on "The Christian's Journey to the Heavenly Canaan," he held that in Heaven:

... all disputes and suspicions are banished; the names of Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Methodist and Baptist, shall be known no more. Luther, Calvin and Zuinglius [sic] shall agree. Toplady and Wesley shall quarrel no more; but shall adore the matchless grace and the splendid glories of Jehovah; and love divine, emanating from God, will unite all together, and continually draw them nearer to Christ, their living head. 73

Lasting from Saturday through Monday evening, the meeting crowded as much preaching as possible into the available time. John McGee preached each day, suggesting that all the ministers shared daily pulpit duties. 74 Thomas Marshal Smith, who purports to base his Legends on the accurate reports of hundreds of eyewitnesses as well as the personal testimony of John McGee, records that when the assembly time arrived, the meeting house was inadequate to hold a third of those already present; and that as time passed, people were still arriving in groups of "dozens, fifties and hundreds." 75 An

73 Works, I, p. 332.

74 Redford, History of Methodism, pp. 268-70. He mentions preaching on successive days, which would not have been more often than the Presbyterians present.

75 T. M. Smith, Legends, p. 375. Although the title of the work indicates that the contents could be considered of questionable reliability, the author claims as his sources, hundreds of eyewitnesses of the revival. He does relate details that no authority presents which seem to validate much of his material. See pp. 371-81.
open-air pulpit was erected in a nearby grove, timber seats provided, and "the thousands" prepared to worship. In this way necessity was the instigator of the open-air meeting.

For two days pressures built. Mc'Gready probably preached twice a day to the whole assembly or many times to small groups scattered over the area. John McGee noted that after the Sunday sermons of William McGee and William Hodge, listeners freely shed tears, but "all was silent until Monday."\(^7^6\) Finally on Monday, William Hodge opened the services, and William McGee followed. During Hodge's address, one woman cried aloud, but was silenced. During an intermission, the Presbyterians, except for William McGee, conferred privately. Unexpectedly, John McGee took the floor with an animated and emotional address, "shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy. . . ."\(^7^6\) John McGee admitted that shouting was improper conduct for a Presbyterian meeting and that he was warned at the time that he was disorderly, but "losing sight of the fear of man," he continued with catastrophic results. He said:

\[\ldots\] the floor was soon covered with the slain; screams for mercy pierced the heavens, and mercy came down. Some found forgiveness, and many went away from that meeting, feeling unutterable agonies of soul for redemption in the blood of Jesus.\(^7^7\)

\(^7^6\)Redford, History of Methodism, p. 268.

\(^7^7\)Ibid., pp. 268-69.
M'Gready reported that "multitudes were struck down under awful conviction; the cries of the distressed filled the whole house. There you might see profane swearers, and sabbath-breakers pricked to the heart, and crying out, 'what shall we do to be saved?" While Methodist sources observed that some thirty to forty had been converted, M'Gready recorded only ten.

The appearance of the exercises placed the Presbyterian ministers in a dilemma. They could neither approve nor disapprove when obviously M'Gee accomplished what they attempted. They apparently adopted a "wait and see" attitude. By 1801, M'Gready justified even the "jerks" as the influence of the Holy Spirit, arguing that the numerous reformatons proved such outbursts could not be evil. His failure to mention the activity of John McGee led to the charge of envy, but this seems unfair in view of his actions and his 1801 letter to Bishop Thomas Coke as a favor to McGee. Although M'Gready did not countenance the

---

78 "Narrative," pp. xii-xiii.
79 T. M. Smith, Legends, p. 373.
80 "Narrative," pp. xii-xiii.
81 T. M. Smith, Legends, p. 373. This appears to be a supposition, but generally in line with the overall history. At no time is there evidence that M'Gready directly opposed a means which showed success.
83 Robert Davidson was a severe critic of M'Gready. Although praising the revival as a religious good and M'Gready as one of its principal leaders, he rarely failed to point out the foibles of the man. His method is subtle as in this case where he said that the silence
extreme techniques of McGee, the difference in approach is one of
degree. He seemed to excuse minimal "expressions" occurring during
worship and openly encouraged the "exercises" at other times. In a
short time the phrase "General Camp Meeting" was common, signify­
ing a jointly conducted meeting where Methodist, Baptist, and
Presbyterian ministers all presided and preached for the common
cause.

During the Red River meeting, several families encamped near
the gathering place. M'Gready observed that the majority of those
converted came from the camping group. Pressed by enlarged
audiences, lack of available lodging, and accepting the campers' conversion as a token of divine approval, he issued public invitations
that the next sacramental service was to be a "camp meeting" at
Gasper River the last week in July.

Gasper River. The invitations brought persons:
.
.
.
from a distance of forty, fifty, and even a hundred

illustrates "perhaps, a degree of spiritual ambition of which the good
man was not conscious." History of the Presbyterian Church in the
State of Kentucky, p. 140.

The "Vindication" is an open attempt, made in 1801, to over­
come the objections which centered on the extremes, such as falling,
crying aloud and jerking. He defended these actions as the result of
divine motivation, attempting to give Biblical precedents. Works, II,
pp. 350-56.

Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 49.

McDonnold, Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 13.
miles; whole families came in their wagons; between twenty and thirty wagons were brought to the place, loaded with people, and their provisions, in order to encamp at the meeting-house. 87

Smith reported that the wagons were arranged in a large square in which a temporary speaking platform was built of logs, having a small handrail for the speaker's convenience. Logs served as seats. 88

Beginning on Saturday and continuing until Tuesday morning, John McGee, Hodge, and M'Gready preached. By Saturday evening a spontaneous revival of "serious" persons occurred in the nearby church building where an all night prayer meeting ensued. According to Smith, the night was similar to the Red River meeting with many falling and crying "aloud for mercy." 89 Both ministers and laymen assisted the fallen privately, and when the whole session closed on Tuesday, M'Gready reported forty-five conversions. Bernard Weisberger interpreted the occasion as follows:

The outside was raw enough. Once again McGready exhorted, and once again sinners fell prostrate to the ground. Night came on; inside the meetinghouse, candlelight threw grotesque, waving shadows on the walls. Outside, the darkness deepened the sense of mystery and of eternity's

87 "Narrative," p. xiii. Charles Johnson calls this, "what was in all probability the first planned 'camp meeting' in the United States, if not in the world." Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 36. No previous record of such a meeting exists, although this is not absolute evidence that no other occurred prior to this date. M'Gready does not appear aware that he instituted a new worship pattern.

88 Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 574.

89 Ibid.
nearness. Preachers grew hoarse and exhausted, but insatiable worshipers gathered in knots to pray together, and to relieve their feelings by telling each other of "the sweet wonders which they saw in Christ." Hour followed hour, into dawn. . . . Lightheaded and hollow-eyed, the "mourners," or unconcerted, listened alternately to threats of sulphur and promises of bliss, from Saturday until Monday. On Tuesday, after three throbbing days, they broke it up. Forty-five had professed salvation. Satan had gotten a thorough gouging. 90

The reports of the frequency of the exercises should not, however, be mistaken for the generalization that these meetings were merely periods of violent, uncontrolled emotionalism. Apparently most worshipers were not seized by the paroxysms, and Mc'Gready's record of forty-five converts from thousands in attendance indicates that the majority were merely witnesses of these strange events. The camp meeting provided both time and opportunity for men and women to satisfy sincerely felt religious needs. Though the revival was three years old, the participants needed time to understand the new physical "exercises."

Davidson found that the camp meeting in Kentucky "spread like wildfire, one after another was held in rapid succession." 91 In these open-air meetings, the exercises were frequent. Ministerial cooperation, multiple services, and emotional preaching characterized the 1800 revival. As Walter Posey said, "If it were possible to pass in

91Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church, p. 135.
rapid succession from one camp meeting to another, the bold and salient features of each would form a composite picture similar to the one which follows."\(^92\)

**Latter part of 1800.** During the remainder of 1800, M'Gready listed in his "Narrative" eight additional camp meetings,\(^93\) most of which he attended. Besides the total of 340 converts which he claimed for the camp meetings, M'Gready mentioned that "private occasions, common-days preaching, and societies, would swell a letter to a volume."\(^94\) He spent the year "actively and successfully engaged in promoting the work \(/

\text{revival}/ \text{in Kentucky.}"\(^95\) On the weekend of the fifth Sunday in August a meeting, held at nearby Muddy River, lasted for four days and though the Methodists claimed hundreds of converts,\(^96\)


\(^93\)"Narrative," pp. xi-xv.

\(^94\)Ibid., p. xv.

\(^95\)Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 576. Smith indicated that M'Gready attended a meeting at one of "Mr. M'Gee's" congregations with the inference that this was John and the meeting was one sponsored by the Methodists.

\(^96\)T. M. Smith recorded the undocumented testimony of an elder of the Muddy River church, who stated that at this meeting, James M'Gready was one of the many church members and preachers that "fell strewing the ground." Smith recorded that M'Gready felt, for the first time, the assurance of his divine election. This, however, does not seem to correspond to other known facts. Smith noted that this meeting lasted for four days and nights; "hundreds claimed conversion and many claimed a restoration to God." Smith, Legends, pp. 375-77.
M'Gready reported only fifty.  

Moving into Tennessee, M'Gready attended a meeting at the Ridge congregation near the Nashville-Bowling Green Road and recorded forty-five converts. M'Gready's preaching reputation brought great numbers of people. John McGee was also present and proudly claimed that "one hundred souls" were converted.

Moving further into Tennessee, M'Gready cooperated with William Hodge, recently arrived from North Carolina, in a meeting at Shiloh. Previously, a number of persons from Shiloh attended the Gasper River meeting with William Hodge. Some went to Gasper River to disprove what they heard, by showing that the "falling" could be quickly cured by bleeding or smelling agents. But some of these same persons returned home as converts to spread the news. The sacrament was scheduled for the third Sunday in September, and

97 "Narrative," pp. xi-xv.
98 Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 576.
99 Redford, History of Methodism, p. 270.
100 McDonnold told of one Gasper incident in which a Shiloh visitor fell to the ground, and others rushed to him with bleeding lancet and camphor in an attempt to disprove the contention that such demonstrations were of divine origin. McDonnold recorded that before the Shiloh meeting, twenty conversions were made without formal sermons by the converts of the Red River meeting. Both these incidents point up the congregational division existing in the scattered churches. That Hodge arrived in 1800 and immediately went to Red River is sufficient to point up his support of M'Gready and the revival. See McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 13-15.
when the appointed time arrived, "many thousands" gathered.\(^{101}\) A Sumner County eyewitness said people fell "like men slain in battle" under the preaching of William McGee and McGready.\(^{102}\) Hodge wrote to Bishop Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal Church that on Sunday evening the center of the camp had people "lying in heaps and scattered all around; the sighs, groans, and prayers seemed to pierce the heavens, while the Power of God fell upon almost all present.\(^{103}\)

McGee mentioned that at this meeting some "Pharisees cried disorder and confusion," but this opposition had little effect, for the Shiloh

\(^{101}\)Redford, History of Methodism, p. 271.

\(^{102}\)John Carr, Early Times in Middle Tennessee (Nashville: E. Stevenson & F. A. Owen, 1857), pp. 67-68. Carr was a resident of the area. He mentions that the first camp meeting in the Sumner County area of Tennessee was at "Robert Shaw's on the head waters of the Red river, in the summer of 1800." He does not mention the name of Hodge, while he does list McGee, Rankin, Craighead, and "McGrady" as the Presbyterian preachers in attendance. This gap with the summer allusion opens some confusion as to whether he refers to the Shiloh meeting of September. He could be speaking of the Ridge meeting that preceded Shiloh or even one that McGready does not mention, though the latter possibility is remote. Nevertheless, he recorded that a "vast multitude" assembled and that "such displays of Divine power as were there seen, I had never before witnessed. Under the preaching of Messrs. McGrady and McGee, the people fell down like men slain in battle. . . ."

\(^{103}\)Extract of Letter of William Hodge to Francis Asbury (no date). The Methodist Magazine for the year 1803; Being a Continuation of the Arminian Magazine, First Published by the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises, on General Redemption, XXVI (London, 1803), pp. 268-72. The letter was apparently written late in the summer of 1801 as evidenced by context.

\(^{104}\)Redford, History of Methodism, p. 271.
meeting became the most successful of the year, having the largest attendance and, according to M'Gready, seventy converts. 105

Sometime near the first of October, M'Gready itinerated in the Red Banks district along the Ohio. 106 It is therefore questionable that M'Gready attended the camp meeting held at the congregation of Craighead near Nashville. Craighead opposed the revival, its doctrines and methods, but McDonnold recorded that some of Craighead's members who had been converts of earlier meetings pressured him to hold one. For the occasion M'Gready listed forty converts. Apparently William McGee was in charge. 107

Significantly, three Methodist dignitaries, Francis Asbury, William McKendree, and Bishop Whatcoat, arrived for the last day of the meeting and all three were invited to preach. Concerning this event, Asbury wrote in his *Journal*:

> Yesterday, and especially during the night were witnessed scenes of deep interest. In the intervals between preaching the people refreshed themselves and horses, and returned upon

---

106 *History of the Presbyterian Church*, II, p. 165.
107 This congregation met on Drakes Creek, a short distance outside of Nashville. The building was of stone, but unfinished, without window glass or finished ceiling. Two thousand were present on Sunday, but half left prior to Monday. Craighead may not even have been present. See McDonnold, *Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, p. 15; Smith, *History of the Christian Church*, p. 578; and Elmer T. Clark and others (eds.), *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), II, p. 257.
the ground. The stand was in the open air, embosomed in
the wood of lofty beech trees. The ministers of God,
Methodists and Presbyterians, united their labours, and
mingled with the child-like simplicity of primitive times.
Fires blazing here and there dispelled the darkness, and the
shouts of the redeemed captives, and the cries of precious
souls struggling into life, broke the silence of midnight. . . . 108

Asbury's subject, "The Work of God," may indicate his approval of
what he saw as does his diary notation.

Four additional meetings were conducted that fall, two in the
Logan area and two in the Cumberlands of Tennessee, with a total of
eighty converts. 109 M'Gready certainly attended the Logan revivals,
and he perhaps journeyed south again for the last two meetings.

1801

After the successes of the previous year, M'Gready and the rest
of the revivalists were eager for the sacramental season to open
again. James Smith wrote that with the spring these men were on the
move, "travelling from congregation to congregation, proclaiming
salvation. . . ." 110 Evidently the revivalists started early, for
while the first meeting of 1800 was in June, M'Gready spoke in March,

108 Clark and others (eds.), Journal and Letters of Asbury, II,
p. 257. Asbury concluded his Journal notation by the pointed but
forgivable comment, "I rejoice that God is visiting the sons of the
Puritans, who are candid enough to acknowledge their obligations to
the Methodists."


110 History of the Christian Church, pp. 576-77.
1801, at Shiloh in Tennessee. Writing to his old teacher, McMillan, M'Gready admitted that the successes were not so numerous during 1801, but that for every convert at a sacramental meeting, one was "brought into the fold" through normal preaching in home congregations. Respecting his own experience at Red River, he said that except for two Sundays, his preaching regularly excited some "visible tokens of God's power & presence." The total number of camp-meeting converts for 1801, according to M'Gready, was 179.

During 1801, M'Gready observed the conversion "experiences" of two of his daughters. He wrote to McMillan, saying:

---


112 Ibid. M'Gready listed a total of 340 converts for 1800.

113 M'Gready to McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801). The list of 1801 meetings and conversions is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Converts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shiloh (March)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drakes Creek (May)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red River (June)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge (July)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gasper River (August)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Creek (August)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muddy River (August)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockbridge (October)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose Creek (October)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery (November)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the latter part of September and the first of October, M'Gready wrote that he and Mr. "M'G." (McGee) were at the Redbanks region on the Ohio River. This explains the September gap in his time. He mentioned having been there previously on two occasions. See "Narrative," p. xvi.
I have the pleasure to tell you that my two oldest little daughters, (the one of eight years old and the other of six) have I hope got real Religion. . . . Nothing except the salvation of my own soul, ever made me feel so happy. To hear the little creatures tell of the preciousness of Christ, and the sweetness of his Love, and praising God in language that before they could not express and pleading with other little children to repent and seek the Lord and telling them of the sufficiency and willingness of Christ to save them, melted my heart and if ever I felt gratitude to God it was then. 114

M'Gready firmly believed that the spirit of God operated in such instances and that he had no right to make a judgment condemning an expression of Jehovah's wisdom. 115

By 1801, the awakening spread to many parts of the West. Upon introduction into upper Kentucky, the camp meetings were an instant success and were scheduled almost semimonthly between May and August, with the high point reached at the gigantic Cane Ridge meeting, where, according to some reports, 25,000 persons gathered. 116

Accounts of these occasions appeared in national and foreign publications. 117 John McGee asked M'Gready to write to the Methodist

114Ibid. Hodge also mentioned children's conversions as a dominant trend of the revival. See Hodge to Asbury, Methodist Magazine, pp. 270-72.


116Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, pp. 136-37.

117Both the Methodist Magazine and the New York Missionary Magazine began publishing letters from Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. These magazines had extensive followings. Other private publications appeared, such as Angier March, Increase of Piety, or the
Bishop, Thomas Coke, who forwarded the letter to the Methodist Magazine. 118 McGready was gratified to hear that in Guilford County, North Carolina, David Caldwell's congregations had camp meetings at which there were about one hundred conversions. 119

1802 to 1804

By 1802, the "era of the gigantic camp meeting" was a reality. 120 The methods of McGready and his innovations were duplicated over the

Revival of Religion in the United States of America; containing several interesting letters not before published. Together with three remarkable dreams (Newberryport: private printing, 1802). Since almost no evangelical denomination in this country or England doubted the possibility of dreams or special powers from God granted to select persons, many of these reports were popularly accepted as fact. See also Richard M'Nemar, The Kentucky Revival, or a Short History of the Late Extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of God, in the western States of America, agreeably to Scripture-promises, and Prophecies concerning the Latter Day: With a Brief Account of the Entrance and Progress of what the world call Shakerism, among the Subjects of the Late Revival in Ohio and Kentucky (Cincinnati: John W. Browne, 1807).

118 Coke was the well known Methodist "Superintendent" of the American Methodist churches. That he sent the letter to the London publication enlarged its favor and credibility to a reading audience who knew much of Coke but little of McGready.

119 McGready wrote that Mr. Rankin returned to an October, 1801, sacramental meeting in North Carolina where families came in wagons, persons fell, and the congregation continued on the ground from Friday through Tuesday. McGready to McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801). Significantly, Ethel S. Arnett found that Mrs. Caldwell heard of McGready's successes in Kentucky and, together with other women of Buffalo congregation, held prayer meetings for a year in hopes of such an awakening in their area. This was a spontaneous repetition of McGready's prayer pact. See Ethel Stephens Arnett, Greensboro, North Carolina, The County Seat of Guilford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), p. 120.

120 Charles Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 49.
South and West. From Kentucky and Tennessee it spread to the Carolinas and west with the settlers. Peter Cartwright, who saw the M'Gready camp meeting and then adopted it in his frontier Methodist ministry, said that for years:

... a blessed revival of religion spread through almost the entire inhabited parts of the West... Presbyterians and Methodists in a great measure united in this work, met together, prayed together, and preached together. 121

By 1811, the Methodists held four or five hundred such gatherings a year and by 1820, after M'Gready's death, the Methodists alone held about a thousand camp meetings. 122

After the initial beginnings in the Cumberland, the Revival progressed over much of the West until the fervor began to decline by mid-decade. William Warren Sweet condensed the progress of the Revival as follows:

Through Kentucky and Tennessee the movement continued powerful, while from North Carolina and Georgia came reports of the progress of the revival. In 1803 a revival began among the Presbyterians on the upper Ohio and spread through all the churches of the Ohio Presbytery. Ministers from Kentucky crossed the river and carried the revival to the Ohio settlements, and by 1803 it had reached as far north as the Western Reserve. 123

---


123 Story of Religion in America, pp. 331-32.
IV. EFFECT OF JAMES M'GREASY ON THE REVIVAL OF 1800

M'Gready's effect on the Kentucky Revival of 1800 is difficult to determine because of the tendency of most contemporary religious witnesses to relegate the human factor to an obscure position. Through M'Gready's efforts, however, something new, different, and challenging entered the Western religious scene. Whatever the cause, natural or supernatural, the revival's effects could not be denied.

When combined with the social aspects of the camp meeting, religion gained a high position in frontier life. Herbert M. Morais showed in his Deism in Eighteenth Century America, for example, that deism largely became the "axis about which the religious thought of eighteenth-century America revolved. . . ." On the frontier its influence kept religion's effect small. No apologist met the rationalists on their own ground until M'Gready sparked the Kentucky Revival. As Morais observed, most of the people were "neither capable of following anti-deistic arguments nor were they especially interested in them." Although the two apologetic sermons of M'Gready which are extant could not be said to have destroyed the influence of the free-thought movement, the revival spectacle which


125 Ibid., pp. 173-74.
M'Gready and others said was divinely inspired was a proof that many frontiersmen accepted. Harvey Wish observed that the rise of rationalism was slowed by the Second Great Awakening "which drew its vitality from the unlettered southern and western frontiersmen." Some argued that because Kentucky and Tennessee were major highways to the West, they needed religious strengthening, or the trans-Mississippi states might be peopled by a non-Christian society. Such arguments are perhaps futile, but it is an unchallenged stipulation that the revival influenced the Westerner's thought away from rationalism to conservatively oriented Christianity.

From the standpoint of church additions, Sweet said that the revival's effect was "particularly marked." During the two years at the beginning of the century when the revival was at its height, the Methodist church alone grew in the West by over 6,000 members. Between 1800 and 1803, the Baptists gained more than 10,000 in Kentucky alone. The Presbyterians, however, suffering from an uncompromising theology and later splintering over the revival, did


128 Sweet, Story of Religion in America, p. 334.

129 Ibid.
not fare well. After 1801, the Methodists, Baptists, and portions of the Presbyterians entered a new era. William L. Duren, a student of Methodist history, said, "A flame of revival passion swept over the entire field, and the dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed a new demonstration of the power of Methodist evangelism." James M'Gready, a Presbyterian, was one of those responsible for this spirit of evangelism.

M'Gready influenced his time through the "planned" camp meeting. An attempt has been made here to show the progressive development of such meetings. Similar meetings probably existed before 1800, but the innovation became a permanent institution after M'Gready introduced it. The camp meeting has been misunderstood, even maligned, but also defended. It is true that extravagant "excesses" furnished "yellow journalism" news of which Paul Boase said, "... the reader carries away the impression that evangelical religion on the frontier was one vast camp meeting marked by jerks, barking, shouting and emotional orgies." Continuing, however,

---

130 Sweet, Story of Religion, pp. 334-35.


132 For the continuation of the camp meeting as a religious evangelistic and teaching tool, see Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting.

he commented:

That from these awakenings come humanitarian reform, the advancement of education, anti-slavery agitation, temperance reform, and a general neutralization of the barbaric influences usually found in a migrant population is lost in a myopic view of externals. ¹³⁴

M'Gready was interested primarily in saving souls and did not recognize strong denominational lines in evangelistic work. Perhaps at no time in American history was Protestant denominational unity more possible. Peter Mode found that an unprecedented spirit of unity characterized the early camp meetings. He wrote,

"Sectarianism was completely submerged as preachers of different faiths and church affiliations relieved each other on the same platform. . . ."¹³⁵ This was true of M'Gready's first meetings and for the continuation of which he was largely responsible. He wrote to Thomas Coke:

One observation more I would make. This glorious work has disseminated a principle of love through the hearts of all Christians. Bigotry and prejudice have received a death wound; names, parties and division seem to subside totally: Presbyterians and Methodists love one another, they preach together, and commune together, and mutually rejoice to see the work of the Lord go on.¹³⁶

As a preacher or platform orator, M'Gready was in demand

¹³⁵Mode, Frontier Spirit in American Christianity, pp. 107-8.
¹³⁶Letter to Coke, p. 184.
throughout the Cumberland. Through his preaching, he set the revival in motion, and his preaching seems to represent the oratory that characterized the early camp meeting. Once the revival began, he was called to many meetings, indicating that he could effectively use pulpit persuasion techniques. Furthermore, he became a model for a rising group of revival preachers as will be seen in the next division. Thereby, his style of address, his approach as a platform speaker, and his philosophy of public address for religious purposes passed to a new generation.
CHAPTER V

THE YEARS OF DECLINE

By 1802, the Kentucky Revival began to decline and by 1805, almost disappeared. The revival came at a critical moment when weak faith and morality existed in the Old Southwest and when churchmen had not lived up to their responsibilities. Largely viewed, the revival was beneficial to the moral standards of Western society. Even the Presbyterian moderate, David Rice, known as the Father of Presbyterianism in Kentucky, stated before the Synod of Kentucky in 1803 that:

A considerable number of persons appear to me to be greatly reformed in their morals. This is the case within the sphere of my particular acquaintance. Yea, some neighborhoods, noted for their vicious and profligate manners are now as much noted for their piety and good order. Drunkards, profane swearers, liars, quarrelsome persons, etc. are remarkably reformed.

---


Many visitors came to see this remarkable religious upheaval. One of these was George Baxter, professor at Washington Academy of Lexington, Virginia. On his return, he wrote:

Upon the whole . . . I think the revival in Kentucky, among the most extraordinary that have ever visited the church of Christ; and, all things considered, peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of that country. 3

Kentucky had a poor reputation, and the effect of the revival on the inhabitants was of special concern. Baxter reported that he found Kentucky "the most moral place I had ever been in; a profane expression was hardly heard; a religious awe seemed to pervade the country. . . ." 4

Though not directly bearing upon M'Gready's preaching in the revival of 1800, his subsequent history is important to a complete study of his preaching effectiveness. After 1805, he virtually dropped from sight, becoming an obscure minister in Western Kentucky. This chapter will analyze the events leading to his decline as a revivalist

---

Rice was the first Presbyterian minister in the state. He was educated at New-Surrey College, Virginia, and licensed by Hanover Presbytery, moving to Kentucky in 1783.


4 Ibid.
I. EARLY PRESBYTERIAN OPPOSITION

The opposition to the revival was evident in various ways. Balch publicly and privately attacked the revival doctrines and ridiculed the converts' experiences. At Gasper in 1800, others came to disprove the nature of the exercises, "armed with [bleeding]/lancet and camphor." Another incident illustrating private opposition was a man (unnamed) who, seeing his praying wife at a M'Gready meeting, forcibly dragged her away, lest she become affected by the revival phenomena. M'Gready wrote of the continuing Balch opposition in 1801, asking John McMillan not to believe reports about him unless well authenticated. M'Gready related:

At my last Sacrament at Muddy River a son of Mr. Balches and two nephews of his came on Monday morning before publick/sic/worship. A number of people were collected together for social prayer. The Balchites ran in among them & seized hold upon a man that was upon his knees at prayer and commanded him to stop and not blaspheme the Name of God. A violent riot was likely to begin. I ran in among them in order to stop it. Balches son and nephews blackguarded me with the most abusefull/sic/language, and dared me to concern with them. Still crying out, "we will contend for

5Benjamin W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), pp. 13-14.
6Ibid., pp. 40-41.
7Letter of James M'Gready to John McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801). This correspondence is in Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Faith once delivered to the Saints and bear our Testimony against delusion — I found it in vain to speak to them and walked out of the company. The Balchites followed me crying, "Ant you the pope. We are upon pope's command. We must obey two words illegible." I suppose word illegible I called aloud to the people to repair to the tent and attend the public worship and in the meantime I spoke to Mr. McGee to begin preaching in order to stop the uproar. Still they persisted until the civil magistrate interposed and put some of them in custody. The next day in a public company Mr. Balch vindicated the conduct of his son and nephews and said they would have been justifiable if they had raised the arm of flesh and come to blows. In the pulpit he vindicated their conduct in such language as this, The Israel of God came to Muddy River to contend for the faith and bear their testimony against the delusions, and the heretics persecuted them by the arm of the civil magistrate — in the space of two weeks after he came into the bounds of both my congregations to oppose the Deceiver, the Beast of America, the American Anti-Christ, and abused me and the whole of the revival in language more like a ruffin than a preacher of Christ.

Such incidents easily explain why the revival effect was not as great in 1801 as it was the previous year, for M'Gready said that "such incidents are becoming frequent." In Southern Kentucky the relatively equal support and opposition stabilized the Presbyterian situation. Yet in the Synod of Kentucky, the trend gradually moved toward the conservative view. Posey found that in 1801, few Presbyterian ministers openly supported the revival. He said:

Although eighteen Presbyterian ministers were reported present at the Cane Ridge meeting, it is difficult to find in

---

8 Ibid.

9 Letter of M'Gready to McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801).
Kentucky more than a half-dozen leading members of that ministry who held to the revivalistic program through its important years. At first the mature clergy took part, but, when the excesses became evident and the theological drift was toward the Arminian viewpoint, most of them withdrew and denounced the movement. On the other hand, the actual leaders of the movement were largely young ministers educated in the border colleges whose theology was in sharp contrast to the heavily impregnated Calvinistic theology taught at Princeton.  

The story of the theological division developed in the Cumberland Presbytery, formed in 1802.

II. CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERY; LIBERALISM AND EDUCATION

In 1802, the Presbyterian Kentucky Synod found it advisable to divide Transylvania Presbytery and form Cumberland Presbytery with jurisdiction in the southwestern section of Kentucky. Six men made up the ministerial membership; two of these were James M'Gready and William McGee, whose names "had become well known throughout the whole western country as leaders in the Great Revival." Posey found that in 1802, the presbytery was the most commanding ecclesiastical body in the Presbyterian system. Until 1806 when

---

10 Walter Brownlow Posey, The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest: 1778-1838 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1952), p. 25. The major support for the revival was in Cumberland Presbytery.


12 Posey, Presbyterian Church in Old Southwest, p. 16. The Presbytery generally met twice a year and could examine, license, and ordain ministerial candidates, install ministers, supervise all churches under its care, and serve as a court of appeal.
the Synod dissolved Cumberland, James M'Gready attended all
sessions except the last two, took an active part in the proceedings
and, as a consequence of his influence on the lives of the young
ministers who left the parent body, was given the title of "father of
the Cumberland Presbyterian Church" by John Vant Stephens, a
historian of that denomination. 13

The first meeting of the Presbytery was in April, 1803. From
the first, the revival divided this presbytery as it had the Transylvania
body. Solidly in favor of the evangelistic methods were James
M'Gready, William Hodge, William McGee, John Rankin, and Samuel
McAdow, the latter a young minister from Orange Presbytery. 14
Opposing were the Anti-Revival party, equally strong but perhaps
balanced by the moderate views of Thomas B. Craighead. 15 As
Gillett said:

There was little or no sympathy between them. They met
only when brought together in Presbytery. M'Gready
considered Balch as an opponent, who in his own neighborhood

13 John Vant Stephens, Genesis of the Cumberland Presbyterian
Church (Cincinnati: Private publication, 1941), p. 72.

14 Samuel McAdow was licensed by the Orange Presbytery in
1794 when M'Gready, Hodge, Caldwell, and McGee were members of
that body. He became a leader of the Cumberland movement after
M'Gready and Hodge returned to the parent body. See Richard Beard,
Brief Biographical Sketches of Some of the Early Ministers of the
Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Southern Methodist

15 Ezra H. Gillett, History of the Presbyterian Church in the
United States of America (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publica-
tion and Sabbath-School Work, 1864), I, p. 179.
and among his own congregations had headed a party against him. There was not a little of mutual exasperation.\textsuperscript{16}

At the first meeting on April 5, 1803, the revival supporters gained two members and, by the first of 1806, the number of ministers supporting the revival rose to ten. Thaddeus Blake found that these ten men were soon supported by four licentiates and four ministerial candidates.\textsuperscript{17}

This rapid accumulation of ministers brought the difficulties to the point where the Synod was requested to intervene and re-examine the Presbytery affairs.\textsuperscript{18} The specified reason was irregularity in the ordination of unqualified men, but perhaps the underlying purpose was to resolve the revival doctrine questions.

**Licensing the "Unqualified"**

The revival led to the establishment of far more congregations than the existing ministers could supply or serve. Following the lead of Transylvania Presbytery, the Cumberland men licensed and ordained young men who did not have the traditional Presbyterian

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Thaddeus C. Blake, The Old Log House, A History and Defense of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1879), p. 44.

\textsuperscript{18}The original Kentucky Synod Minutes are in the Philadelphia office of the Presbyterian Historical Society. However, they are published in William Warren Street, The Presbyterians, 1783-1840, A Collection of Source Materials, Vol. II of Religion on the American Frontier (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1936), pp. 306-92,
educational prerequisites. This expediency was done at the suggestion of David Rice. 19

Logical reasons stood behind this irregular action. The acceptable educational facilities were far away while the need was immediate and constantly increasing. Therefore, when talented men presented themselves as candidates, the Presbytery hastily trained and licensed some to serve as itinerant evangelists. 20 The Cumberland Presbyterians contend that M'Gready was a leader in the education of these men as he was the leader of the revival group.

Traditionally, the Presbyterian Church had strict views concerning ministerial educational standards, requesting that candidates have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and have completed a course of theological training. The first requirement could be substituted by some indication of the college equivalent as in M'Gready's own case. In this frontier revival situation, however, circumstances allowed neither for substitution nor for special permission, and the Presbytery's liberal leaders (by 1803 a majority) continued to license

---

19 This is the asserted claim of the Cumberlands, based on the defense letter (written in 1807) of the defunct Cumberland Presbytery members. "Circular Letter Addressed to the Societies and Brethren of the Presbyterian Church, recently under the Care of the Council, by the late Cumberland Presbytery; in which is a correct statement of the origin, progress, and termination of the difference between the Synod of Kentucky and the former Presbytery of Cumberland" in Theological Medium, XI (October, 1877), 395-409.

20 "Circular Letter."
the "unqualified." 21

The Cumberland liberals had proper precedent in this Second Awakening from a similar situation arising from the First Awakening. William Warren Sweet found that in the decade between 1748 and 1758, the New York Synod and the Philadelphia Synod disagreed over Presbytery right to ordain ministers and determine proper ministerial qualifications. As a result of the work of the log college seminarian, Gilbert Tennent, an agreement was reached in 1758. The individual presbyteries were left to examine the candidates' "learning and religious experience" and "nothing was said about synodical examination or college degrees." 22

Liberal Theology

M'Gready and the other revivalists were charged with unorthodox theology. Although the Presbytery records do not reveal it, the conservatives substantiated that both Cumberland and Transylvania ordained men who stated their willingness to accept the Confession of Faith, "so far only, as they believed it to agree with the word of God." 23 Robert H. Bishop stated the conservative view, "This opened a door

21 The New men of Cumberland were charged with being "unqualified," but the reply of the Presbytery was that it was their duty to determine this.


23 Bishop, Outline of Church in Kentucky, pp. 119-20.
to any one who might choose to enter, no matter what his creed might be. " Specifically, the doctrine in question was predestination, the election of a specific number to Heaven and the reprobation of a specific number to Hell. The Cumberland Presbyterians called it the doctrine of Fatality. Walter Brownlow Posey, reporting on both Methodist and Presbyterian thought in this period, concluded that:

It was inevitable that the new independence and freedom possessed by the frontiersman would turn him away from Calvinism "with its God inexorable decrees" to Arminianism with the idea of "free will," or cause him to turn, as did the frontier revolters against Calvinism /the Cumberland Presbyterians/, to a position midway between the two extremes.

Thaddeus Blake and others collected precedents for this action and presented a reasonably acceptable case for the Cumberland conduct in the ordination of liberal ministers. Perhaps most conclusive was the Adopting Act of 1729 when the Confession of Faith became the official Presbyterian creed. It held:

And in case any minister of this Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession of Faith or Catechism, he shall at the time of making such declaration, declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within

---

24 Ibid.

25 Blake, The Old Log House, p. 65. The doctrine as defined by the liberals was that God had "created a certain part of the human family" to be saved and others to be lost without any regard to their actions.

26 Posey, Presbyterian Church in Old Southwest, p. 33.

27 Blake, The Old Log House, pp. 71-73.
our bounds, and to ministerial commission, if either Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about such articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, and government. 28

This type of justifying evidence did not allay the suspicions of the traditionalists.

The view of M'Gready appears to be an extension of his position on the softening of Calvinism in preaching. The problem for the Cumberland men was to provide capable (by frontier standards) ministers for the masses, and M'Gready stood solidly with the liberals and officially "charged" or assisted at the ordination of many of these men. 29

Apparently, liberal ordination was not new in M'Gready's experience, for Barton Warren Stone reported that when he was licensed by Orange Presbytery in 1796 (the year that M'Gready left North Carolina), the examination questions were Biblically-oriented and not based upon the Confession of Faith. Furthermore, when ordained by the Transylvania Presbytery in October, 1798, when M'Gready was a member, Stone accepted the Confession of Faith

---

28Quoted in Blake, The Old Log House, pp. 71-73.

29The Cumberland Presbytery Minutes show that M'Gready functioned at the ordination of the new men as often or more often than any other member of the Presbytery. See Minutes of the "Original" Cumberland Presbytery, 1802-1806, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (Louisville: Published by the Stated Clerk, Edward L. Warren, 1906), pp. 3-18.
insofar as "consistent with the word of God." \(^{30}\)

The later history of the Kentucky conservatives does not justify their invectives toward the Cumberland party. James McChord, a strong and influential Kentucky Presbyterian, wrote in 1817 that many who considered themselves orthodox Scotch-Irish Presbyterians objected to certain "expressions of the confession" and interpreted them in a liberal manner. \(^{31}\)

Thus, M'Gready and the Cumberland revivalists felt that it was within Presbytery right to take this course of action in view of the needs so urgent at the moment. This course was characteristic for M'Gready, who only once mentioned the Confession of Faith in his published sermons, accepting the Confession in a secondary position to the Scriptures. \(^{32}\)

**Ecclesiastical Rights**

The third difficulty, and that which led to M'Gready's censure, was the Synod's attempt to negate the ordination of the "new" ministers

---

\(^{30}\)The record of Stone's ordination does not record this, however. See Charles Crossfield Ware, Barton Warren Stone; Pathfinder of Christian Union, A Story of His Life and Times (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1932), p. 74.


of Cumberland. The issue was ecclesiastical authority--whether the Presbytery did or did not have independent power to ordain without interference.

Within a year after the Cumberland Presbytery formed, the conservatives appealed the revival questions to the Kentucky Synod. Perhaps Robert H. Bishop revealed the inciting reason when he stated that if the revival party were allowed to grow:

... there is little doubt that that Presbytery, by its rapid movements, in a very short time, would have gained such an ascendancy in Synod, as to have completely swayed that body in any measure they might wish to carry.

The Synod stood above the local presbyteries and was a convention of delegations. It had authority to hear and determine appeals from presbyteries, review records, unite or divide presbyteries, and to force conformity to the church rules on members, local congregations, or presbyteries, but the Synod rarely used this power. Generally, the Synod met once each year. When the conservative groups lost control of the Cumberland Presbytery, its obvious recourse was to the conservatively oriented Kentucky Synod.

By 1803, Cumberland Presbytery was under scrutiny because its representatives did not attend the September Synod meeting nor were

---

33Bishop, Outline of the Church in Kentucky, pp. 119-20.
34Posey, Presbyterian Church in Old Southwest, p. 17.
its records submitted for examination. At the October, 1804, meeting the Synod issued citations for "all parties" pertaining to Cumberland to appear at the next session. The move was directed toward the large number of Cumberland ministers or licensees (some twenty-seven ministers, probationers, exhorters) whose educational qualifications and theological leanings were to be examined. Going beyond the citations, the Synod appointed a committee of five men to attend the next Presbytery meeting and report back to Synod. M'Gready attended this session and returned to the Cumberland country certain that such developments indicated nothing good and, perhaps through the possible withdrawal of ministers from the new congregations, could extinguish the revival itself.

---

35 A Brief History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the Proceedings of the Synod of Kentucky, Relative to the Late Cumberland Presbytery: in which is Brought to View a Brief Account of the Origin and Present Standing of the People Usually denominated Cumberland Presbyterians; as Taken from Official Documents and Facts in Possession of Synod (Lexington: Thomas T. Skillman, 1823), p. 8. This is the defense of the Synod action taken against the Cumberland Presbytery. Thomas Craighead "and others" initiated the action.

36 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

37 Kentucky Synod Minutes. All subsequent references are from Sweet's copy in The Presbyterians. See page 329. The review committee was largely composed of those bitterly opposed to the revival.

Dissolution and Censure

When the review committee returned to Synod the following year, no report was made as only one member of the committee attended the Presbytery meetings. Rather than allow another full year to pass before taking action, the Synod approved a review commission to study the charges and determine the action necessary to correct any irregularity. The Synod vested the commission with "full Synodical powers," and specifically cited M'Gready to be present for the commission's review.

On December 3rd, 1805, the commission met at Gaspé. One commissioner, John Lyle, wrote that local animosity filled the air, even to the point where lodging for the commission was difficult to secure. On the 5th and 6th, M'Gready spoke for the Cumberland group, arguing past precedents for their action and as for the leniency concerning the Confession, "they could not in conscience feel themselves bound any farther than they believed it to
correspond with the Scriptures...."  The commission's judgment was unfavorable, holding that unless the suspect ministers stated allegiance to the Confession, "no man can know what they believe in matters of Doctrine." The commission proposed to re-examine the "new men" in order to test their orthodoxy. The commission reasoned that since the newly ordained Cumberland men were not invested according to the strict order of the Presbyterian Church, they were not indeed ministers but only candidates for the ministry.

The revivalists refused to recognize the right of the commission on the ground that the Presbytery had exclusive right to examine and license its own candidates. As Sweet found:

This precipitated a crisis which soon brought about a schism. The commission summoned the members of the presbytery before it, but some of them refused to appear on the ground of its unconstitutionality. The commission also made accusations of heresy against three of the ministers, stating that they held doctrines contrary to those contained in the Confession of Faith, while others were cited to the next meeting of the Synod. Twelve ministers were summoned to stand an examination of their qualifications for the ministry, to which they refused to comply, while certain churches, presided over by untrained ministers, were declared vacant and the Cumberland Presbytery was dissolved.

---

43 Kentucky Synod Minutes, pp. 336-37.
44 Ibid. The Synod later stated that the speech inferred that M'Gready may not have agreed with the Confession on all points himself. See page 368.
45 Kentucky Synod Minutes, p. 374.
Hodge, McGee, and Rankin were the three ministers charged with heresy, specifically, the denial of election as taught in the Confession, and teaching the possibility of salvation for all men. \(^{47}\) That M'Gready was not charged indicates that his objection was to the rigidity of Presbyterian law and traditions, combined with a refusal to repudiate the actions of his Presbytery.

Their refusal to lower the barriers in tradition and theology is one reason that by 1837, the Presbyterians numbered far fewer than the Baptists and Methodists. As Sweet argued, "The churches which dealt most effectively with frontier needs were those which utilized revivalistic methods."\(^{48}\) Although through their dread of lay-evangelism and fear of loose Calvinism, the Presbyterians lost large numbers of possible adherents, they ultimately gained a prestige which the Methodist historian, Walter B. Posey, said, made them "in several ways... the most influential religious body on the frontier."\(^{49}\)

**III. M'GREADY AND THE CUMBERLAND CHURCH**

When the Presbytery was dissolved, the revival party formed

\(^{47}\)Kentucky Synod Minutes, pp. 343-44.


\(^{49}\)Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, p. 126.
themselves into an informal council. The purpose was for mutual encouragement and for seeking possible redress through the General Assembly. At first, M'Gready associated freely with the council, but foreseeing that "the final issue would result in a separation from the Presbyterian Church," he withdrew from active participation, finally making his peace with the Presbyterian authorities in 1807.

The period from 1805 to 1809 must have been exceedingly difficult for M'Gready. He was reinstated by the Kentucky Synod in 1807, but he did not attend the meetings of Transylvania until 1809. The pressures of the period, probably the reason for his move to Western Kentucky, and his own need for time to formulate a plan of action tend to explain his absence from official meetings. His obvious support of the new measures, countered by his refusal to join in the separate Cumberland denomination, indicates the resolution in his

---

50 Stephens, *Genesis of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, p. 72. In 1807, under the leadership of William Hodge, the council appealed by letter to the General Assembly. Acting unofficially, the Assembly wrote to the Synod asking a review of the previous action, saying that the decision appeared "at least of questionable regularity. . . ." Synod Minutes, pp. 359-60.


52 M'Gready sent a letter of submission to the Presbytery in 1809, while absent, but came in person to the October 3, 1810, meeting. Cossitt says that M'Gready moved to Henderson, Kentucky, soon after 1805 and did not return to the Cumberland until 1809. See *Life of Ewing*, p. 167.
thought.

The new body obviously bore the imprint of M'Gready's views. But in 1811, he wrote of his disapproval of the attitude of the new denominational preachers, saying:

... the new Cumberland Schismaticks \textit{sic}/ are using all possible exertions to rend and break up Societys \textit{sic}/ wherever they go. They have a flame of animation with them which they call the revival, and this is what supports them and gives 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 to my view to differ far from the spirit of Christ, or The Teacher of the Gospel.\footnote{MS letter to Archibald Cameron (Nov. 6, 1811). Letter at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.}

His support of the 	extit{Confession} in this letter and his disapproval of the Cumberland spirit without a direct attack on their doctrine indicate he chose a middle ground. If he could fellowship religiously a Methodist, he certainly could the Cumberlands. He apparently did not believe in dividing what was to him the family of God over matters of procedure, and hoped the problems would be resolved in time.

The liberals lost his active support, but they never repudiated his previous leadership. J. Berrien Lindsley, a Cumberland historian, wrote of M'Gready's influence on the founders of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church:
In the Transylvania and Cumberland Presbyteries, it is very evident that he was the guide and instructor of the large body of men thrust into the Master's vineyard by the great revival. Even after many of these became the framers and fathers of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, they still looked upon him in this light. 54

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The period from 1802 to 1817 for M'Gready was not happy. It was the time when he could have reached a position of leadership giving him additional stature beyond that of a revival speaker. But he could not take the role of the leader of liberal Calvinism on the frontier. When his group of supporters would have rallied around him, he chose to retire to another field of service. Perhaps he was

54 J. Berrien Lindsley, "Sources and Sketches of Cumberland Presbyterian History: No. XI, James M'Gready, His Character and Work," *The Theological Medium*, Vol. VIII (1877), p. 294. James Smith reported that M'Gready urged his congregations to favor the Cumberland Presbyterians after he died. See History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; Compiled from Various Authors including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), pp. 672-75. Until 1906, the Cumberland Presbyterians remained independent, but in that year a reunion with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. occurred. The theological basis was a liberal interpretation of the Confession adopted in 1903. As Walter Lingle said, "This Declaratory Statement (1903) did not destroy the Calvinism of the Confession but it did tone down its Calvinism." *Presbyterians; Their History and Beliefs*, Revised by T. Watson Street (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1956), pp. 110-11. In 1906, 185,000 Cumberland Presbyterians re-united with the parent body. Prior to 1870 six advanced educational facilities, a publishing board and a board of education were part of the Cumberland system. See Robert V. Foster, "A Sketch of the History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church," *The American Church History*
convincing with his conservative Presbyterian brothers that the trend could go too far, or perhaps that the doctrinal issues were definitive enough to demand his taking a stand with those who supported traditional Calvinism. He was a moderate in the midst of a conservative and liberal struggle and consequently could not lead in either direction. It is altogether probable that his association with the liberals and apparent defection to the conservatives made it impossible for him to serve as arbitrator. The emotional tide was too strong.

Rhetorically speaking, the period involved him in controversy. In 1801, he defended the exercises as he defended the Cumberland Presbytery actions in 1805. But the result was that he was placed under censure and denominationally prohibited to preach, administer the Lord's Supper, perform marriages, or officiate in any capacity as an ordained minister. As has been seen, he was a preacher, a man dynamically involved in a search for souls; to have deprived him of these rights must have made an extreme impression. Further, in many circles, his ethical propensities must have been hampered; and in the ranks of extreme conservatives, the Balchite approbriums of "Pope," "Beast of America, the American Anti-Christ," could not have been conducive to his success as a pulpit orator. As his reputation declined, so did the effectiveness of his preaching.

Series; Consisting of a Series of Denominational Histories Published under the Auspices of the American Society of Church History, Philip Schaff et al., eds. (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1894), pp. 297-98.
CHAPTER VI
THEOLOGICAL AND HOMILETIC VIEWS

James McGready derived his views from a Calvinist interpretation of the Bible. With his teachers, David Caldwell, Joseph Smith, and John McMillan, McGready shared the belief that the Old and New Testaments were a divinely inspired and infallible revelation of God's nature and will. Two of the sermons in the Works are apologetic defenses of his convictions against the charges of the Deists.

McGready affirmed that the Bible "unveils the mystery of God," and opens a door of hope to a dying world.\(^1\)

This chapter is an analysis of the religious and homiletic views of McGready as they affected his revival preaching, and his religious differences with his colleagues of the Kentucky Synod.

1. CALVINISM AND MCGREADY'S THEOLOGY

The French reformer, John Calvin (1509-64), developed a system of theology evolving from the primary concept of divine sovereignty. Five points dominated the system: (1) divine sovereignty, (2) human impotence, (3) limited atonement, (4) irresistible grace, and (5) final perseverance.\(^2\) Calvin taught that God was infinitely pure and just, but being offended by sin, condemned man to the punishment of hell. Motivated by mercy, God provided redemption by virtue of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

Calvin argued that when man committed the first sin, he became "totally depraved," or, as the Confession of Faith stated, man was "utterly undisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."\(^3\) John Calvin stated in the Genevan Confession: \(^4\)

> We acknowledge man by nature to be blind, darkened in understanding, and full of corruption and perversity of heart so that of himself he has no power to be able to comprehend the true knowledge of God as is proper . . . on the contrary, if he is left by God to what he is by nature, he is only able to live in ignorance and to be abandoned to all iniquity. Hence he has need to be illumined by God. . . .

Consequently, Calvin argued, man must be punished for sin in the fires of hell.


\(^{3}\)The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Adopted by the General Synod in 1729, Amended and Ratified in 1788, and Amended in 1867 and 1903 (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1939), p. 27.

As a Calvinist, M'Gready accepted these principles.

He said:

If the Supreme, Eternal God be a being of all possible goodness and perfection, and possessed of every amiable moral excellency, delighting in the happiness of his creatures, then he must originally have created man in his own image, a pure holy being. . . but man, by some means sin, has lost his original rectitude and purity; he has become a fallen, depraved creature, prone to vice and wickedness. . . .

The sin of Adam, according to M'Gready, caused all evil in the world; "One fatal act of sin ruined him, and all his unborn race, and deluged the whole habitable globe with mischief, misery and ruin."  

Calvin believed that Jesus Christ substituted for mankind, allowing the wrath of God to be executed upon Him. Jesus, said M'Gready, was "slain by the sword of divine justice," taking the punishment for "the iniquities of us all. . . ."

The Elect

Calvinism differed from Arminian theology, however, on the recipients of the substitutionary grace of Christ. Calvin argued that only a select company, arbitrarily chosen by God, could be saved. The "hidden unexplainable counsel of God" determined this

---


"election" or predestination. Calvin said: "Upon the same decree
\( \text{God's counsel} \) depends the distinction between election and
reprobate \( \text{rejection} \): as he adopted some for himself for salvation,
he destined others for eternal ruin."\(^8\) Arminianism, taught by the
Methodists, contended that the sacrifice of Christ was for all men, a
doctrine called the "general atonement." In effect, the two theologies
differed over the responsibility for salvation. Under Calvinism, God
was ultimately responsible for choosing the "elect," while
Arminianism placed the liability upon man.

M'Gready believed that Christ died for the elect. He said that
Christ endured "the hell of the whole elect world, and at one draught
he drinks that cup of wrath which must have been their portion for-
ever."\(^9\) But the revivalist placed the immediate responsibility for
salvation on the sinner, thus marking himself as a "moderate"
Calvinist. He freely invited the "sinner" to "come to Christ" for
redemption. He said, for example, "You are invited to come to
Christ---and this implies that he is \underline{willing to save you}. Of this he has
given the most unquestionable proof."\(^10\) At this point, therefore,
M'Gready differed from the strict dictates of Calvin's theory. The

---

\(^8\) J. K. S. Reid (trans.), Calvin, p. 179.


French reformer stated that election did not depend upon the recipient, that it came even without desire or faith. The elect, Calvin said, "receive the grace of adoption by faith, but their election does not depend on faith, but is prior in time and order." M'Gready, by contrast, argued that faith was essential in order to "please God." To reject God, according to the revivalist, was "an aggravation of its sin's guilt."  

**Human Impotence**

Because of the "totally depraved" nature of man, according to Presbyterian Calvinism, man was incapable of achieving salvation by himself, it being a supernatural action granted by God. Calvin described the effect of salvation or "regeneration" as follows:

... we acknowledge that by his Spirit we are regenerated into a new spiritual nature. That is to say that the evil desires of our flesh are mortified by grace, so that they rule us no longer. On the contrary, our will is rendered conformable to God's will ... and by this deliverance we are made capable and able to do good works and not otherwise.  

Thus, regeneration changed the nature of man, taking away his desire to do evil, made him spiritually acceptable, and enabled him to perform spiritually good deeds.

The early American Calvinists required that an "elect" be able

---

11 Reif, Calvin, p. 179.
13 Reif, Calvin, p. 28.
to tell of a particular catastrophic moment in which his nature changed, a "personal grace experience." As early as the first quarter of the seventeenth century, they weakened the position, granting "Graceless Communion" to those without an "experience." This retreat from strict Calvinism was a major cause for the division leading to the Separatists. Eventually, in 1662, the "Half-Way Covenant" permitted persons who did not have an "experience," partial entry into church practices. It gave no right of membership nor the right to the Lord's Supper, but treated them as "presumptive saints" bound by church government. Over the years the "experience" requirement was relegated to the background until many Calvinists, M'Gready for example, confidently believed that they were saved without such a theopathy.

Apparently as a result of his own "experience," M'Gready theologically returned to the original position. He felt that salvation was a supernatural phenomenon which God alone could accomplish. However, M'Gready believed that man could condition himself for the moment of conversion which he called "the New Birth." He taught the sinner to act as follows:

---


He commands the sinner to pray—to repent and believe in Christ—But he offers his almighty power to enable him to perform all that he commands. He directs the sinner to the use of the means which he has appointed; and to the use of these he has annexed the most gracious and encouraging promises. 17

The "means" served two purposes; the preparation of the sinner and the call for God to grant regeneration. The means included Bible reading, meditation, repentance, worship, and personal reform. Thus man was active in the preparatory process, but only God could actually regenerate the soul.

M'Gready's position was, therefore, a medium between the responsibility of God advocated by the Calvinists and the liability of man advocated by the Methodists. He believed that God would reveal his choice, but after man indicated his desire to serve a sovereign Deity. M'Gready's views, if accepted by society, would result in reform, even if salvation was never granted.

As a preacher, M'Gready urged repentance and prayer, but did not guarantee regeneration. In the years 1797-1805, evangelistic themes dominated his preaching. Cossitt described his themes as follows:

... M'Gready was not one of those ministers who could suffer the people of his charge to continue in ignorance of the great doctrines of the gospel; the depravity of the human heart, the necessity of regeneration, the atonement made by Christ, and the necessary qualifications for Heaven. He was, strictly speaking, a Calvinist, but of a moderate

17 Works, II, pp. 148-49.
grade, more zealous to teach his people the plan of salvation than the subtleties of a favorite system; . . . he was accustomed to dwell . . . on the purity, spirituality, and justice of God's law; the reigning power, odious nature, and destructive consequences of sin; the freeness, suitableness, and sufficiency of the gospel; the love of the Father in giving his Son a ransom for all, and his Spirit to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; the wrath of Jehovah awaiting the rejectors of offered mercy, as well as the bliss and glory prepared for those who obey the gospel of the grace of God. 18

The New Birth

M'Gready advocated that the sinner be convicted of sin and his need for salvation, and diligently utilize the "means of grace."

Without the theopathy, however, preachers "might as well stand in a common grave yard, and called upon the dead corpses, rotting in the earth, to come forth and act like living men." 19 No amount of piety or prayer improved one's depraved spiritual state unless the new birth occurred. Walter Posey stated that M'Gready "talked endlessly of the new birth and demanded the absolute necessity of knowing when and where one's conversion occurred." 20

James M'Gready considered the new birth doctrine central in

18Franceway Ranna Cossitt, The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing. One of the Fathers and Founders of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Louisville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1853), pp. 43-44.


the preacher's message. If the new birth did not come, the preaching was in vain. He said:

My dear fellow-creatures, if you would be the followers of Christ, here your religion must commence. You must be regenerated before you can live a spiritual life. If you neglect this one matter, all your endeavors will be in vain, how strong soever your hopes for heaven may be. No difference how fair your profession; how upright your conduct and conversation, unless you have been born from on high, death will rob you of your religion, and the wrath of God like a mighty deluge will sweep you to the lowest hell. 21

Furthermore, the question of regeneration took precedence over all other doctrinal matters. M'Gready observed:

In that awful day, when the universe, assembled before the judge of quick and dead, the question brethren, will not be, Were you a Presbyterian--a Seceder--a Covenanter--a Baptist--or a Methodist; but Did you experience the new birth? Did you accept of Christ and his salvation as set forth in the gospel? 22

M'Gready considered that the phrase "new birth" implied two factors. First, he argued, man was spiritually dead prior to the birth, "altogether under the government of sin" and "under the sentence of eternal condemnation." 23 Secondly, the phrase implied "an irresistible exertion of the Almighty power of God." He stated:

Now the preaching of the gospel, and all the efforts which creatures can use, could no sooner bring the


22Ibid., p. 71.

spiritually blind soul to perceive the moral excellency and beauty of the divine perfections, or impart to the dead soul spiritual life, than they could create an universe or raise the dead . . . [God] must work this change, effect this new creation, or it never can be done. 24

Finally, the new birth was a revelatory experience. The soul, M'Gready said, "beholds in Christ complete salvation, pardon of sin, and peace with God, quickening, sanctifying and persevering grace, and eternal life in the immediate presence of God." The result of the experience was, first, a "universal change" in the "powers and affections of the soul." Furthermore, the powers of the soul, he said, were regulated, so that man no longer desired to sin or was capable of sin. 25

In effect, therefore, M'Gready asserted that regeneration, accomplished at the new birth moment, did nothing less than return the spirit of man to a condition of pure holiness. The change, he argued, came in one dynamic moment, so powerfully perceived that one could tell precisely when it occurred. If that moment was not known, he concluded, the experience had not happened and the individual was yet a sinner. 26

Interestingly, M'Gready exemplified his convictions in a letter

24 Ibid., p. 75.
26 George Whitefield also taught that regeneration was a complete alteration of spiritual attitudes. See Eugene White, "The Preaching of George Whitefield During the Great Awakening in America" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1947), p. 302.

to his daughter as follows:

... My beloved Child will you gratify your loving affectionate Father so far as to spend some time on your knees every morning praying to the Lord to send his Spirit with power into your heart, to convince you of your lost ruined state, and that he may give your Soul no rest until you feel the pardoning love of God. ...

His daughter apparently was a respectable person, accustomed to prayer and well instructed in religious matters, but M'Gready believed she was not a Christian. He admonished her to pray, but could only hope that she would be granted the new birth. Implied in the letter is his conviction that sufficient prayer or "use of means" would ultimately gain the theopathy.

In this letter and in his sermons, M'Gready leaves the distinct impression that the decrees of God are influenced by fervent piety and prayer. Such assurance of spiritual pardon was not strict Calvinism; notwithstanding, M'Gready compared preaching to saving drowning men by saying, "God, by his ministers, cries to perishing sinners, who are sinking in the gulf of Hell, 'Take Hold of My Covenant,' and I will deliver you..." The use of "will" is a virtual guarantee. Again, M'Gready provided verbal assurance when describing how the sinner "shall obtain the kingdom of heaven":


The terms upon which you shall possess an inheritance in this country [heaven] are easy and very reasonable. Repent of your sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall obtain the kingdom. Come unto the Lord just as you are—poor and vile, needy and dependent, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and you "shall be filled," you shall obtain pardon of sin and peace and reconciliation to God. 29

M'Gready adopted, therefore, an inconsistent position. Although he believed in election as opposed to the general atonement, 30 there is little to suggest that he ever closed the redemptive door to a sincere believer. Perhaps he was influenced by his own mystical experience, or perhaps he felt that the sinner had nothing to lose. The way to salvation might be difficult, but to those unsuccessful penitents, he advised, "storm the heavens with your cries." 31 By his position he undeniably demonstrated that he was a liberal Calvinist.

In his Freedom of the Will, Jonathan Edwards attempted to reconcile man's tendency to do wrong and his free right of choice. Edwards neither repudiated the "election" nor man's free will. 32


30 Robert Bell, an early Cumberland Presbyterian leader, attended all the M'Gready meetings from 1797 to 1800. He reported that he did not hear M'Gready preach the doctrine of the general atonement. See Benjamin McDonold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Education of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), p. 17.

31 Works, I, p. 123. Eugene White found that Whitefield was sometimes inconsistent on achieving regeneration, saying at times that God had to select the sinner and at others that Christ would receive all who believed. See "Whitefield," p. 303.

32 C. H. Faust and T. H. Johnson, Jonathan Edwards,
Similarly, M'Gready accepted a Calvinism which recognized God's sovereignty but, in practice, placed a portion of the redemptive responsibility on the sinner.

II. M'GREADY'S INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS VIEWS

The revival, according to Posey, divided the Presbyterian ministry into revival and anti-revival factions from the "very beginning," causing the Kentucky presbyteries to weaken from within. Much of the odium for the existing problems was heaped upon M'Gready.

What were the bases for the anti-revivalists' suspicion of M'Gready. Basically, three differences existed: (a) doctrinal deviations; (b) cooperation with the Methodists and other communions; and (c) acceptance of the physical exercises.

Doctrinal Differences

Thomas H. Campbell observed that many anti-revival men objected to a number of practices which M'Gready condoned. These included the use of Watt's hymns, walking amidst the congregation giving personal help to worshipers, and the "planned" camp meeting.

---


33 Posey, Presbyterian Church in Old Southwest, p. 31.

The last objection expressed their opinion of many smaller offenses usually found at such meetings. McDonnold stated that these offenses violated many traditional customs when he said:

There were in 1800 many rigid notions among the churches which seem strange to us now. Singing hymns instead of psalms was one of McGready's offenses. The day for opposition to fireplaces or stoves in church was gone, but other things as unreasonable still held sway among the descendants of the Covenanters. Night meetings were considered scandalous. In the catalogue of "new measures" which the "Old Side" party objected to, were protracted meetings, night meetings, calling in other ministers to aid in meetings, inquiry meetings, propositions /appeals/ calling for action of any kind, weeping in the pulpit, great fervor in exhortation, itinerant preachers, evangelists both lay and clerical, singing hymns, all noise—shouting, groaning, or crying out for mercy; to all of which was added another long list after camp meetings and the mourner's bench came into use. 35

M'Gready committed most and probably accepted all of these offences.

The suspect practices pertained to church order and worship, a category closely related to the minister's concept of doctrine. Niels Sonne observed that Presbyterianism in Kentucky was noted for extreme rigid formality, strictly adhering to Calvinist doctrine and Presbyterian practice. He said, "The story of Kentucky Presbyterianism is . . . of ruthless destruction of every vestige of independent theological thought which might arise among the clergy, and even among the laity." 36

The Kentucky Synod had disciplined half of its ministers at least once

35History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 41-43.
by 1847; many of these men had worked in the revival.\textsuperscript{37} As a New Side sympathizer, M'Gready's views made him suspect without any further consideration.

The major point distinguishing M'Gready from his colleagues was his insistence on the "new birth" experience. M'Gready identified his routine sermon themes as "Regeneration, Faith and Repentance."\textsuperscript{38} He stated that these caused his listeners to ask:

"Is Religion a sensible thing? If I were converted would I feel it, and know it?"\textsuperscript{39}

M'Gready emphatically denied the sufficiency of mere mental acceptance of Bible facts, arguing that this only prepared one for regeneration. He asserted that an experience told of the regeneration occurrence. Holding these views, he differed from most of his Presbyterian colleagues. Samuel McSpedden, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister, said:

... during the fourteen years previous to the great revival of 1800, I heard the preaching of Dr. James Blythe, Barton W. Stone, John Anderson ... John Doak, Caldwell, William McGee, and James McGready: the last named, once, most of the others, several times. The tendency of most of their sermons was not calculated to awaken much interest, nor alarm the conscience; nor did the efforts in general seem designed to accomplish more

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., pp. 18-19.

\textsuperscript{38}"Narrative," Works, I, p. ix. The emphasis is M'Gready's.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. ix.
than to inform the understanding. For I heard nothing on
the necessity of the new birth from any of them, except
from McGready and McGee, near the close of the period
mentioned. 40

In contrast to his colleagues who "informed," M'Gready sought to
"awaken" and "alarm." Furthermore, in the one sermon that
McSpedden heard from M'Gready, the apparent emphasis was on the
"necessity of the new birth."

Additional information on the distinctive doctrinal views of
M'Gready was given by Finis Ewing and his wife who moved to
M'Gready's charge from Thomas Craighead's congregation near Nash-
ville. They soon became afraid that they were not saved though they
had been Presbyterian members in good standing for many years.
Cossitt, their biographer, stated: "They heard nothing to which their
minds could remain indifferent, or over which their consciences could
slumber. The whole system of religion seemed to be presented to
their view in an unusual form. . . ." 41 Their experience was based
on a new concept--that man's relation to God was determined by the
"new birth" without which all religious acts were useless. Thus,
M'Gready was emphasizing the primary nature of the "new birth" to
the "whole system of religion." They had not heard this from
Craighead, one of the oldest and most respected men in the Cumberland

40 Cossitt, Life of Ewing, p. 38.
41 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
ministry, nor apparently from other Presbyterian preachers in the years prior to hearing M'Gready. Not content merely to inform, their new minister appealed for immediate action or a diligent use of the "means."

While foreign from modern terminology, M'Gready's preach- ments concerning the "means of grace" did not mark him as a radical or liberal. David Rice, a moderate, but a respected Kentucky Synod preacher, defined his position as follows: "... I mean that God has decreed to effect salvation in the use of certain means, that he has put these means in our hands, and in the use of these means we are encouraged to hope in his sovereign mercy." Thus M'Gready did not differ by teaching how one might be saved, but that one must persevere until his salvation was announced through the "experience."

Having identified his customary doctrines as "Regeneration, Faith and Repentance [emphasis M'Gready]," the revivalist stated that Balch "involved our infant churches in confusion, disputation and opposed the doctrines preached here. . . ." As an orthodox minister, Balch would not oppose faith or repentance, and M'Gready

---


43 "Narrative," Works, I, p. x.
is stating that Balch directed his opposition at the specific doctrine of regeneration or the new birth. When the revivalist concludes by stating that Balch went from home to home ridiculing the "experience" of his parishioners, he leaves no doubt as to his difference with Balch and the conservatives.

Having made the regeneration doctrine basic to all of religion, M'Gready was opposed by an extremely sensitive orthodoxy. As Sonne said, the typical Presbyterian conservative adhered strictly to historical Calvinism and regarded "all other theological positions as heresies." Barton Warren Stone described the opponents of the revival as "the sticklers for orthodoxy."  

Cooperation with the Methodists

Related to the new birth position, M'Gready's views on religious fellowship countered those of his Presbyterian colleagues. If one was regenerated, M'Gready considered him a child of God and a proper associate, regardless of his denominational position.

Furthermore, M'Gready adopted certain practices which were traditionally associated with the Methodists. While the older

44 Liberal Kentucky, p. 18.

Presbyterian preachers were somewhat passive, M'Gready and the Methodists vitalized the doctrines of judgment, hell, and divine justice. He adopted whatever rhetorical means, logical or pathetic, which could carry the repentance message to the greatest number of souls in the swiftest manner.

In addition, a number of lesser offenses cemented the impression that M'Gready was a Methodist sympathizer, if not an Arminian. Robert Davidson, for example, reported that the hymnals were incorrectly entitled "Wesley's Hymns," and were cut up and the leaves distributed at camp meetings so that all could memorize the hymns. The Wesley association was too much for the Old Side.

The Reaction to the Exercises

M'Gready differed from his conservative detractors by assuming a favorable attitude toward "the exercises," although his was not an extreme position. At the first evidence of "falling," he adopted a cautious attitude, and, in his "Vindication" of 1801, he defended some exercises while revealing himself as a moderate. He said:

"Sometimes the children of God when first converted, and not unfrequently afterwards, are the subjects of great bodily agitations. Here we would remark, that mankind are apt to run into extremes upon this subject--contending that all"

---

46 Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 24.

bodily exercises in religion are the delusive effects of a diabolical agency, or that they are the evidences of a gracious work. And there are not a few, who suppose that the Spirit of God can be in no public assembly, unless there are bodily agitations. Now, both of these opinions are erroneous; for although bodily exercises are no evidence of grace, nor at the same time, a proof of the want of it, it is very clear, that they are sometimes the effects of the mighty power of God. — And yet we know the Devil is capable of imitating this work. 48

Obviously, M'Gready accepted the view that at times the exercises were the work of God's spirit, but other motivations might account for their presence. He did not believe that they were the "regeneration experience," but neither were they totally evil in intent or origin.

Charles Johnson reported graphically that improper conduct, even immorality, resulted from the emotionalism of the camp meetings. His study, however, emphasized the meetings after 1805. Nevertheless, falling, shouting, lay exhortation, dancing (emotional agitations by one person), and "strange agitations of the body" occurred in the M'Gready gatherings. M'Gready concluded that these were often effects of divine causes; 49 at other times he felt that they were improper. 50

The conservatives, however, tended to condemn all "exercises."

As Bernard Weisberger said, the emotion-filled meetings appeared

48 Works, II, p. 10.


50 Works, II, p. 10.
about to replace the "whole orderly scheme of life on earth, symbolized
by a powerful church, an educated ministry, and a strait and narrow
gate of salvation." 51 Posey, after research on both Methodist and
Presbyterian thought in this period, concluded:

Under the leadership of McGready the results were highly
pleasing, but as the camp meeting progressed there were
injected, largely by the Methodists, a religious fervor and a
fanaticism that led to excesses, which the orthodox
Presbyterian theologian could not accept. As a rule, the
Presbyterian minister seldom deviated from the standards in
the Confession of Faith—stern and unbending as it was. 52

McGready could see both good and evil in the exercises, while
many conservatives saw no good at all. As Sonne observed, "The
majority of the Presbyterian ministers wanted a revival of religion,
but they wanted it to be orderly and proper in the middle-class sense
and they strongly opposed all excesses." 53

51 "Pentecost in the Backwoods," American Heritage, X
(June, 1959), p. 79. Caustic attacks were made on the whole
revival as a perpetrated delusion. See Adam Rankin, A Review
of the Noted Revival in Kentucky, commenced in Kentucky in the
year of our Lord, 1801 (pamphlet, privately printed, 1803).
Other writers replied; one of the best was David Thomas, The
Observer, Trying the Great Reformation in this State, and
Proving it to have been originally a Work of Divine Power. With
A Survey of Several Objections to the Contrary, as Being Chiefly
Comprised in Mr. Rankin's Review of the Noted Revival, Lately
Published. Sent with an address to a friend in the country
(Lexington: John Bradford, 1802).

52 Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, p. 28.

53 Sonne, Liberal Kentucky, p. 17.
III. HOMILETIC VIEWS

Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird concluded that a speech is effective when "it achieves an end or response consistent with the speaker's purpose." Regardless of the actual response, which may be a result of many factors, the speaker's goal forms the foundation from which all his preparation and execution is derived.

"This point," according to Alan Monroe, "must never be lost sight of since it forms the basis of the entire process of speech preparation."  

M'Gready's goal was to convert men to the religion of Christ.

Speaking to his fellow preachers, he said:

Our design in composing, studying and preaching, must be the salvation of sinners. We are not to preach ourselves or show our great abilities in a parade of learning. We are not to stuff our sermons with geography, philosophy--with new speculations and curious criticisms in divinity. We must hold by the spirit of the gospel. Repentance, faith and regeneration, placed in bold relief, should be the burden of every sermon.

This definition is quite limiting, forging a mold too confining for many ministers. For example, M'Gready limited the scope of his messages

---


to themes concerning sin and redemption. Interestingly, thirty of the forty-two sermons in the Works treat propositions of this type and many of the remaining twelve, such as his defense of the Bible in the "Revelation" sermon, reflect this evangelistic purpose. M'Gready could not have been more definite than when he said:

The conversion of sinners was the grand design of the apostle \(\text{Paul}\) in preaching the gospel; and every faithful minister, at this day, has in view the same end. And wherever he opens his mouth for God, whether in public or private, repentance and faith are his themes.\(^{57}\)

Secondly, M'Gready indicated that evidence from secular sources would be held to a minimum in sermons. He implied that the Bible would be the source of his arguments in the words: "We are not to stuff our sermons with geography, philosophy--with new speculations and curious criticisms in divinity. We must hold by the spirit of the gospel."\(^{58}\) Those who knew of M'Gready's sermon preparation observed this tendency. Foote reported, probably from the testimony of Ebenezer Currie, that M'Gready:

... considered the word of God as truth to be taken for granted, and of course not to be reasoned about as if to be proved, but to be explained and enforced by the various considerations presented by revelation itself, by man's condition and by providence.\(^{59}\)

\(^{57}\) Works, I, p. 311.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 322.

In this conviction, M'Gready tended to undervalue secular evidence, relying on Biblical testimony and examples.

Finally, the words, "Repentance, faith and regeneration, placed in bold relief, should be the burden of every sermon. . . .", indicate that M'Gready wanted his message to be clearly understood and strikingly impressive. Hugh Blair said that pulpit eloquence should be "calculated to make impression on the people; to strike and to seize their hearts."

Finis Ewing and his wife heard M'Gready regularly during the early days of the revival and reported that M'Gready used strong arguments and appeals to the conscience, "intent on convincing candidates for eternity of the truth as it is in Jesus."

He preached to convert "sinners" to Christianity. M'Gready's views probably paralleled those of Matthew Simpson, the Methodist preacher who had seen many camp meetings and who said that "persuasion, rather than instruction is the great end of preaching. Instruction is essential, but without persuasion the sinner is never moved or saved."

M'Gready even saw disputation or debate as secondary in preaching when it might conflict with his evangelistic purpose. In his sermon, "The

---


Young Invited to Come to Christ," M'Gready said: "Disputation is not our object: we design to enforce the more important duties of religion, in which the salvation of immortal souls is particularly concerned." 63

To accomplish this concept of preaching, M'Gready often relied on "soul-searching" sermons, designed to apply the great Bible doctrines to the personal lives of his auditors. In his Studies in Cumberland Presbyterian History, Thomas Campbell said that M'Gready "was gifted with an unusual ability to apply his message to the particular sins and prevalent errors of his day." 64 Apparently, M'Gready made a studied effort to accomplish this goal. He made a distinction between the undesirable "cold, formal preaching" which was "smooth and general" and the "soul-searching" sermon which was so 'close, pointed and searching that it condemns the hypocrite's false hope..." 65 M'Gready thought that preaching should search the heart "as with a lighted candle" and show the sinner's true spiritual condition. 66

63 Works, II, p. 262. See also p. 2.

64 Thomas H. Campbell, Studies in Cumberland Presbyterian History, p. 46.


66 Ibid., p. 32. See also p. 33 and p. 2.
Ministerial Qualifications

One sermon in the Works appears to be a charge delivered at a Transylvania or Cumberland ordination service. Its title, "The Qualifications and Duties of a Minister of the Gospel," exactly expresses its theme. To M'Gready the major qualifications for a minister were the following: (a) a true convert, "experimentally acquainted" with regeneration, (b) a habitual student of the Bible, and (c) one who has been called for the task. The emphasis on conversion is evident, for M'Gready asserted that the true minister must be a convert or he was still the servant of Satan, incapable of pointing out the dangers of sin. M'Gready believed, furthermore, that the regenerated preacher was divinely assisted in his sermon preparation. M'Gready's distrust of ministers with only academic qualifications emerged when he said that the unconverted man can only preach for personal gain. "His aim is to shew himself the great man--the scholar, or eminent divine; not to feed the lambs of Christ; they find no spiritual food in his doctrine."  

67 The essence of the sermon is a justification of the liberal licensing views. Apparently James Smith included the sermon as one which justified Cumberland Presbyterian thinking. Works, I, pp. 311-24.
68 Ibid., pp. 312-16.
70 Works, I, p. 314.
M'Gready broadly defined the minister's "call." He required that the prospective minister have: (a) a concern for the condition of sinners, (b) a competent amount of natural ability, (c) a reasonable education, and (d) opportunities of service. He did not emphasize a need for a supernatural experience, and the "reasonable education" was a pointed response to the conservatives. Perhaps he felt, as did Walter Posey, that the urgent revival needs justified a less well-trained ministry than no ministry at all.

Church Audience Needs

M'Gready cautioned the minister to preach the "counsel of God" completely adapted to his auditors' needs. Noting that the churches were crowded with many "lukewarm" persons, M'Gready advised that the minister:

... should try the foundations of his people's hopes, labor to drive the formalist and self-deceiver from their false refuges, and surround them upon every side, with the infallible marks of the Christian, from the word of God; use the most convincing arguments to prove them still in the state of wrath.

71 Ibid., pp. 315-16. The opportunities of service seem to relate to the need for preachers in the dispersed society.


73 "Qualifications and Duties of a Minister of the Gospel," Works, I, p. 312.

74 Ibid., p. 317.
Obviously, he advised that the minister should study the audience and thoughtfully include in his addresses appeals adapted to their needs. He advised that the minister analyze the personal conduct of his listeners, comparing their conduct with the Biblical standards. By this method, M'Gready said, the minister "would be clear of the blood of all men. . . ."75

Interestingly, M'Gready suggested a unique form of audience analysis, the grouping of listeners into four classes, the preacher owing a distinct duty to each class of listeners. First, the minister must declare the gospel to the unconverted and rebellious sinner, using the strongest possible arguments. Secondly, he must adapt his lessons to the "formalist" and "self-deceiver." According to M'Gready, this category contained those who mistakenly believed themselves Christians. He said:

All these call themselves Christians, and are continually gaping for a comfort--looking to ministers of Christ to prophecy smooth things, to cry, peace, peace. They would hear the gospel preached upon legal terms /good works/. Oh, my brethren, by comforting such weak believers, or rather hypocrites, we would make their damnation sure.76

Thirdly, the minister must direct the "awakened sinner" to Christ. This category contained those convinced of the need for salvation, but who had not experienced the new birth. The minister's duty was to

76 Ibid., p. 318.
instruct them in the use of "means." Finally, the minister must comforts the "people of God" through presenting Biblical assurances that "they have rational and solid foundation of comfort assurance of heaven/.../;” 77

M'Gready apparently prepared his addresses for these four categories. If one places the deist in the sinner category, the analysis provides a workable plan for studying a religious audience, even if the categories are too broadly conceived. Three of the groups were considered "sinners" according to Calvinist thought; only the last group contained the saved people of God.

77Works, I, pp. 319-20.
CHAPTER VII

AUDIENCE AND SETTING

James M'Gready could not know each of the thousands who came to his revivals. However, Gray and Braden state: "Adjustment to each individual is highly desirable but impossible if the gathering is of large size. You must adapt your materials and appeal to certain groupings or segments of those present."¹

Previously published studies of the camp meeting social setting are generally well documented and reliable descriptions.² This analysis, therefore, indicates only general characteristics with emphasis on the religious nature of the Cumberland society. Further, this chapter will analyze the speech settings to determine how M'Gready's preaching fit the matrix of camp meeting worship.


1. GENERAL ASPECT OF CUMBERLAND AUDIENCES

The general composition of M'Gready's audiences probably remained fairly constant from 1799-1805. All evidence indicates that many of M'Gready's audiences numbered in the thousands. M'Gready stated that at the first planned meeting in 1800, the "multitude crowded from all parts of the country," even from a distance of one hundred miles. By 1802, reports stated that the audiences in the Cumberland reached as large as ten to twelve thousand. These numbers do not seem excessive when one considers that the gathering at the Cane Ridge meeting in upper Kentucky was estimated between twenty and twenty-five thousand. Obviously, no ethnic, economic, or

3 Toward the beginning and end of the revival, many attended to "see for themselves" or to test the validity of the exercises. Though a minority regularly present, this group did not seriously hinder those who came to worship sincerely. Some of the critics were indeed converted. See Benjamin McDonnell, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), p. 47.


6 Johnson, historian of the camp meeting, admits that the numbers seem fantastic, but that the figures "are borne out by more than one account." Camp Meeting, p. 51.
religious group was excluded, for virtually all segments of frontier society attended not only one meeting but many. The census of 1800 listed approximately 220,000 persons living in Kentucky. That the Cane Ridge audience might include one-tenth of the entire state population suggests the impact of these meetings.

Generally, the population predominantly contained young people, poorly educated and absorbed with the necessities of economic and personal survival. Posey found that the early pioneer was "brusque in manners, illiterate, untrained, and possessed by strong impulses. His religion was of the same nature..." In 1805, Josiah Espy summarized his biased impressions of Kentuckians as follows:

The great body of the well-informed and wealthy were immersed in infidelity and dissipation, while the more illiterate were downright fanatics and zealots in religion. However, they are generally an hospitable people, fond of society and polite to strangers. With a few exceptions, they are more sprightly and fonder of conversation than the Pennsylvanians, and have a remarkable attachment to all public meetings and amusements, particularly to horse-racing, where they assemble in vast crowds.

---


McGready centered his work in Logan County, in the northern portion of the Cumberland which was probably representative of the entire area. With no official law enforcement, few churches, and fewer educational opportunities, the area had little chance for moral refinement. Peter Cartwright described the setting of Logan County in the 1790's, as follows:

Logan County, when my father moved to it, was called "Rogues' Harbor." Here many refugees, from almost all parts of the Union, fled to escape justice or punishment; for although there was law, yet it could not be executed, and it was a desperate state of society. Murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers and counterfeitters fled here until they combined and actually formed a majority. The honest and civil part of the citizens would prosecute these wretched banditti, but they would swear each other clear; and they really put all law at defiance, and carried on such desperate violence and outrage that the honest part of the citizens seemed to be driven to the necessity of uniting and combining together, and taking the law into their own hands, under the name of Regulators. 11

Cartwright observed that there was no newspaper south of the Green River, no schools worthy of the name, and no mill for a distance of forty miles. He noted that Sundays were devoted to horse-racing, card-playing, dances, and "all kinds of jollity and mirth." 12 According to Valentine Cook, Logan County was the "devil's campground." 13

12 Ibid., p. 25.
13 Cited by Coffman, Logan County, p. 42.
Education

Educationally, the frontiersman was generally inferior. 14

Superstition built upon ignorance and illiteracy in many districts.

Z. F. Smith, a Kentucky historian, challenged the universality of this condition, contending that the revival did not address only "an ignorant and credulous people..." 15 Using Russellville, M'Gready's home locale, as an example, he argued:

As typical of the intelligence and high character of the pioneers of this large and fertile region West of Green River, in the first quarter of the century, there resided at Russellville, the little town seat of Logan County, such men who became of note, as Governors Edwards and McLean of Illinois; Breathitt, Morehead, John J. Crittenden, Governors of Kentucky; Call, Governor of Florida; Crittenden, Governor of Arkansas; Bibb, Hise and Ewing, Justice of the Appellate Court; Major General Boyle, and Surgeon-General McReynolds of the U. S. Army, and others as distinguished. As brilliant a record could be made of the residents of Danville, Bardstown, Lexington, Frankfort, and other county towns of the State. Indeed this era of twenty-five years may be entitled the Golden Age of Intellectual Development of the Commonwealth; made illustrious with its Clays, Breckenridges, Marshalls, Wickliffes, Hardins, Rowan, Davises, Nicholas, Dudleys, Johnsons, Shelby, Taylor, McDowells, Crittendens, and a hundred others worthy and famed. 16

14Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 15.


Admittedly, the list is creditable, but it does not justify the conclusion that these people were representative of those who from 1800 to 1805 attended McGready's meetings.

**Moral Standards**

Reports suggest that a general moral looseness prevailed in the Cumberland region. Peter Cartwright estimated that in the Logan area, there were more lawless persons than otherwise in the 1790's, while Charles Johnson suggested that on the frontier fringe, the "related sociological factors of monotonous existence, ceaseless hard labor, and limited sources of amusement" help explain the moral conditions. Excessive drinking, brawling, and vice were common. The domestic condition was not a great deterrent to dissipation in many homes, for Francis Asbury wrote of the squalor which he viewed in 1803 Kentucky. He had acquired a common disorder--the itch. "Considering the filthy houses and filthy beds," he wrote, "... it is perhaps strange that I have not caught it twenty times." When the settlers first arrived in a new region, the majority became absorbed in providing for their families and clearing land. Yet a congregation

---


18 Johnson, *Frontier Camp Meeting*, p. 12.

19 Quoted in Posey, *Development of Methodism*, p. 11.
often banded together and, as in M'Gready's own case, invited a minister to work in their area.

**Religious Atmosphere**

By 1799, although the frontier of the Cumberland area had been open for almost fifteen years, no general religious spirit had appeared. Prior to the revival, relations between the existing churches were extremely poor, but by 1800, the Presbyterian-dominated meetings of James M'Gready attracted men and women of all religious groups, colored and white. ⁴

The first known minister in the Cumberland was Thomas Craighead, who came in 1785, although no church building apparently existed until 1787. As late as 1800, there was but one church building in Nashville which remained uncompleted. Harriette Arnow found that:

Religion was there, taking firm root all through the first years, but because of the smallness of the population and the Indians ever waiting in ambush, it was practiced in the home with Bible, psalm book and such sermon books as Watt's Upon Prayer. ⁵

---

²⁰ No known distinction as to color was made. Colored participants attended the 1800 and 1801 meetings. See Letter from William Hodge to Francis Asbury, *The Methodist Magazine*, XXVI (London, 1803), pp. 268-72.

²¹ Harriette Louisa Simpson Arnow, *Seedtime on the Cumberland*, p. 344. Arnow's study deals primarily with the Tennessee portion of the region. The work of Thomas Craighead centered near Nashville. In 1786, he opened Davidson Academy just north of Nashville and was active in the area during the whole tenure of M'Gready.
In 1783, David Rice became the first settled Presbyterian minister in Kentucky. He found prospects for a bright, though meager, ministry because few held religious convictions. Although some claimed church membership, Rice described them as follows:

Some were grossly ignorant of the first principles of religion. Some were given to quarrelling and fighting, some to profane swearing, some to intemperance and perhaps most of them totally negligent of the forms of religion in their own houses.  

The conduct of the Presbyterian laity is not surprising, for, according to Davidson, most Kentucky ministers in the early days were guilty of drunkenness, wrangling, licentiousness, and heresy.  

The Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians were virtually the only Protestant denominations present in 1790. Weakest were the Baptists, who declined in influence throughout the decade. In 1790, they had a Kentucky membership of approximately 3,100 or one to twenty-three in the population, while in 1800 they showed a membership of approximately 5,100 or one to forty-three in the population.  

The Baptist organization had little central authority which hindered

---


23 Benjamin McDonold, the Cumberland Presbyterian historian, joined Davidson in this conviction. For a summary of both observations and supporting evidence, see Benjamin W. McDonold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 7.

its developing a satisfactory system of expansion.

The Methodists were advantageously situated at the turn of the century, having the Tennessee-Kentucky area organized into six circuits reaching a membership total of about 2,500. The poverty of the people and the financial inability to support located ministers were answered by the circuit system which allowed one minister to tour the circle each month. This traveling minister-missionary system proved a great success in the battle against distance, poverty, and lack of available clerics.

With about 1,400 Kentucky communicants in 1790, the Presbyterians found after ten years that they had little or no increase. Barton Warren Stone said:

Things moved on quietly in my congregations, and in the country generally. Apathy in religious societies appeared everywhere to an alarming degree. Not only the power of religion had disappeared, but also the very form of it was waning fast away, and continued so till the beginning of the present century.

Difficulties of reorganization were one reason for Presbyterian

\[\text{25}^\text{Walter Brownlow Posey, The Development of Methodism, p. 10.}\]

\[\text{26}^\text{Z. F. Smith, Register, p. 22.}\]

\[\text{27}^\text{Barton Warren Stone, The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone, written by Himself: with additions and reflections by Elder John Rogers (Cincinnati: J. A. and O. P. James, 1847), p. 34. The work of Stone has been previously mentioned. During the Kentucky revival period, he was a principal leader of the Presbyterians in the northern Kentucky section. Later he repudiated his Presbyterian status.}\]
weakness. The Synod of Virginia was composed of those ministers and churches in the states of Virginia and Kentucky (until 1792 a part of Virginia) and Pennsylvania west of the Allegheny Mountains. However, in 1785, with some twelve congregations in Kentucky, permission was granted for the establishment of Transylvania Presbytery with jurisdiction over all of Kentucky, the settlements on the Cumberland River in Tennessee, and, by the time of M'Gready's arrival in 1796, certain mission congregations on the Big and Little Miami Rivers in Ohio. By 1799, the Presbyterians had twenty-six ministers in the Kentucky region as opposed to the four who had composed the first Transylvania group. Kentucky was given a Synod in 1802.

In later years the Cumberland denomination stressed the formal way in which the Presbyterian ministers went about their duties. Franceway Cossitt, the first president of Cumberland College, stated, Presbyterian preaching was universally known as a "dry speculative orthodoxy, leaving the heart without interest, and the conscience

---

28Sweet, Story of Religion, p. 305; Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 20. In 1799 the presbytery was subdivided into Transylvania in Central Kentucky, West Lexington embracing the territory east of the Kentucky River, and Washington serving the region northeast of the Licking River and across the Ohio.

29Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 20.

without alarm." In the case of Craighead of Nashville, one
listener declared that his sermons were "lifeless and without power--
a dull, formal affair." With few books on religion and only an
occasional Bible, many professing church members had little
knowledge of Biblical doctrines or of their denomination. 33

II. PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF M'GREADY'S MEETINGS

Curiously, no evidence exists that M'Gready was aware he
contributed to evangelistic history either during the period of camp-
meeting development or later. His contribution was unique, bringing
together separate worship features so that after 1800, the camp
meeting became, according to Charles Johnson, "one of the most
important social institutions in the trans-Allegheny West in the first

31 Franceway Ranna Cossitt, The Life and Times of Rev. Finis
Ewing. One of the Fathers and Founders of the Cumberland
Presbyterian Church. To which is Added Remarks on Davidson's
History, or, a Review of His Chapters on the Revival of 1800, and
His History of the Cumberland Presbyterians. With An Appendix
(Louisville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian
Church, 1853), pp. 34-35.

32 John Carr, an early settler in the Cumberland, heard
Craighead at Mansker's Station, Tennessee, in the early 1790's.
See his Early Times in Middle Tennessee (Nashville: E. Stevenson

33 Cossitt recorded that this observation was based on the
personal testimony of those who had been in Tennessee and Kentucky
prior to the Revival. He noted that "many persons were received
into full fellowship with the church, who were totally ignorant of their
natural depravity" and other doctrines considered essential by most
Presbyterians. Life of Ewing, p. 41.
half of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{34} Wittingly or unwittingly, M'Gready experimented with the physical and psychological conditioning of his audiences through establishing a setting conducive to religious response.

The progressive nature of the meetings between 1799 and 1800 suggests that those factors which appeared salutory were continued while others were dropped. The original invitations illustrate the selection. Seeing that the camping families present at Red River were especially affected, M'Gready issued the widespread invitations to camp at Gasper River. The multiple use of preachers at Red River in 1800 does not appear planned, but it later became an essential and necessary feature in other meetings. Even after the first planned camp meeting in Kentucky, at Gasper in 1800, M'Gready was not sure that the next meeting would be successful, and when it was, he was unprepared.\textsuperscript{35} It appears, therefore, that he accepted each feature as it appeared beneficial to the total success of preaching. Later evangelists varied the forms of these mass meetings and almost all, as Dwight L. Moody, made a special effort to concentrate every

\textsuperscript{34}Charles A. Johnson, \textit{The Frontier Camp Meeting}, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{35}Samuel Wilson was an elder for the Muddy River congregation, and he is quoted by Thomas Marshal Smith in his \textit{Legends of the War of Independence and Earlier Settlements} (Louisville: J. F. Brennan, 1855), p. 376. Smith dates this meeting in 1799, but this is an obvious mistake. For evidence that the invitations to preachers were continued after the Red River meeting, see James Smith, \textit{History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; compiled from Various Authors, including a History
variable factor toward the central objective, the "saving of souls." 36

When modern research found that a "contagion of feeling" is aroused when a worshiper seeks God in the company of others, 37 the studies only repeat what most experienced speakers have always known, and that the larger the audience, the more dynamic may be the contagion. Within a sympathetic crowd, a religious devotee tends to lose his normal restraints or inhibitions. 38 Furthermore, with a heightening of emotional fervor, many psychologists suggest an increased stimulus for religious action. James B. Pratt said:

... nearly all the students of this subject in our day as well as in the past agree that religion in its genuine form grows out of the emotional rather than the intellectual nature, or, better still, from the man as a whole, and that the overthrow of an authority or the refutation of an argument has but little permanent effect on the really religious

---


38 Everett D. Martin, The Behavior of Crowds (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920), pp. 35-36. Posey found that the church membership on the frontier was an inverse ratio to education and in direct ratio to the emotional appeal regularly used in preaching. Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, p. 125.
spirit.  

In the M'Gready meetings, the audiences numbered in the thousands and consequently, the auditor was emotionally and spiritually vulnerable. Peter Mode said the frontiersman was brought "face to face with a compelling interest--that of personal religion. However unversed in the techniques of psychology, the camp preachers were sound psychologists."  

III. SETTINGS OF THE M'GREASY MEETINGS

According to Johnson, the physical layout of a camp meeting varied in later years.  

But the M'Gready meetings developed utilizing the available materials as worship needs arose.

A site for a church building usually was determined by centrality to membership, availability of water, and sufficient land for a graveyard, but such buildings rarely seated more than thirty

---


41 Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 20-65.

42 Posey, Presbyterian Church, p. 102.
persons comfortably. When the summer months brought the sacramental occasions, M'Gready probably conducted services outside, a custom in the Old Redstone district. This system enlarged to meet camp meeting necessities.

At the Gasper meeting in 1800, the wagons formed a large square; within the enclosed ground, raised log benches provided seats. The pulpit was a temporary stand of rough logs, with a hand rail for the convenience of the speakers. The following meeting at Muddy River in 1800 was probably a close duplicate of the Gasper arrangement.

Samuel Wilson, a Muddy River elder, recorded that the arrangements were made after the assembly gathered; indicating that M'Gready did

Moreover, the physical arrangements were unsatisfactory for accommodating a large crowd. At one congregation in Illinois which M'Gready established, the usual one-window and one-door building had an adjoining camp area, complete with raised pulpit for camping seasons. See description in Augustine Theodore Norton, History of the Presbyterian Church, in the state of Illinois (St. Louis: W. S. Bryan, 1879), I, p. 20.

Joseph Smith, Old Redstone, or Historical Sketches of Western Presbyterianism, Its Early Ministers, Its Perilous Times and Its First Records (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1854), p. 153. Smith has an excellent description of sacramental, open-air, worship arrangements which were used in the Redstone district during the time of M'Gready's education. Outdoor preaching was a custom all M'Gready's life. For his later preaching in Indiana, see Hanford A. Edson, Contributions to the Early History of the Presbyterian Church in Indiana; Together with Biographical notices of the Pioneer Ministers (Cincinnati: Winona Publishing Company, 1898), pp. 31-43.

Smith, History of the Christian Church, p. 574.
not anticipate the vast numbers. Wilson reported:

In a few hours it was a sight to see how much was gathered together in preparation for our encampment, and food for the hungry. Soon we strewed a half-acre, at least, with the straw, pushed up a large tent spreading over the pulpit and for a distance in front, and then ten or twelve smaller ones, in order ranging round the ground where the straw and people were spread, standing and sitting. Fires were built, cooking begun, and by dark candles lighted and fixed on a hundred trees around and interspersing the ground surrounded by the tents. . . . 46

Benjamin McDonnold, historian of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and an eyewitness of the early meetings and the later type, believed that the later variation had "scarcely one single feature of those early gatherings." 47 Of the early type, he said:

The first camp-meetings were without tents or other shelter except the wagons apparently Red River and Gasper in 18007. Later, people built double log-cabins, which were still called tents, for their families and visitors. So far as possible people cooked the provisions before they left home, and they moved to camps expecting to remain during the meeting. All who attended the camp-meeting were fed freely. Campers would go out into the crowd and make a public invitation for all to come and eat. The camps were supplied with straw, both on the ground and on the bed scaffolds. One tent was used by the ladies, and another by the gentlemen. A field of grain with a stream of water in it was secured, and the horses of the visitors were turned into it. A vast shelter covered with boards was built and seated for a preaching place. This, too, had ample supply of clean straw for a floor. In the intervals between public services it was their universal custom to go alone, or in small groups, to secret prayer in the adjacent forest. The north and south line divided the grounds for retirement and prayer, and gentlemen were not allowed to go

46 Thomas Marshal Smith, Legends, pp. 376-77.

McDonnell's remarks show the gradual progression in providing comfortable physical facilities. What is important, however, is the simplicity of speaking arrangement. A single pulpit was the early fixture, indicating that one speaker preached to an audience gathered on approximately a half acre of ground. As the crowds grew larger, the worship space certainly enlarged and the practice began of having more than one preacher functioning at one time. The reports of the Red River and Gasper meetings already cited indicate that for private prayer sessions or for all-night services, the small church building was used. On Sunday the ministers provided a communion table, either a "puncheon" log or a crude table covered with a sheet. As the Lord's Supper service drew closer, the preaching took on a more critical tone based on the Biblical admonition, "let a man examine himself," lest by hypocritically engaging in the symbolic meal, he "eat and drink damnation to himself."

48 Ibid.
49 In the later meetings sometimes three to four ministers or exhorters gathered audiences in various parts of the camp area and spoke simultaneously.
50 Works, I, pp. xi-xii.
51 Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 48.
52 1 Corinthians 11:27-28. This was the traditional Lord's Supper warning to the unworthy communicant.
Schedule of the Camp Meetings

Paul Boase found that the Ohio camp meetings from 1808 to 1815 followed a prescribed schedule. Activity began at daylight with family devotions followed by prayer and singing in each tent or wagon. Those not preparing breakfast had a prayer meeting at the preaching stand. Four preaching services occurred during the day, at eight and eleven o'clock in the morning and at one and three o'clock in the afternoon, followed by one evening service. Between the services, prayer meetings occurred spontaneously or by request. 53

It is highly probable that a similar schedule served the M'Gready meetings and was the basis for the Ohio plan. Much was spontaneous, but M'Gready told McMillan of day and night services, early morning prayer groups, early morning preaching services as well as lay exhorting and prayers at all times of the day. 54 M'Gready and his co-workers attempted to crowd as much exhorting as possible into the three or four days of the camp session. John Edgar Park said in his homiletic lectures that "the art of common worship is the art of getting the minds and emotions of the congregation to operate, cajoling the


people to do more than half the work." The camp meeting did just that. Charles Johnson concluded that the worshiper felt "something great and extraordinary—that is, the active participation of the Lord—was going on." 56

**Effect of the Exercises**

If the physical phenomena, for example, the falling exercise, occurred at these early meetings, the subjects were allowed to remain where they fell. The mass scenes of fallen worshipers were highly suggestive, perhaps even terrifying, to the uneducated and superstitious. John Carr, who attended the Shiloh meeting, left with the following indelible impression:

> It would be impossible to describe the scenes presented at that meeting particularly when one saw many men, women and children, from the aged father down to the youngest son, now stretched upon the ground and pleading for mercy; then rising, and with shouts giving glory to God.

Concerning the same meeting, William Hodge said, "They were lying in heaps, and scattered all around; the sighs, groans, and prayers seemed to pierce the heavens, while the Power of God fell upon almost

---


56*Frontier Camp Meeting,* p. 56.

57John Carr, *Early Times in Middle Tennessee,* pp. 68-69.
all present." 58 Barton Warren Stone, who attended the Red River meeting in 1801, observed:

It baffled description. Many, very many fell down as men slain in battle, and continued for hours together in an apparently breathless and motionless state--sometimes for a few moments reviving, and exhibiting symptoms of life by a deep groan, or piercing shriek, or by a prayer for mercy most fervently uttered. After lying thus for hours, they obtained deliverance. 59

Although James Smith, the Cumberland historian, and William McGee, the Methodist revivalist, indicate that M'Gready discouraged the wilder forms of the exercises, it is difficult to recognize that his advice deterred any such expressions. 60 Nor does it seem reasonable that the crying, falling, and jerking occurred only after the services concluded as M'Gready himself argued. 61 If an overwrought worshiper could wait until the close of the worship, then it seems he could wait until the cause passed. The Cumberland sympathizers argued that the revival in the Cumberland had less emotionalism and

58 Letter to Francis Asbury, pp. 269-70.


60 Smith, History of the Christian Church, pp. 587-88. Smith said that M'Gready "particularly, was at great pains to guard his hearers against delusion of every kind." McGee noted that with the first exercises in 1800, M'Gready indicated a cautious attitude. See Chapter IV for the incident.

fewer physical exercises than in the northern parts of Kentucky. 62

George Baxter, a Virginia traveler, wrote that the Cumberland assemblies reportedly were more solemn, more successful, and that the "enthusiastic symptoms" were greatly "subsided." 63 Even if true, and the evidence is not conclusive, the difference was merely one of degree.

Many impressions accompanied the actual preaching. The distances traveled to attend such meetings indicate the inquisitive and perhaps anticipatory attitude of the attendants prior to the services. The vast crowds, the religious attitudes, and the physical phenomena lent a favorable setting for Mc'Gready's message of faith, repentance, and regeneration. Robert Davidson, a Kentucky Presbyterian historian, described the setting as follows:

Here were collected all the elements calculated to affect the imagination. The spectacle presented at night was one of the wildest grandeur. The glare of the blazing camp-fires falling on a dense assemblage of heads simultaneously bowed in adoration, and reflected back from long ranges of tents upon every side; hundreds of candles and lamps suspended among the trees, together with numerous torches flashing to and fro, throwing an uncertain light upon the tremulous foliage, and giving an appearance of dim and indefinite extent to the depth of the forest; the solemn chanting of hymns swelling and falling on the night wind; the impassioned exhortations; the earnest prayers; the sobs, shrieks, and

---

62 McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 44.

shouts, bursting from persons under intense agitation of mind; the sudden spasms which seized upon scores, and unexpectedly dashed them to the ground;--all conspired to invest the scene with terrific interest, and to work up the feelings to the highest pitch of excitement. 64

Jonathan Edwards made religious emotion and emotional preaching respectable as well as intellectually acceptable in his Religious Affections. M'Gready was well aware of the treatise and used it as justification of his action. 65

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The camp meeting was M'Gready's attempt to provide worship facilities conducive to repentance and the religious experience.

Broadly speaking, it provided a setting where preaching could have maximum effectiveness. By separating the auditor from his home duties, crowding a great amount of religious instruction and fervor into a short period, while providing an environment where prayer and meditation were socially acceptable, the innovation was a desirable arrangement. M'Gready sought for theopathies or intense worship experiences, which Douglas Horton termed, "always fiercely


The function of the preacher was to intensify the environment, give it reasonableness, present logically the basic truths of his revival message, and make appeals designed to begin the emotional process.

Lawrence L. Lacour found that in the development of revival methods in America, ten dominant characteristics were evident by the 1950's. Incorporated into "campaigns," they form the major guidelines for modern mass evangelism. They are:

1. Preaching the Christian message in a way that brings men to commit themselves personally to Christ.
2. Extending the ministry over a period of days and weeks.
3. Using group singing and special revival music to communicate the Christian message.
4. Employing organization and promotion both during preparation and while conducting the revival services.
5. Making revivalism a program special in the calendar of the church.
6. Limiting the activities of both church and community in order to concentrate on the revival effort.
7. Appealing to the individual listener in isolation.
8. Appealing to the listener as a group member.
9. Appealing to the listener in a mass crowd.
10. Conducting the evangelistic season comprehensively so that all activities focus the participant's attention upon the necessity of a personal decision.

The meetings of James M'Gready in 1800 and 1801 were as crude as


the times. They were not refined or polished, nor had the psychology of a revival been studied so that the meetings could be planned within the limits of the latest research. However, it is true that every guideline which Lacour's study found dominant in modern evangelism was utilized in some form in the M'Gready meetings of the Revival of 1800.
CHAPTER VIII

PREPARATION AND SERMON PROOFS

The Kentucky Revival of 1800 set in motion a wave of religious feeling and activity in the Old Southwest which spread over the eastern United States. Catherine Cleveland believes that this movement may best be understood through study of the young men who gave it strength and substance. According to Cleveland, the central figure in the early years was James M'Gready.¹

M'Gready's accomplishments were chiefly the result of oral persuasion. He was not an outstanding educator or literary figure.² He never held a significant ecclesiastical office. Pre-eminently, he was a preacher, properly classified in the log college tradition which William Henry Foote described as follows:

Didactic, -exhortatory, -plain, -impassioned, -often vehement, -they used the strong doctrines of Scriptures as facts for illustration, or weapons to subdue the heart, -and fearless of man in the cause of God, they pressed on to run with speed their race. Accustomed to debate, they were at home with the pen, and ready for their message, armed at all points, whether to preach from the plain desk, the well-


²The materials which found their way into print during M'Gready's lifetime were from letters originally intended for private correspondence.
arranged pulpit, or in the barn, the school house, or the shade of the forest. 3

With the exception of the reference to debate, this description fits M'Gready. Although no specific debate was a part of his career, certain of his sermons are a defense of Biblical authority against the charges of the rationalists. 4

This study considers in detail ten selected sermons from the forty-two published by James Smith in M'Gready's Works. These ten sermons seem typical of M'Gready's various sermon themes and also represent the three types of addresses which he delivered between 1797 and 1805. Smith did not attempt to identify these specific sermons as those delivered during the revival, but he says only that most of the sermons in the first volume were preached during the revival period. 5 By eliminating those cases in which internal or external evidence suggests a later period, the following ten sermons


4Herbert Montfort Morais found that during the period from 1789 to 1805, deism was particularly vigorous in its attack on the origin of the Scriptures. Led by Thomas Paine, the attack centered on ending formal Christianity by destroying its authority, the Biblical revelation. After 1805, largely because of the results of the revival, the power of deistic thought has been destroyed. See Deism in Eighteenth Century America (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960), pp. 120-25.

were selected:

Apologetic:
"The Bible a Revelation from Heaven"
"A Vindication of the Exercises in the Revival of 1800"

Evangelistic:
"The New Birth" (No. 1)
"The New Birth" (No. 2)
"The Character, History and End of the Fool"

General:
"The Nature and Necessity of Faith"
"The Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation"
"The Superabounding Grace of God"
"Christ Has Done All Things Well"
"Sacramental Meditation"

In each grouping the last sermon listed is known to have been preached during the revival. 6

The first group, listed under the heading of Apologetic, illustrates how M'Gready defended his convictions. In these two sermons he exemplified his ability in argumentation. The "Vindication" was preached in 1801, while the "Revelation" address pertains to the issues

---

6 As previously observed, M'Gready preached the "Vindication" in 1801 in defense of his position that the exercises seen in the revival were often of divine origin. Smith is the authority for the use of the "Fool" sermon even though internally it shows evidence of having been preached again late in M'Gready's life. See Works, I, p. iv, as well as James Smith, History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; compiled from Various Authors, including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), p. 672. The "Sacramental Meditation" internally establishes the place of delivery as Gasper River, and the nature of the subject establishes its use at the typical camp meeting, Works, I, p. 271.
prevalent during the revival period and compliments J. Berrien
Lindsley's contention that M'Gready was highly influential as a
religious apologist during the height of the revival.  

The second group, listed under the heading of Evangelistic,
illustrates the two types of evangelistic sermons that he preached.
The "New Birth" sermons are extensive doctrinal discussions of the
nature of conversion. The "Fool" address is an example of the
candid, down-to-earth sermons for which he was noted.

The third group contains speeches which combine the qualities
of the regular Sunday-to-Sunday addresses with subjects applicable
to the camp-meeting audience and therefore may have been preached
on either occasion. Indeed, the "Sacramental Meditation" was
delivered at a sacramental occasion at Gasper River. The first
three, "The Nature and Necessity of Faith," "The Excellencies of
Christ," and "Superabounding Grace," illustrate M'Gready's more
involved sermon organization and style which contrast with the
simplified development of the remaining two. Admittedly, the choice
of the ten sermons is in some cases arbitrary. However, virtually

---

7 J. Berrien Lindsley, "Sources and Sketches of Cumberland
Presbyterian History--No. XI, James M'Gready, His Character and

8 These are in fact two sermons developed from one outline.
They are the closest to a series in the Works and are a rather full
treatment of his peculiar conversion doctrine.

9 Works, I, p. 271.
any sermon of the *Works* might have been chosen with some justification. This selection has been made to facilitate analysis. M’Gready made no shift in theological thought during his preaching career nor in homiletic technique, presenting some sermons more than once.  

Furthermore, the editor of the *Works* was a Cumberland Presbyterian and obviously selected those examples that bear on Cumberland history which significantly involves M’Gready during the period of the Kentucky revival.

### I. SPEECH PREPARATION

M’Gready’s sermon manuscripts are adequate testimony to the time and energy he expended in his sermon preparation. Other successful evangelists in America have not been so laborious in their preparation. For example, George Whitefield’s preparations generally did not include writing a manuscript, and Eugene White found that the extant sermon texts of Whitefield’s American tours are but the substance of his actual remarks. Rollin Quimby concluded that Charles G. Finney rarely spent much time preparing particular

---


11 Smith’s publication of M’Gready’s *Works* was probably a studied supplement to his *History of the Christian Church*.

addresses. Even during the era of Mc'Gready's career, Presbyterian ministers generally wrote sermon manuscripts, but this was not a universal practice.

In North Carolina, Mc'Gready prepared each sermon with "much study," devoting two full days each week to the task of writing out his sermons. Having once written the sermons, he carefully "perused and re-perused" them prior to delivery. As previously shown, during the Carolina period Mc'Gready served two congregations, preached throughout the North Carolina-Virginia border region, and taught a school at his home. Two full days of sermon writing each week and the additional time for laborious restudy testify to the importance which Mc'Gready placed on full preparation. That he "perused and re-perused" his addresses hints of redrafting up to the moment of delivery. Matthew Simpson said to the Yale theology students that such recasting was desirable in producing high quality sermons. He stated:

> It is very seldom, as I think, that a sermon can be very ably wrought out by the first effort of either speaker or writer. Though in a few cases it has been done, even then

---


previous materials have been freely used. The life may be in it, but it is frequently like the tender blade as compared with the ripe ear. To have perfect force, it needs oftentimes recasting; always amending, pruning, or enlarging.¹⁶

There is no reason to assume that M'Gready changed his practice of sermon preparation after he moved to Kentucky. Having established a custom during the late Carolina period, he probably continued his early practice. Furthermore, with the lessened duties in the early Kentucky period, he probably spent more time than previously in his speech preparation.

In the preface to the Works, James Smith stated:

Most of the sermons, in this volume, were preached by the Author during the revival mentioned of 1800, although some of them were slightly altered by him, at a subsequent period, as may be observed from an allusion to natural events of a later date in that one entitled "The Character, History, and End of the Fool."¹⁷

This allusion to slight alterations is important for it indicates that M'Gready adapted his sermons to various audiences, making improvements which made the addresses more suitable or impressive. The sermon to which Smith referred includes a very brief allusion to the 1811 earthquake which rocked the Northwest Tennessee region.¹⁸


¹⁷Works, I, p. iv.

¹⁸Ibid., II, pp. 226-27. See the reference to place of delivery. Works, II, pp. 135, 203. These allusions did not alter the basic message content nor seriously change any argument structure.
allusion is brief, however, merely an illustrative example concisely inserted into the text, serving to make his general thesis relevant to his auditors. Certain implications follow from the Smith statement.

First, M'Gready selected and re-used those sermons which he found effective. Smith had evidence of the use of these addresses in the 1800 revival and M'Gready's student, Ebenezer Currie, remembered many of these sermons from the Carolina era.Obviously M'Gready preached the "Fool" address in the late years, indicating that he repeated other sermons after the revival period.

Secondly, M'Gready's practice of making alterations throughout his life indicates special preparation for each instance of delivery, even if he used previously prepared sermons. As an itinerant minister, he probably could not make complete revisions for each speaking occasion, but that he made such revisions at all indicates a process of self-criticism with a positive effort at self-improvement.

Another significant factor in his preparation is that M'Gready prepared sermons on general themes which applied to various church audiences. Of the forty-two sermons in the Works, only four appear suitable for one specific audience. Curiously, one of the four is a sermon which Smith asserts M'Gready preached at the funeral of his wife. This sermon, however, does not mention the wife nor make any

---

19 Foote, Sketches of North Carolina, p. 373.

personal remarks which would render the address unsuitable for the
funeral of any faithful Christian. With only a little impromptu assist-
ance, thirty-nine of the forty-two sermons could probably be delivered
to a variety of religious audiences. As M'Gready did not prepare his
manuscripts for publication, this manner of preparation appears
intentional. 21

Foote and Smith suggest that M'Gready used the manuscript
sermons as complete addresses or as notes for extemporaneous
sermons. Foote stated that on occasions M'Gready enlarged his manu-
script sermons by impromptu or extemporaneous additions. 22 Smith
observed that M'Gready sometimes presented his concluding remarks
"extemporaneously." 23 It appears logical, in view of M'Gready's
method of preparation, that he was capable of making the necessary
additions or explanations he deemed desirable for audience
comprehension. According to tradition, M'Gready was a capable
extempore speaker, preaching one funeral sermon immediately after
a man had fallen dead at a camp meeting. 24 Almost all of the
published sermons are complete addresses, however, which capably

21 Works, I, p. iv.
24 Benjamin McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), pp. 40-41.
explain and defend a proposition. They do not need additional remarks. Therefore, recognizing M'Gready's right to expand his sermon material at the moment of delivery, it appears that, with few exceptions, the sermons as published are complete but could also serve as notes for extemporaneous address.

Viewed in the perspective of the working environment of a camp-meeting preacher, M'Gready's method of sermon preparation had advantages. His method provided for preparation when weather or work load permitted. It provided sermon manuscripts which did not require redrafting prior to delivery before a second audience. The method provided a manuscript easily expanded, if the speaker desired, at the moment of delivery. In general, M'Gready's preparation was a decided improvement over both the manuscript method of presentation so unsatisfactory under open-air preaching circumstances and the unprepared impromptu harangue.

II. ETHICAL APPEAL

Aristotle indicated that the speaker should give the "right impression of himself," resulting in a mental disposition in the auditors favorable to the speaker and accordingly toward his case.  

---

Such a disposition could be sought through what is said in the address or can exist in the listeners through the known reputation of the speaker—the antecedent impression. Though a speaker may influence his listeners by what he says, his reputation may prejudice the case before it is presented. What was the reputation of James M'Gready during the Kentucky Revival period, 1797-1805.

**Antecedent Impression**

M'Gready was acutely aware that his day-to-day conduct influenced audiences. He said:

> The Preacher's life should be such as to declare loudly to all men, and convince the most sceptical, that there is a living reality in his doctrine, and in the religion of Jesus Christ. His conduct and conversation should preach as loudly and as convincingly as his sermons. ²⁶

Although M'Gready contended that prejudice against the ministry was a stratagem of the Devil to defeat the cause of Jesus Christ, ²⁷ in the late days of the revival he was suspected and accused of collusion to defraud in a land case. The matter was brought before the presbytery for judgment, and he was found guilty, although he was not present when the charges were made and had not been notified of the pending accusation. ²⁸ When M'Gready appealed, the Kentucky Synod referred

---

²⁶ *Works*, I, p. 323.


the case to Transylvania Presbytery. The action, in reality, was a transparent attempt to discredit the revival through an attack on one of its leaders. Transylvania Presbytery ruled that the action and ruling of Cumberland Presbytery was "a false, iniquitous & malicious representation of the conduct of the Rev. James McGready." 29

Fortunately for this study, the land case involved a review of motives and the testimony of character witnesses who overwhelmingly supported M'Gready as a man of honor and probity during the revival period. In a remarkable deposition, Ninian Edwards, one of the more accomplished men on the Western frontier, said:

From a knowledge I have had of James McGready since the year 1799, having since that period lived within about two miles of him, & for some years of that time adjoining him, being his nearest neighbor as I believe, I have been clearly of opinion that he was one of the most honest men & possessed & practiced the most exemplary piety of any man I ever saw or was acquainted with. He appeared to me more abstracted from the things of the world & more devoted to religion uniformly than any man whose conduct I had as particularly observed & I cannot forbear the repetition of an observation I have often made, tho it might appear improper, or indiscreet, or ill-timed or irrelevant, except as far as it goes to show the uniformity of my opinion & corroborate the statement I now make, --his conduct has made such an impression on my mind that I have frequently & as sincerely declared I would rather have his chance of future happiness [Heaven] than any man's I ever saw. 30

29 See Walter B. Posey, The Presbyterian Church, p. 98.

McGready's reputation during the revival period saved his ministerial position when, in the winter of 1806-1807, he was guilty of intoxication, apparently reporting the incident himself. One of the committee of investigation in the collusion case, Thomas Cleland, reported that the intoxication involved sickness and extenuating circumstances. The incident occurred in the Western Barrens region and did not affect his reputation in the Cumberland. Indeed, Cleland remarked that the testimony of some of the most respectable men in Logan County "gave Mr. McGready the most exalted character." These testimonies obviously reflected the reputation Justice of Kentucky in 1808. In 1809, he was appointed governor of the Illinois Territory and in 1826, was elected governor of the state of Illinois. He had been in Kentucky since 1795.

See his own third person report of the incident in Works, I, pp. 10-11. He admitted the situation, claiming an empty stomach and recent sickness. His own penitence made the circumstance public.


Cited in Cossitt, Life of Ewing, p. 486.
of M'Gready during the revival. He was extremely penitent because he believed that all Christians must show complete sincerity, especially ministers of the gospel, for there "is no vain word, no wrong step, no trifling gesture of all their lives, but is stained with the blood of souls. . . ." The standard he advocated was and is almost too stringent for practicality.

Clearly, M'Gready's preaching was not without opposition. His doctrines and worship procedures were not universally acceptable, and even men of his own presbytery were in ardent opposition. However, his preaching could not be impugned as proceeding from base motives or a suspect character. His reputation was strong, and apparently the people in his region respected him. Sincerity and piety seem to have been his dominant characteristics.

Individual opinions on the merits of the revival probably colored his later career. An interesting letter, dated December 7, 1808, is extant from a Presbyterian leader in Beards Town, Kentucky, to Joshua Wilson, then a leader in the Kentucky Synod. The writer wrote of the possibility of M'Gready's moving to his community, saying, "I expect he could be got to settle among us but you know my sentiments about him. Tho I believe him to be a pious man- [sic]."

---


35 MS letter from G. Gaither to Joshua Wilson (Dec. 7, 1808), Durrett Collection, University of Chicago Library.
did not define the "sentiments" but implied that he did not agree with the revivalslist. Interestingly, M'Gready's sincerity and piety were not questioned but granted.

M'Gready's advocacy of strict morality also made him unpopular with some persons in Kentucky as in North Carolina. John Andrews, a minister and religious editor, wrote of the mixed reactions toward M'Gready as follows:

\[\sqrt{\text{M'Gready}}\] . . . was highly esteemed by the humble followers of the Lamb, who relished the precious truths which he clearly exhibited to their view; but he was hated, and sometimes bitterly reproached and persecuted, not only by the openly vicious and profane, but by many nominal Christians, or formal professors, who could not bear his heart searching and penetrating addresses. . . .

It is difficult to state whether this opposition hindered M'Gready's effectiveness. Perhaps his controversial position rendered him more interesting to some frontiersmen.

Many stories, uncertain in origin, circulated in the Cumberland concerning M'Gready's ability and spiritual powers. By 1800, reports of the vast assemblies who gathered to hear M'Gready were being circulated throughout Kentucky and Tennessee. To these reports were added those of the fallings, strange conversions, jerks, and other phenomena, and the populace knew that most of these mysterious occurrences were regularly seen at M'Gready's meetings. He became a frontier phenomenon and his presence at a camp meeting attracted

\[\text{36}\] Works, I, p. vii. Andrews was a Chillicothe colleague of M'Gready and knew him during the Kentucky years.
many curious and sympathetic persons.

Benjamin McDonnold recorded one story in which a falling tree suddenly killed a man who was forcibly dragging his wife from a M'Gready meeting. Richard Beard wrote that "a very reliable old gentleman" witnessed a demonstration of M'Gready's power in prayer. He said:

On a certain occasion, he was preaching to a large congregation in the woods. A very dark and threatening cloud arose. A storm seemed ready to burst upon them. They had no shelter. The preacher was delivering his message with great earnestness and fervency. Seeing the storm approach, he stopped in the midst of his discourse, and addressed a prayer to God that the storm might be restrained or turned aside. The cloud separated, passed to the right and left, and leaving the congregation undisturbed.

Beard properly observed that prayer may not have affected the natural phenomenon, but the narrator and his fellow eyewitnesses contended that God granted special favors to M'Gready.

As such incidents were retold along the frontier, M'Gready's reputation grew. He became a curiosity as well as a man of integrity.

Use of Ethos

Aristotle objected to the view of some contemporaries who held

---

37 History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, pp. 40-41.


39 Ibid.
that ethical persuasion depended solely upon the antecedent impression. He replied that trust of the speaker "should be created by the speech itself. . . ."\(^{40}\) Thonssen and Baird maintain that ethical appeals are made when the speaker associates his cause or himself with virtuous and noble concepts, while associating what he opposes with what is considered base and contemptible.\(^{41}\) How did M'Gready attempt to establish that he and his cause had character, good will, and sagacity.\(^{42}\)

**Character.** Aristotle concluded that character declared itself through what a man chooses to do or avoid, that it is related to one's purposes or aims.\(^{43}\)

In both of the apologetic addresses, M'Gready relied heavily on the character of his cause to gain belief. In the "Revelation" sermon, he sought to prove that the Bible was a reliable statement of God's will for man. To do so M'Gready affirmed that the purposes of God, revealed in the Bible, were that men should "love infinite excellence, beauty and perfection with all our hearts and with all our souls. . . ."\(^{44}\)

---

\(^{40}\)Cooper (ed.), *Rhetoric*, pp. 8-9.


\(^{42}\)Cooper (ed.), *Rhetoric*, pp. 90-92.

\(^{43}\)Ibid., pp. 45-46.
and "promote the general good of society." He said:

... its doctrines are calculated to suppress vice and wickedness, and promote virtue and happiness.

The Bible denounces the most dreadful penalties against the wicked—declaring the wrath and curse of God, the eternal pains and torments of hell, as the just desert of every sin of thought, word or action. But promises the smiles and favor of God, the consolations of the Spirit in the present world, and eternal and indescribable blessedness in the world to come: as the reward of virtue and holiness.

But M'Gready argued that the Bible was especially beneficial to mankind because its commands were unique. He said:

The Bible will appear to be a revelation from God, if we consider the purity, holiness and spirituality of its principles and precepts. No system of religion can be compared with it in this respect. The doctrines of the Bible . . . give laws to the heart. They lay down rules and regulations to direct the most secret thoughts and emotions of the mind.

To establish his point, M'Gready pointed to a variety of social, civil, and domestic regulations, taught by Christianity, which M'Gready asserted were "calculated to promote the happiness of mankind."

He contended that even the Deist recognized the values of the Christian moral system and concluded that Christianity:

... requires all men to be just and faithful, kind and charitable, loving, affectionate and forgiving one another.

44 Works, II, p. 391.


46 Ibid., p. 393.

47 Works, II, p. 394.
Now if every man and woman would be governed and directed by these rules and precepts, how happy would the world be! 48

As he closed the "Revelation" address, M'Gready returned to the ethical values of his cause. As his final appeal, he asked:

I now appeal to every deist upon earth, if the Bible is not strongest bond of civil government.--Does it not offer the most powerful obligations to bind mankind together? Is it not the only system upon earth that leads to happiness in time and through eternity. 49

In the "Vindication of the Exercises," M'Gready combined an ethical appeal with ridicule. He argued from the position of religious persons, stressing the practical results of the revival, such as conversions, reformed lives, and a general religious reawakening in the Cumberland. He called these the revival's effects, "which prove it to be a work of divine power." 50 Knowing that truly religious persons could not object to these results of the awakening, M'Gready argued that only the "proud and worldly minded" could oppose it. 51 He was unfair to some, however, as many did not object to the conversions and reformation but to the apparent hysteria which attended many meetings.

48 Ibid., p. 396.


50 Works, II, p. 346.

51 Ibid., p. 342.
M'Gready emphasized the results of conversion when he appealed to men to choose high standards and virtue for their lives. In the second "New Birth" address, M'Gready spoke of the "surprising change" in a man as follows:

The body, which was before an instrument in the hand of the Devil to execute his commands, and perpetrate the most horrid acts of rebellion against God, now becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost. The members which were before instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, are appropriated to holy purposes. The eye, which conveyed sinful imaginations to the heart, is now under a covenant, employed in beholding the visible works of the invisible God, which declare his eternal power, and manifest his glory to his intelligent creatures. The ear, which was the porter of death, giving sin a ready admittance into the soul, becomes the gate of life, through which the word reaches the heart. The tongue which used to set on fire the whole course of nature, and was employed in vain, unprofitable conversation about things pleasing to the carnal mind, or in blaspheming the dread name of Jehovah, is now engaged in glorifying [sic] his name and setting forth his praise. In short, there is a powerful and universal change wrought upon the whole man, soul and body. 52

By implication, M'Gready appealed to his auditors to accept the benefits of conversion, rejecting nonvirtuous conduct for noble living.

In contrast M'Gready accused the sinner of base motives, implying that all who rejected his "means of grace" loved evil rather than good. This was his strategy in the "Character, History and End of the Fool." He described how the fool hated knowledge, saying:

The Sovereign of the Universe has appointed one day in seven to be particularly devoted to the acquisition of

52 Works, II, p. 88.
the knowledge of God, but the fool hates God, he has no desire to know him and the instruction and wisdom he despises; therefore, he spends the Sabbath in slumbering, visiting his neighbors, walking round his farm, or in vain and worldly conversation; perhaps he never opens his Bible, of if he does, he is not at all interested with its contents, and when he has hastily perused a chapter, he closes the book, rejoicing that he has got rid of his irksome task; he never bows his knee before God, either in secret or in his family, and perhaps he strives to banish from his mind all serious thoughts of God, death, judgment and eternity. As the fool hates instruction and wisdom, so he cannot bear the company and conversation of experimental and lively Christians. The conversation of such persons is intolerable; for it is contrary to his nature; it stings his conscience, and disturbs his carnal peace; therefore, he does what he can to avoid it; he hates and shuns the faithful minister or religious friend, who, with tears in his eyes, shews him his danger, and entreats him to fly to Christ. In a word, his chief happiness consists in the darkness of ignorance, and in living at the greatest possible distance from God and all that bear his image. 53

In this passage M'Gready painted his subject as a man who cared little for God or the moral training of his family and who sought the company of the lowest members of his society. He implied that the fool's motives were contemptible, unworthy of imitation by his auditors.

Fundamental to M'Gready's preaching and strongly affecting his use of ethical appeals was the doctrine of depravity. As M'Gready discussed it, evil ruled mankind and would forever unless man was reformed by a spiritual change called "regeneration" or the "new birth." 54


54 See the "New Birth," Works, II, pp. 72-74.
The implications of this philosophy colored each of the sermons in the
Works, for M'Gready ascribed the highest virtues to Christ and the
Christian system, while impugning the motives of unregenerated men.

For example, the extremes of his position appear as follows:

His Christ's love passeth all created understanding: it is an infinite ocean without shore or bottom; it is everlasting, unsolicited love, sovereign, free and unmerited love. It is almighty, all-powerful, all-conquering love; in a word, his love, mercy and goodness and grace, stoop from the heaven of heavens to the very suburbs of hell, and raises crawling worms--rebels that deserve the lowest hell, from the deep and miry clay, from all the dreadful horrors of an unconverted state, to the very summit of glory, and to the perfection of blessedness.55

Within this frame of reference, all non-Christians were "crawling worms--rebels that deserve the lowest hell," who by impenitence implicitly declared their intent to remain vulgar and ignoble. The weakness of this appeal is in its extremes. It is difficult to accept a classification grouping all men at one or the other end of a continuum as typified in the phrase, "from the heaven of heavens to the very suburbs of hell. . . ." Assuming that many of M'Gready's auditors were sincere and honest, of normal moral convictions, it is difficult to comprehend that they could accept M'Gready's assertion that:

Sinners in their Christless state are dead in trespasses and sins, and are not sensible of their miserable condition. Their eyes are so blinded by the God of this world, that they cannot see the infinite evil and intrinsic vileness of sin; but they will cherish it and indulge in it, although it

should be at the expense of their eternal damnation. They will venture upon it in spite of all the restraints of education and the accusations of conscience, the faithful warnings of God, and the earnest entreaties of a beseeching Saviour, and will voluntarily join with the Devil to excuse and extenuate it, in order to pacify an uneasy conscience. 56

It is little wonder that some resented M'Gready's preaching.

M'Gready's cause and his ministerial position allowed him to appeal for belief on the grounds of character. He believed that the faithful minister was a man chosen by God to preach, free from selfish motives, and having the moral and spiritual betterment of his listeners as his goal. 57 He apparently assumed that his auditors held similar views, for he frequently spoke of the faithful minister who urged men to noble conduct and salvation. 58 At other times he spoke of ministers as the "servants of God," 59 terminology which attributed the high motives of God to the divinely chosen preacher. Building on this foundation, M'Gready called upon his listeners to grant credence to the message he proclaimed because of his position. For example, in the first "New Birth" sermon, he introduced a series of questions, asserting that he asked them in the name of God. 60


58 Ibid., I, pp. 170-71, 179, 185, 186, 190, 214, 221, 316-24.


60 Works, II, p. 90.
In the "Vindication of the Exercises" address, delivered in 1801, M'Gready let his reputation and what appeared to be the personal endorsement of God support his position on the exercises. M'Gready introduced a history of the revival through 1800, stressing the significant events at Red River and Gasper River. As the recognized leader in the revival to 1801, a revival attended by many seemingly miraculous events, he received from many auditors tacit credit for divine assistance as a personal advocate of God. While he carefully avoided stating the direct connection, the point could not have been lost on an 1801 Cumberland audience.

Finally, M'Gready utilized his reputation and his experience to prove the values of Christianity. In the "Revelation" sermon, he recognized that it was difficult, if not impossible, to prove the validity of the new birth to the nonbeliever. He therefore asked for belief on the evidence of his personal experience when he said:

This is the way to happiness which the Bible teaches to . . . sinners of the human race. But my friends, it is the way: I know it, and every genuine christian upon earth knows it. I have that confidence in the esteem of my friends, my neighbors and fellow citizens, that I believe they all think me a man of truth and free from deception. And I declare it as a man of truth, before God, I have felt it--I have tried it--I have experienced it: I have enjoyed more solid pleasure and real happiness in viewing the glory of God in the face of Jesus--in feeling the love of Christ shed abroad in the soul--than ever Buonaparte felt in his mighty victories, and extensive conquests.

\[61\] Ibid., pp. 344-46.  
Obviously, M'Gready had faith in his personal reputation and asserted his conviction that he and all "genuine christians" were a proof of the doctrines he proposed.

Sagacity. By frontier standards M'Gready was considered an educated man, as evidenced by his being the first language teacher in the Red River area. In his sermons, however, he never mentioned any personal educational or intellectual qualifications. Nevertheless, he achieved some effectiveness in displaying intelligence and common sense.

M'Gready evidenced a background of religious study and human understanding that tended to mark him as a man of sagacity. Customarily, he relied on the Bible for proof, but in six of the ten select sermons he suggested that he had examined other sources, a pattern he maintained in twelve of the twenty sermons in the second volume of the Works (1833). But M'Gready did not choose to stress his secular sources, often referring to them as "a certain author", or as "say some . . . say others . . . ." In the "Nature and Necessity of Faith" M'Gready alluded to those who prepared the Confession of Faith and certain unnamed "divines."

65Ibid., II, p. 138.
For example, in the "Bible as a Revelation from Heaven,"

M'Gready demonstrated an awareness of Deism by stating six points of agreement between the Deist and the Christian. In reality M'Gready stated four commonly accepted points and evolved the remaining two. The first four points were: (1) there is a God, the first cause, sovereign and almighty; (2) God possesses all goodness and truth, being the embodiment of these qualities; (3) the world exists, inhabited by rational beings; (4) God created the world and created its inhabitants. M'Gready forged the remaining two stipulations from the previously stated points. The last two were: (5) God, a Being of infinite good, must have created man free from vice and moral evil; (6) man is not now free from vice and is not now as God created him.  

M'Gready forced his opponents to show by reason, totally apart from revelation, how man could repair the spiritual damage or enmity that arose by the introduction of sin and evil into God's world. Capitalizing on his position, M'Gready introduced six proofs that man was degenerate, thereby forcing his point and emphasizing the need for a revelation of reconciliation with God. In effect, he demonstrated an awareness of current thinking as well as a knowledge of historical and current patterns of life.


67 Ibid., II, pp. 382-84.
M'Gready demonstrated sagacity and common sense in his ability to observe his society and to recreate verbally life as it existed about him. The sermon, "The Character, History, and End of the Fool," is virtually a caricature of a religiously obstinate man, a composite creation, who refuses to accept the doctrines of Christianity. For example, M'Gready pictured the fool as needing a psychological escape from Christianity and finding it in the fact that many hypocrites professed religion. M'Gready said:

... the first thing he did, was to make out a large list of hypocrites; he strictly watched the conduct of professors of religion, that he might find out their faults and misgivings; he discovered that such a one, who prayed in his family, and whom he had frequently seen at a communion table, had been discovered somewhat intoxicated; therefore, he entered this professor on his list; a second had taken advantage of his neighbor in a bargain; a third had been seen in a passion and using unbecoming language. These, with many more of the same description, he enrolls [sic] with the first. These discoveries afforded him much satisfaction, and with a smiling countenance and taunting sneer, he would relate the circumstances in every company, and often intimated that all professors were hypocrites, and that the religion of Jesus was a deception. This list served on all occasions as a plaster to his troubled conscience; and he endeavored to believe that it was unnecessary for him to seek religion, as there was no reality in it. 68

M'Gready also described the fool in a moment of repentance when he said:

On a certain occasion, the fool took dangerously ill; he was laid upon a sick bed; his disease increased, and seemed to baffle the power of medicine; his physician despaired of curing him, and his friends expressed their fears that his

68Works, I, p. 220.
case was hopeless; death stared him in the face, and conscience again awoke and placed all his sins before him; the wrath of God and the horrors of hell affrighted him. Now he acknowledged himself a fool... he prayed and cried for mercy; then the language of his heart was, O that God would spare me for a few days or years longer... I would give myself no rest until my peace was made with God. Then eternity and eternal things employed his mind from day to day, until relieved of his disorder; but as soon as flattering hopes of recovery took place, his convictions began to subside; as his health and bodily strength increased, his serious attention to the work of his soul's salvation decreased... and he returned to his old sins... 69

This method of description borders on ridicule, but is probably a reasonably accurate reproduction of persons M'Gready had known. The details make the selection vivid and yet general enough for personal appropriation by many in his audience. 70

Good will. M'Gready recognized the need for tact when addressing his audiences, hoping that they would receive his message without being hindered by a poor opinion of the speaker.

In the introduction to the "Fool" address, M'Gready needed to establish a common ground in order to guard against offending his listeners. He said:

Perhaps there is no character more contemptible than that of a fool. Hence it is considered an insufferable insult to call


a man a fool. Were I to say that I now address a congregation of fools, or that I believed a majority of my hearers are fools, I expect I would give a general offence to my audience. To be as modest on the subject as possible, we will suppose there is one fool in this assembly; and, if there be, he is an object of pity; his condition is so wretched, that human language cannot describe it. My present business, then, is to delineate the character of the fool so plainly that he may see himself, be influenced to apply to Christ. . . .

In this selection, M'Gready combined humor with tact to gain his listeners' attention and good will. He displayed an awareness of word connotation, but used it to focus attention on his subject.

Similarly, when addressing his audience on "The New Birth," M'Gready asked his hearers to give special attention to his subject as the most important which Christianity could bring to men. With a mild rebuke he admonished his auditors against spending "their strength and time in quarrelling with other denominations about controverted points, and disputing about matters of small concern." . . .

In a camp meeting where numbers of denominations were represented, his candor could easily have removed some prejudice and associated him and his message with the interests of the group.

Another way in which M'Gready showed good will was in the treatment he gave to opposing views. When he felt that conscientious objectors could be reached, he described the conflict and attempted to

71 Works, I, p. 207.

72 Ibid., II, pp. 70-71.
resolve the issues. In the "Revelation" he fairly stated seven objections to the Bible as a reliable revelation. Having stated them without rancor, he gave his answers. Answering in too general a fashion, he probably did not sway the perceptive and critical Deist.

McGready also utilized the same technique in the "Vindication," openly stating the objections of those who found the "exercises" distasteful. He listed eight different criticisms, giving his answers to each. Methodically, McGready stated his case, giving reasons and precedents for actions that he could not stop but felt compelled to support. In fact, he answered quite creditably, as in this answer approving the "falling" exercise:

This may be accounted for, upon principles of plain reason. So intimate is the connexion between the soul and body, that it is nothing strange if a man filled with an uncommon sense of terror and divine wrath, or with an uncommon share of heavenly comfort, should fall to the ground and his bodily strength be overcome. Edwards in his sermon on the distinguishing marks of a work of God; expresses himself in such language as this: Were God to give the sinner a discovery of his state as it really is, he would not only fall to the ground, but sink dead upon the spot. . . . But falling to the ground, either under uncommon impressions of terror or comfort, is exactly scriptural and supported by many examples. Paul "fell to the earth" and "trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The jailor "came trembling

---

73 In the sermon on the "Character and Works of Christ," he recognized the variety of opinions existing on the subject, listing seven. He then suggested that as each concept was based on Biblical evidence, the questions could only be resolved by a re-examination of scripture. Works, II, pp. 248-49.

74 Works, II, pp. 396-403.
and fell down," saying, "What must I do to be saved?" And Habakkuk, speaking of the majesty of God, cries out, "My belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones,75 and I trembled in myself." The prophet Daniel... 

M'Gready gave one psychological reason, one statement from a recognized authority, and five scriptural precedents.

M'Gready demonstrated his good will toward his audiences in such phrases as "my friends"76 or "my brethren,"77 wording which briefly indicated a personal attitude of conciliation or concern. These references were rare, for M'Gready seldom used direct address in his sermons.78 He probably adopted this method as a consequence of preparing general sermons that he could preach before a variety of audiences. In his sermon, "The Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation," he attempted a personal approach. He topically discussed the moral qualities of Jesus Christ, taking his text from John 1:46 in which inquirers about Christ are invited to "come and see." In this sermon M'Gready repeated the phrase over thirty times, making it a rhetorical device of invitation to his audience to give attention to his message.79 However, he was too indirect by

75 Works, II, pp. 348-49.
76 Works, II, p. 387.
77 Ibid., p. 342.
78 In the twenty sermons of the second volume, see only five references of this type, pp. 71, 90, 342, 387.
79 Works, I, pp. 105-23.
this approach, many listeners probably being unaware of his rhetorical invitation.

As determined by an analysis of ten select sermons, M'Gready was weak in the use of ethical appeal. As a preacher who dealt with controversial subjects or who strongly condemned many social customs of his listeners, he probably should have attempted to conciliate his auditors more frequently.

As a minister, M'Gready gained respect merely because of the social customs of the day. Perhaps he relied too strongly on this social accommodation, or perhaps he felt that a minister must not inject personal considerations into the message of God. If so, he was inconsistent, for if he could be concerned about the impression of his daily conduct upon church members, he certainly could be concerned about the feelings he personally aroused in preaching the message of his god.

III. LOGICAL APPEAL

Hugh Blair, the English rhetorician, wrote that every successful minister must have a clear pulpit purpose. Blair, however, was vague, merely stating that the minister must persuade men "to become good."\textsuperscript{80} M'Gready was more specific, stating that his "grand design"

\textsuperscript{80}Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Philadelphia: Troutman & Hayes, 1851), p. 341.
was the "conversion of sinners."\footnote{\textit{Works}, I, p. 311.}

Preaching must be persuasive, M'Gready believed, designed to motivate his listeners to use the "means of grace." He did not believe that this was accomplished by emotional appeals alone, but that the minister must forcefully present "every argument" to convince the sinner. He felt that many deceived themselves by rationalization and that the minister must:

\begin{quote}
. . . labor to drive the formalist and self-deceiver from their false refuges, and surround them upon every side, with the infallible marks of the Christian, from the word of God; use the most convincing arguments to prove them still in the state of wrath.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 317.}
\end{quote}

Others, according to M'Gready, had unjustly condemned Christianity and the Bible, not having "weighed the evidences and arguments on both sides of the question. . . ."\footnote{\textit{Works}, I, p. 176.} M'Gready, therefore, recognized the difference between the evidence and the argument.

Use of Evidence

M'Gready was taught to seek a clear presentation adapted to the needs of his listeners, for John McMillan, M'Gready's theology teacher, said, "... the religion of mankind, ought to be delivered in the plainest manner, obvious, to the capacities of all; and this is remarkably the case in the holy scriptures." What forms of evidence did M'Gready adopt to support his contentions.

Biblical and secular testimony. In 1859, Henry Ripley stated that when the Bible is studied as a "book both of sacred literature and of divine authority, the more shall we find it an inexhaustible treasure of thought and of imagery." Ripley's theory was preceded by M'Gready's practice which made the Bible a source both of assertions and evidence.

In the ten select sermons, M'Gready averaged over thirty-two Bible quotations in each address. The number of quotations for each address is as follows:

"The New Birth" (#1) 43
"The New Birth" (#2) 43
"Character, History and End of the Fool" 24
"The Nature and Necessity of Faith" 27
"The Excellencies of Christ" 51
"The Superabounding Grace of God" 35
"Christ Has Done All Things Well" 14

85 John McMillan's Theology Lectures. Original in library of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Citation is from page five of Dwight Guthrie's copy.

86 Sacred Rhetoric; or, Composition and Delivery of Sermons (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1859), pp. 68-69.
"A Sacramental Meditation" 15
"Vindication of the Exercises" 26
"The Bible A Revelation from Heaven" 47

The lower number of quotations in the "Meditation" was probably because the listeners were communicants at a Lord's Supper service who did not need additional proof, but an intensification of existing emotions. That M'Gready cited almost fifty Biblical quotations before an audience who doubted scripture validity indicates that he believed the Bible was a weapon in its own defense. In addition to quotations, the sermons contain numerous allusions to Biblical personalities or instances. For example, ten such allusions appear in the "Excellencies of Christ," and seven appear in "Christ Has Done All Things Well."

Since the Bible was his primary source of evidence, M'Gready presented Bible quotations in every sermon for supporting materials; clarification, proof, amplification. For example, in the first "New Birth" address, he utilized the following Biblical support:

And I dare assert, that those who have not, at certain times, had such views of the divine glory, and felt such a sense of the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, as filled them with joy and satisfaction . . .

87 Works, I, pp. 103-23. These are apart from specific Bible quotations.

88 Ibid., pp. 256-65.

they are yet in the "gall of bittleness /sic/ and in the bond of iniquity /intensify/." For it is by communion with God, that the plant of holiness is nourished, and the Christian derives strength. . . . Says John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ /prove and intensify/." 90

In this paragraph M'Gready consciously quoted two passages, Acts 8:23 and I John 1:3, to intensify and prove, but the phrasing "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts" is also Biblical, coming from Romans 5:5, and is here inserted by M'Gready to amplify his general definition of the conversion moment.

M'Gready quoted his Bible as proof, a purpose determined by his belief that the Scriptures were divine in origin and infallible in truth.

For example, in "The Nature and Necessity of Faith," he said:

Every step of the christian's pious walk with God--every act of holy obedience--every victory he gains over sin and the world, and every pious breathing of the heart after God and holiness, springs from the living exercise of faith in the blood of Christ; and, hence it is, that our Lord tells his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." And says Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Indeed, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." 91

He presented his assertion, then supported it with three passages designed to prove, John 15:5, Philippians 4:13, and Hebrews 11:6. Significantly, the proof is more direct, more easily understood than his complicated assertion.

90 Works, II, pp. 105-106. The printed sermons contain scriptural quotations in quotation marks and in italics. However, the practice is not consistent, as illustrated by this example. Whether this was M'Gready's manuscript practice or that of Smith, the editor, is not known.

91 Works, II, p. 143.
Strangely, M'Gready did not always use his passages to their fullest advantage. Generally, he did not give his listeners the citations for Bible passages and often quoted verses from various parts of the Bible consecutively, as if they could be found at one place in the Scriptures. In this way, he was particularly weak when using Biblical testimony. For example, in the "New Birth" sermons, M'Gready cited passages one after another without comment at a crucial point of his address:

The word of God is frequent also, in its declarations respecting the helpless condition of sinners and their total impotency to all that is morally or spiritually good, declaring them "Dead in trespasses and sins;" that "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;" "Servants of sin;" "Enemies to God by wicked works." "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."92

In order M'Gready quoted Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 4:18-19, Romans 6:20, Colossians 1:21, and Romans 8:7. M'Gready's method would have significantly improved if, after defining the context, he had logically argued from the language of each passage. By this approach M'Gready would have been more fair, giving his listeners the setting from which each quotation was taken and, by elaboration, increasing the force of his evidence. Furthermore, the logical development of his sermon demanded more effective presentation, for failing to prove that man was

---

92Works, II, p. 75.
spiritually incapable of good ("total impotency"), he could not logically show that a "new birth" was mandatory for salvation. Unfortunately, weak use of Biblical evidence occurs in the "New Birth" sermons, "The Excellencies of Christ," "Superabounding Grace of God," and the "Vindication." Apparently he hoped that the audience was familiar with the passages quoted and would accept them as valid evidence without elaboration.

In his sermons M'Gready sometimes cited authorities other than the Scriptures. In the forty-two sermons in the Works, he alluded to or quoted from nineteen secular writers. In addition, he referred to the views of unspecified "eminent divines" or a "certain author." M'Gready mentioned four deistical writers: Constantine Volney, Jean Francois Voltaire, Henry St. John Bolingbroke, and Thomas Paine. From the classical period he identified Flavius Josephus, Augustine of Hippo, Tacitus, Pliny, and Socrates. Finally, he cited the following contemporaries: Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Sheridan, Ralph Erskine, Bishop Newton (probably John Newton, English clergyman, 1723-1807), Samuel Clarke, Isaac Watts, Samuel Rutherford, Elizabeth Rowe, John McLaurin, and a writer merely identified as "Brown." As suggested


94Rutherford and McLaurin were both Scotch evangelicals while Elizabeth Rowe was a minor poet. M'Gready liked poetry, but rarely identified the source of the poems he used. Perhaps some were his own. See the six poems used in the funeral sermon, Works, II, pp. 279-312. Brown is quoted but not identified. See "Importance of Early Piety," Works, I, p. 249.
by the preceding list of authors, M'Gready did not read widely, a probable result of circumstance more than temperament. He apparently concentrated on the religious field and the works which attacked his convictions. He studied the leading rationalists of his time and was familiar with those classical writers who commented on the early Christian movement.

Although he did not reject secular testimony, M'Gready generally relied on the Bible to prove his contentions, citing secular writers for elaboration or clarity. For example, in the "Vindication" he introduced five effects (exercises) observed in the revival meetings. Although he cited Jonathan Edwards' testimony to expand his ideas, M'Gready failed to indicate that the five effects were traceable to the "Twelve Signs of the Spirit in a Revival" in Edwards' Religious Affections.95 M'Gready made his case stand on Biblical precedents, while he cited Edwards' testimony in a secondary position. In the "Revelation" where his case logically would be strengthened by introducing a maximum of secular testimony, M'Gready continued to build his case on logic and scriptural evidence.96

Explanation or exposition. M'Gready consistently utilized


96 Works, II, pp. 376-404.
explanation at the beginning of his sermons in an analysis of his text, explaining the background or context of the Bible passage. Through this technique he familiarized his listeners with the general thought which he later expanded in the body of his address. He had the ability to condense large amounts of difficult material into short explanations. For example, M'Gready took Romans 5:20 as the text for the "Super-abounding Grace" sermon. To establish the setting he presented an excellent thematic discussion of the entire epistle of Romans to that point. He condensed his synopsis into approximately 250 words, a difficult task with involved material. In the first "New Birth" sermon, however, he adopted John 3:3 as his text and began his explanation with the first of the second chapter, a mistake which resulted in his including extraneous information.

Utilizing the exposition in other ways, M'Gready often developed a point through explanatory analysis. In the sermon on the "Nature and Necessity of Faith," he discussed the Biblical point that faith is necessary to satisfy the demands of God. He said:

In these words are two things worthy of observation: 1. Faith, the faith of God's elect, the radical grace which receives Christ, feeds upon him, and unites the soul to him; that faith which is the instrumental cause, by which the life

---

97Only one exception occurs in the forty-two sermons. See Works, II, pp. 96-97.

98 Works, I, pp. 286-87.

99 Ibid., II, pp. 66-72.
of grace is implanted in the soul—by which it is nourished and supported, and by which it ripens into the life of glory. 2. What is predicated of this faith. It pleases God; it chooses the very way and acts upon the very plan, which brings the highest tribute of glory to all the attributes of God. Faith grasps and holds fast by the incarnate God; it feeds and lives upon his mediation and atonement; it delights in the law of God, and to do his will. From Christ's fullness, it daily draws aid to perform the divine commands, from proper motives, and to right ends. Therefore, without this faith it is impossible to please him. 100

Interestingly, this selection, appearing at the close of the introduction, is a preview or synopsis of the total sermon. In addition to explaining the text, Hebrews 11:6, it sets forth the entire line of thought which the rest of the sermon develops. In the same sermon M'Gready attempted to clarify the "soul" by combining an analogy with exposition. He said:

The soul or spiritual part of man, is called in scripture the heart, inasmuch as it is to the whole man, what the heart is to the body. The heart is the spring of all animal motion and the soul the source of spiritual motion. 101

Six of the select sermons constitute explanations of specific Bible doctrines which M'Gready defined through analysis. He followed this pattern in "The Nature and Necessity of Faith," "The Superabounding Grace of God," "The New Birth" addresses, "The Excellencies of Christ," and "Christ has Done All Things Well." Introducing a major doctrine, he clarified and explained it, then attempted to motivate the listener to act. He apparently had concluded that if religious persons could understand and appreciate the redemptive message, they would respond. Thus,

100 Works, II, pp. 137-38.
101 Works, II, p. 144.
explanation and exposition formed a large portion of his pulpit approach.

Illustrations and allusions. M'Gready clarified his ideas through illustrations and allusions, either factual or hypothetical. In most instances, he drew these from Bible incidents or from the lives of major historical characters. 102

M'Gready's best use of illustrations drawn from the Bible was that used in connection with the exposition of the sermon text. He made his sermon text a significant statement from a scripture incident, adopting this technique in five of the ten select sermons. These were "Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation," "A Sacramental Meditation," "Christ Has Done All Things Well," "Vindication of the Exercises," and the first "New Birth." For instance, in the Excellencies of Christ," M'Gready chose John 1:46 as his text. In his introduction he asserted that the sincere believer becomes a missionary, as follows:

... he must tell the blessed news, he must tell what a precious Christ and sweet salvation he has found. This we find was the case with Philip, when he meets with Jesus, sees his glory and tastes his love—he runs to Nathaniel with the blessed tidings, saying, "I have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathaniel, though a good man,

102 The longest illustration in the Works is a two-page reference to the Marquis of Vico in "Terms of Discipleship," Works, II, pp. 132-33. Vico was a minor historical character and M'Gready provided sufficient details for understanding.
The technique is sound, for M'Gready tied his theme with the text by
the use of an incident drawn from human experience. Unfortunately,
he did not introduce many Biblical incidents as illustrations in other
portions of his sermons, trusting to allusions to carry the burden of
clarification.

When clarifying or making a point impressive, M'Gready occasion-
ally introduced a hypothetical illustration closely related to his
listeners' experience. For example, he intensified his point that men
could be mistaken if they thought themselves saved. He said:

I have heard of a madman, who claimed all the lands
between the Delaware and Susquehannah, and attended
courts of justice to be put in possession of his right. But
he had no evidence to support his claim other than a vain
conceit of his own crazy imagination; and upon no better
foundation than this, do many who call themselves
christians build their hopes for heaven and eternal life. 104

Because of the frequency of land disputes on the frontier, the illustra-
tion was easily understood.

Similarly, he illustrated his contention that man deserves God's
wrath because of willful disobedience. He argued that if a master
ordered his slave to plow his fields but that slave was physically
incapable, the slave was excused. But if the slave's disobedience

103 Works, I, p. 105.
104 Works, II, p. 113.
was due to rebellion, M'Gready asserted that the disposition to disobey was "the provoking cause of his damnation." 105

In the concluding portion of the first "New Birth" sermon, M'Gready attempted to highlight the need for "regeneration." He said:

When Xerxes, the king of Persia, beheld the millions who composed his Army, he sat down and wept, because in one hundred years not one of so great a multitude would survive. But much greater cause have ministers of the gospel to weep and mourn, for, in the space of an hundred years, the greater part of all the congregations to whom they are now delivering the message of God, will be howling with the damned in hell, and be eternally out of the reach of mercy. As sure as you live and die strangers to the new birth, you shall perish forever... 106

Here M'Gready used an unfamiliar historical incident as an opening to stress the need for his listeners to act. He did not rely on the illustration, for the audience was probably unfamiliar with the incident, but he quickly applied the moral to the particular congregation he addressed.

However, M'Gready bordered on the trite when attempting to emphasize that the unconcerned sinner was a fool. He combined short illustrations with rhetorical questions, saying:

Another peculiarity in the character of the ideot [sic], is, he is void of wisdom; so every part of his conduct is vain, foolish, and irrational; but this bears no comparison

106 Works, II, pp. 89-90.
to the brutish irrationality of the Christless sinner. Did you see a man bartering away an immense earthly inheritance for an embroidered cap, a gay feather, or a fine go-cart; or did you see him selling a crown, a throne, and a kingdom, for a ginger-cake or drink of grog, would you not be convinced that he was verily a fool? or did you see him in cool blood cutting his own throat, or driving a dagger into his own heart, would you not conclude that he is a distracted fool? but all this falls far short of the brutish and distracted conduct of the poor Christless sinner who parts with heaven and all its glories for the vain pleasures of this world, and who, in spite of all the entreaties of the ministers of the gospel, the warnings of God, and the motions of conscience, sells his soul for a trifle, and finds his way to hell. 107

Obviously, he was ridiculing the mundane attitude of many toward his preaching. Holding one set of convictions, he conscientiously felt that the sinner bartered away a great prize for a trifle, but one may assume that some listeners did not concur. Therefore, those who shared his views probably accepted his illustration, but it was too superficial for others.

M'Gready relied on well-known Bible characters or stories as the source for allusions, a type of evidence that appeared often in the selected sermons. The number of allusions used in each address was as follows:

"Character, History and End of the Fool" 11
"The Nature and Necessity of Faith" 10
"Christ Has Done All Things Well" 5
"A Sacramental Meditation" 5
"Superabounding Grace of God" 8

It is probable that M'Gready relied too heavily on an assumed scripture familiarity in his audience, for he consistently took his allusions from specific instances in the Bible, the details of which made the allusion pertinent. For example, in the "Fool" sermon, M'Gready amplified his assertion that the continual rejection of grace ultimately damned the sinner. He said:

. . . he refuses to submit; the world and its pleasures so possess his heart, that he will rather risk all the torments of hell than part with them; sometimes like Ahab, he humbles himself for a time, and walks softly; but he soon resists the light, and returns to sin. Again, like Felix, he is made to tremble under the awful apprehensions of the wrath of God; but he puts off seeking the salvation of his soul till a more convenient season. Again, like Agrippa, he is almost persuaded to become a Christian, but some beloved sin keeps the Lord Jesus Christ from possessing his heart . . . when he is confined to a sick bed, and death and eternity stare him in the face, like Pharaoh, he promises amendment, and pleads with the people of God to pray for him; but no sooner is affliction withdrawn, than Pharaoh like, his heart becomes more hardened than before, until, at last . . . his damnation is sealed. 108

In order, M'Gready alluded to events occurring in 1 Kings 21 and 22, Acts 24, Acts 26, and Exodus 3 through 12. In each case he called the central character of the event by name; but by merely indicating the logical connection of each man to his thesis, he forced the

---

audience mentally to provide additional details. In this instance, as in almost every other case where he mentioned Bible personalities in allusions, his sermon would have benefited by additional detail.

M'Gready also alluded to historical personalities in his sermons, but only rarely. When mentioning such personalities, he selected those generally well known, as in the "Christ Has Done All Things Well" sermon. He intended to clarify his point that Jesus changes the disposition of the heart at the time of conversion. He said:

Alexander, Caesar and Marlborough conquered nations and forced thousands into obedience; but they could not subdue the will, firm and untrammelled, she reigned the unrivalled queen of the soul. But the proudest sinners, the most stubborn rebels, who are overcome by the power and grace of the Redeemer, are sweetly drawn by their own free and hearty consent. 109

In this manner, M'Gready compared Christ to conquerors, one of the soul to those of nations. He mentioned those characters easily recognized by his listeners and probably established his point without additional comment. By elaborating on each case, M'Gready could have built the allusions into analogies, but chose to leave this to the imagination of his auditors.

In summary, M'Gready freely utilized illustrations and allusions to clarify and expand his ideas. He drew his illustrations from the Bible and history, but where he relied on historical instances

109 Works, I, p. 262.
or personalities, he appropriately selected famous characters or events. In the adoption of allusions, M'Gready again relied on his Bible to furnish material, but he also relied on his audience to furnish details. In most instances his sermons would have benefited if he had expanded the allusions into full illustrations, a technique which would have provided greater clarity and consequently gained greater interest.

Inference

As previously shown, M'Gready relied on the evidence furnished by the Old and New Testaments which he supplemented by historical and observable facts and illustrations. However, he combined these materials with inferred conclusions or facts which also constituted a form of logical appeal.

Deduction. The application of a general principle to specific instances was probably the most common method of reasoning found in M'Gready's sermons. This method dominated five of the ten addresses: "All Things Well," "A Sacramental Meditation," "The Excellencies of Christ," and both "New Birth" addresses. Interestingly, each of these sermons is largely doctrinal, and M'Gready could rely on his infallible Scriptures for tenets.

In the "Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation," M'Gready followed a pattern of making an assertion, proving it with one or more Bible quotations, and then arguing from
the implications of his assertion. He represented Jesus Christ as having two distinct natures, human and divine, and three offices, prophet, priest, and king. He developed each division by deduction as he did the following discussion of Jesus as priest:

... you are called to come and see what a precious, suitable Saviour Jesus is, when viewed in his priestly office. The Divine Spirit tells us that "he is a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek;" "that he is a merciful and faithful high priest;" a "high priest that can be touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, as in all points he was tempted, as we are yet without sin;" "that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession". View him in his priestly office, and by faith you may see that glorious, precious, sweet smelling sacrifice, which was the antitype of all the bloody sacrifices for thousands of years. The sacrifice that made a competent atonement to the law and justice of God for all the sins of many millions of lost sinners; for the sins of that exceeding great multitude which no man can number. Do you ask, what was this sacrifice? I answer, it was the immaculate human nature of the son of God--his spotless, holy soul and body--which was intimately united to the second person of the ever blessed Trinity, as to constitute but one identical person. The altar upon which this was offered, (and which sanctified the gift and gave an infinite dignity and value to the sacrifice), was the divine nature, and the priest that offered it up was Immanuel, God in human flesh.

Having made a general assertion, M'Gready allowed the Bible quotations to provide proof and to suggest the special priestly duties of Christ, which M'Gready built upon in the concluding material.

In the "Revelation" M'Gready chose to make the major divisions of his address form the major and minor premises of a categorical

110 Works, I, pp. 111-12.
syllogism. His first point, "a revelation from heaven is necessary to lead man to true happiness," formed the major premise; the second point, "... the Bible has all the features and evidences of a divine revelation," forming the minor premise. He distinctly stated the conclusion during his discussion of the second division.111

Similarly, M'Gready argued deductively to prove that the unbeliever was lost. He asserted:

The soul void of faith is dead, morally and spiritually dead—"Dead in trespasses and sins." Therefore, it is as much incapable of actions spiritually good, and pleasing to God, as the dry bones scattered over the valley, of reanimating themselves and performing the actions of living men. Desperate wickedness, and the unconquerable enmity of the heart, are the causes of this spiritual death or moral inability, that unfit the unregenerate soul to perform actions acceptable to God.112

Stated more distinctly, his syllogism would be as follows:

Major Premise: The soul which pleases God performs spiritually good acts.

Minor Premise: The unbelieving soul (human) is dead and cannot perform spiritually good acts.

Conclusion: Therefore, the unbelieving soul cannot please God.

The phrase, "dead in trespasses and sins," was his Bible proof, while the remainder of the paragraph was explanation or exposition. Keeping


112 Ibid., II, p. 144.
the chain of reasoning simple, M'Gready did not confuse his auditors.

He developed the succeeding point of the same address through an enthymeme, but in effect the point was a categorical syllogism. He said:

The soul destitute of faith cannot please God, because unbelief is the ruling principle of all its actions; and therefore, instead of pleasing, these actions offer the highest affront to the eternal God; for they declare him to be a liar, and treat him with the lowest contempt. 113

The major premise was his implication that any action which insults God is displeasing to God; the minor premise was that unbelief is a practical affirmation that God lies. The weakness is the assumption that one's unbelief suggests anything more than inability to accept the existence of a deity. Unbelief, which cannot accept any god, can hardly call a nonexistent god a liar.

M'Gready was more successful when he argued from hypothetical or disjunctive syllogisms, forms of reasoning which require in the first instance that the logician have absolute consequences or, in the second, mutually exclusive alternatives. He frequently utilized the hypothetical form in his "applications," for if the doctrine previously discussed was true, then his applications or consequences would be valid.

In the "Revelation" address, however, M'Gready combined both

113 Works, II, p. 145.
hypothetical and disjunctive reasoning in a chain to establish his first assertion, that man needs a revelation from heaven in order to enjoy a beneficial relationship with God. M'Gready argued from the common ground that existed between himself and the deists; God existed and was of infinite purity and good. He argued deductively through a series of three hypothetical syllogisms ("if . . . then") and two disjunctive syllogisms ("either . . . or") to prove his point. His outline of reasoning is as follows:

(a) If God created man, then man must have been created without evil, for to do otherwise would have been a denial of God's own nature.

God created man.
Therefore, man was created without evil.

(b) If man is evil, then he is not as created by God.

Man is evil.
Man is not as created by God.

(c) Either God despises evil or God sees no difference between good and evil.

God despises evil, for to do otherwise is to deny a difference between good and evil.

(d) If man performs evil, then he offends and alienates himself from God.

Man performs evil.
Man offends and alienates himself from God.

(e) Either reason must discover a way to reconcile man to God or man needs a revelation from Heaven.

Reason cannot discover a way to reconcile man to God.
Man needs a revelation from Heaven. 114

In this reasoning progression, M'Gready forced the Deist to accept the consequences of his own position. While the last syllogism might be weak for other skeptical persons, M'Gready knew the Deist affirmed that reason was supreme in religion as in other areas of life and would accept his alternatives.

In the "Superabounding Grace" sermon M'Gready began his second point by asserting that he would demonstrate that God's grace supercedes or "abounds" over sin. To do so, he proceeded on the unstated major premise (hypothetical) that if grace displaces, destroys, or overrules the conditions created by sin, then God's grace "abounds." His first three supporting points are specific theological considerations which show the displacement of sin's consequences. 115 His reasoning is complex, valid if one accepts his interpretation of Bible theology, but it is doubtful that many listeners could follow his involved explanations.

As an evangelist M'Gready relied on the alternatives inherent in his doctrine to bring his listeners to a logical dilemma, for as a modern homiletician stated: "A sermon is like a highway; it is only when one comes to a fork in the road that he stops to think about his

---

114 Works, II, pp. 381-88.
115 Works, I, pp. 293-95.
McGready believed that the saved would enjoy the bliss of heaven while the unrepentant would inevitably enjoy hell, alternatives which he attempted to intensify. For example, McGready's manner closely resembled that of Jonathan Edwards when McGready stressed the consequences of a wrong choice, saying:

As long as you are strangers to the new birth, all the curses, terrors and threatenings hang over your heads. The vengeance of the eternal God is gathering in a thick tempest ready to burst upon you: bottomless hell is yawning wide to receive you: the devils are waiting the dreadful mandate, that they may sink their fiery talons into your souls and drag you to the infernal pit! Oh that you were wise, that you understood this, and would consider what would be the end of your course. Fly to Jesus while the door of mercy is open. Fly, fly, to the ark of safety, before the deluge of God's wrath overtakes you. Turn to the strong hold, while you are prisoners of hope; for behold the avenger of blood is at your heels--the sword of inflexible justice is drawn and ready to be plunged into your hearts.117

In this passage McGready attempted to eliminate a possible third choice. He argued that the listener either repented or suffered, seeking to make the alternatives distinct and vivid.

Bound by the alternatives of his Calvinism, McGready argued from the premise of total depravity, a doctrine which dictated that God accepted no action of man until that man was granted "righteousness."

---


He said in the "Superabounding Grace" sermon:

All who hear me this day are either under the government of sin, and slaves to their lusts, or under that of grace, with Jesus Christ for the captain of their salvations and the heirs of eternal life. 18

While the position was a consequence of his denominational teaching, M'Gready's theology strongly colored his revival sermons, a trend evident in all the analyzed sermons. He consistently emphasized the alternatives and consequences of repentance, a pattern which implicitly relied on either the hypothetical or disjunctive syllogism.

**Generalization.** M'Gready was plagued by the lack of sufficient specific instances when attempting to argue from single incidents to general laws. Although he did not often adopt this method of argument, he built his case in the "Vindication of the Exercises" about specific instances. After giving a chronological history of the revival since 1797, he asked, "What are the observed effects proving this a work of divine power?" Answering his own query, he specified five categories or classes of effects: (1) a conviction of sin is granted to sinners; (2) sinners are given a view of Christ's willingness to save; (3) a loving, benevolent spiritual disposition is evident in the participants; (4) select persons are given special knowledge; and (5) lives have been reformed.119 However, at no time did he give

---


specific examples of the categories, apparently assuming that his audience was aware of these effects. Oversimplified though it was, M'Gready challenged the objectors to find any cause for these desired religious actions other than divine motivation. Obviously, emotional factors would account for some of these effects, but many in an 1801 frontier religious audience probably accepted his reasoning. While his categories were his specific instances, they lacked the very specificity which gives this method of argument clarity and strength.

In the "Revelation" M'Gready again adopted categories or classes as specific instances when attempting to prove that "mankind are degenerate creatures." M'Gready affirmed that his statement was supported by seven areas of evidence, the first two being as follows:

1st. From the vice and great wickedness which every where abound in the world. Witness the falsehood, the deceit, the cheating and fraudulent measures universally practised in accumulating property, and depriving men of their rights. The dissipation, swinish drunkenness, obscene debauchery, profane swearing, and horrid blasphemies. -- The idleness, prodigality and extravagance, by which men destroy their characters, their estates, their health, their families, their lives and their immortal souls. To these we may add, the rage, the malice, the private injuries, slanders, oppressions, thefts, murders, adulteries, and the evil disputings and contentions, which every where prevail.

2nd. Another evidence of the fallen and depraved condition of man, may be drawn from the necessary establishment of civil government, and penal laws to restrain offenders, defend men's lives and property, and prevent the world from becoming a perfect hell. To which are attached civil officers, courts of justice, and places of punishment, viz. Judges, Sheriffs, court houses, jails, penitentiaries, pillories,
whipping-posts and gibbets. 120

M'Gready based his assertion on groups or classes of sins, each class expanded by the identification of sub-classes. He adequately proved, if he needed to at all, that mankind was not pure or free from vice. Actually, the point probably would have been granted, but M'Gready presented his evidence to stress the enormity of sin in the world. His underlying strategy, implicit in the generality of his evidence, was to demonstrate that a God of purity was forced to condemn his created world, now filled with such monstrous evil. Isolated instances would not fulfill this purpose, so the revivalist adopted species of sin as specific instances.

Finally, M'Gready argued that the Bible must be a revelation from God because of the fulfilled prophecies it contained. His proof consisted of three specific predictions to support his general assertion that "the Bible is a revelation from God, [as] is evident from the exact accomplishment of its prophecies." 121 While he referred his listeners to other source materials, he asked them to accept his generalization on the basis of three specific examples. 122

120 Works, II, pp. 382-83. The last two areas of evidence are not consistent, being Biblically based evidence not so obvious as the others.

121 Works, II, p. 289.

122 Ibid., pp. 289-90.
The inherent weakness of his argument was that he was obligated to prove all the prophecies were fulfilled in order to prove his statement, but he did not accept the obligation.

M'Gready was weak when arguing by generalization. He apparently felt that his presentation of Biblical examples was satisfactory, a judgment perhaps valid to the fundamentalist Christian, but not to the skeptical deist. When referring to specific instances in the "Vindication," M'Gready probably met his doubting listeners on common ground when using Biblical material, but they likely found it difficult to equate "sanctified" Bible incidents with some of the behavior of the camp ground.

Analogy. M'Gready did not often argue by extended analogies, but rather his analogies were short, similar to allusions, merely identified by the word "like." He drew one of his longest analogies from daily life when he compared the believer's faith to a child's dependence on its mother, saying:

Faith is not an occasional act which takes place in the believer's life, in the hour of conversion to God, when he first lays hold on Christ for salvation; but is an abiding principle which runs through every part of the life of sanctification. As the infant lives upon its mother's breast, and derives its whole nourishment, support, and daily growth from her, so, faith lives and depends, daily, upon Christ for righteousness and strength, and for

constant supplies of divine grace, by which the soul grows from strength to strength, until it arrives at the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. 124

In this passage, M'Gready broadly identified specific points of comparison between the infant's dependence on its mother and that of the believer on faith. The analogy provided clarity; the comparison was certainly from common experience.

M'Gready made one exception to his general practice of avoiding extended analogies. In the "Character, History and End of the Fool," he painted a composite picture of the man who continued to reject the Christian religion. M'Gready organized the sermon into a biographical summation of as many forms of procrastination and rationalization as possible, making the "Fool" the epitome of all the "unrepentant." Relying on mere narration without application, he chronologically followed the "Fool" all the way to his Stygian destination. 125 The "Fool" sermon is one of the clearest of the revivalist's addresses, for no one could miss the point of his down-to-earth analogy.

IV. EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Because he was an evangelist by design, M'Gready sought for


and emphasized those appeals which would most efficiently bring about his desired response in an audience of "unconverted" believers, a response which called for a complete mental and spiritual prostration before God. In the ten analyzed sermons, M'Gready made sixty-five separate emotional appeals. Large though the total may be, M'Gready did not depend completely on emotional appeals in his addresses, for five of the sermons have three or less such goal factors.

In the following sermons, M'Gready adopted nine or more emotive appeals: "The Character, History and End of the Fool," "Superabounding Grace," "The Excellencies of Christ," and the first and second "New Birth." In contrast, he included only three or less goal stimulants in each of the following: "The Nature and Necessity of Faith," "Vindication of the Exercises," "Revelation from Heaven," "Christ Has Done All Things Well," and "A Sacramental Meditation." Interestingly, the first group, relying heavily on emotional appeals, is dominated by evangelistic sermons whose purpose was to arouse "sinners" to action. The second group of sermons is addressed

126 Gray and Braden define such appeals as basic, "the impelling forces which form the basis for all our behavior." Public Speaking, p. 54.

127 For analytical purposes the writer listed M'Gready's appeals separately if they stood in distinct organizational divisions; or where two or more appeared in the same division, they were listed separately if each had a well defined individuality.
primarily to "converts" and contains reasoned apologies for religious beliefs. It appears that M'Gready felt that where the audience was composed of the interested but "unconverted," one of his strongest weapons was a vivid display of the Christian goals.

Why did M'Gready depend on emotional appeals when addressing non-Christians. Initial answers appear from his theological training under McMillan and Smith, the common practice of frontier preachers of all faiths, an obvious effectiveness, as well as the recognized truism that many religionists demand such in their worship. But these are probably secondary reasons, giving support and further credence to his primary motivation.

M'Gready most certainly adopted emotional appeals because of his Calvinist philosophy--a philosophy which he believed was the embodiment of God's complete and infallible truth. Furthermore, from his Calvinist interpretation of the Bible, M'Gready derived his knowledge of psychology and motivation which, when applied to evangelistic preaching, forced him to employ strong basic motives. For M'Gready believed that "fallen" man was incapable of noble or higher motives; depravity from the moment of conception had taken such capacities away. He said:

... "he was shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and born like a wild ass's colt;" he came into the world destitute of the moral image of God, which consists in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness; he was born
in the very image and likeness of that old serpent, the Devil. 128

The universality of this condition is evident when, in the "Super-abounding Grace" sermon, M'Gready asserted:

\[
\text{... \sqrt{\text{sin}}} \text{ shed its deadly venom through the whole human nature, ... every thought, word and action of all the numberless millions of mankind in every age of the world; hence the understanding is dark; the heart is enmity against God; the conscience defiled with dead works; the memory prone to forget God; the affections polluted ... and the actions conformable thereto.} \] 129

In effect, therefore, M'Gready's philosophy was a deterrent to logical appeals or appeals to noble living. Gray and Braden suggest that the speaker should appeal to the highest motives to which listeners will respond, 130 but M'Gready did not believe that the sinner's motives were elevated, thus forcing himself to emphasize basic appeals. These were: (1) fear of the wrath of God and eternal fire, used thirty times; (2) contempt for the life and motives of the sinner, used fifteen times; and (3) the possibility of a heavenly reward, adopted eight times.

M'Gready defined preaching to the "awakened" as "one of the most difficult parts of the minister's work." 131

Complicated

129 Ibid., p. 291.
130 Public Speaking, p. 74.
131 "Qualifications and Duties of a Minister," Works, I, p. 318. The "awakened" were convicted but "unregenerate" persons.
by the fact that Calvinism could not promise the "new birth" or "regeneration" to any listener, M'Gready stated his own philosophy of emotional appeal in his advice to his fellow ministers, saying:

He [the minister] must convince the awakened sinner that the vengeance of God pursues him every moment while out of Christ—that there is no safety a hair's breadth short of a sound conversion. He must shew him the great danger of losing his convictions and quenching the motions of the Spirit, lest his day of grace pass away, and he be given up to hardness of heart and reprobacy of mind. . . . He must cut off all his hopes, and reduce him to despair of salvation, save through the atonement of Christ. When sinking into despondency and the gloom of melancholy, he must encourage him, by shewing him from the word of God, and from his own experience, that his case is not hopeless; that it is in this way that the Spirit leads the soul from death unto life. He must press home upon him the necessity of believing and flying to Jesus; the danger of lingering in conviction and waiting for qualifications to come to Christ. He must shew him that Jesus invites and entreats him to come just as he is—wretched, miserable, guilty and blind—that the most vile hell-deserving sinner would be welcome. He must point out the door of hope, and display the willingness and power of the blessed Jesus, to pardon, justify and save—acquaint him with all the promises of God's Word. 132

Fear

Of the thirty fear appeals, seventeen appear in the concluding portions of M'Gready's sermons. Consequently, fear dominated the total of twenty-six emotional appeals in the conclusions. He based these appeals on the approaching wrath of God which would result in eternal suffering in the fire of hell. Consistently, he united the

132 Ibid., pp. 318-19.
appeal with a call for immediate action in the form of repentance.

For example, in the first "New Birth" sermon, M'Gready urged his listeners to beware of complacency, saying:

Now if your consciences declare that you never had such sense of sin as gave you heart-rending pain and anguish, made you lament and mourn and deeply bewail your wretched and deplorable situation--beyond all doubt you are at this moment destitute of living religion. You have never come to Christ, and are yet obnoxious [oblivious] to eternal death. What a dismal state! Every morning that you rise from sleep, God's curse is upon you. Every night when you lie down upon your bed, you go to rest with his heavy curse upon you. Your food, your clothing, your houses and lands, and all your enjoyments are cursed of God. The artillery of heaven is levelled against you, and all the infinite perfections of that God . . . are engaged to make you eternally and completely miserable, if you continue to reject Christ. . . .

In this passage, M'Gready based his appeal on fear of the wrath of God, but attempted to degrade all "enjoyments" which might take precedence over repentance. Though he did not specify hell, he implied the destination in his language.

In the "Fool" sermon M'Gready became more graphic in his description of hell, utilizing description and narration which Wayne Minnick called the most common method of giving emotional content to speeches. M'Gready said:

. . . he died accursed of God when his soul was separated from his body, and the black flaming vultures of hell began to encircle him on every side; his

133 Works, II, pp. 90-91.

conscience awoke from its long sleep, and roared like ten thousand peals of thunder; then all the horrid crimes of his past life stared in his face in all their glaring colors; . . . when the fiends of hell dragged him into the infernal gulf he roared and screamed and yelled like a devil; when while Indians, Pagans, and Mahometans /sic/, stood amazed, and upbraided him, falling, like *Lucifer*, from the meridian blaze of the gospel and the threshold of heaven, sinking into the liquid boiling waves of hell, and accursed sinners of Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom, and Gomorrah, sprang to the right and left, and made way for him to pass them, and fall lower down even to the deepest cavern in the flaming abyss. . . .  

M'Gready became well known for his descriptions of heaven and hell, as observed by William Barnet, an early Cumberland Presbyterian and a revival participant who said:

> Father McGready would so describe Heaven, that you would almost see its glories, and long to be there; and he would so array hell and its horrors before the wicked, that they would tremble and quake, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to overwhelm them, and the wrath of God thrusting them down the horrible abyss.  

Assuming that his listeners accepted his descriptions, and the historical evidence indicates that they did, M'Gready possessed a powerful rhetorical weapon in his ability to depict the future he envisioned for his auditors.  

In the "Superabounding Grace" sermon M'Gready utilized eight separate fear appeals, the largest number for any address, but he also illustrated his ability to combine appeals. In the early portions of the

---

135 *Works*, I, p. 228.

sermon he stressed the love of God as exemplified in God's redemptive plan. In the "Application" he appeared to be describing the joys of heaven, but strongly contrasted heaven's reward with hell's misery by saying:

... how sweet the thought when you shall have safely arrived at your everlasting rest; then you will be far beyond the reach of Satan's temptations and completely delivered from all trouble and distress. Then, when you will view what God has bestowed upon you, and what you have deserved, when you look down upon hell and see the vast difference Free Grace has made betwixt you and the inhabitants of those dark regions; O what gratitude and delight will you feel when you reflect--Yonder lake was my deserved portion--These had been my doleful groans--these my endless pains--that dark dungeon my eternal prison, had not Free Grace interposed. Yonder death was the wages of my sin; but this eternal life is the gift of God. . . .

In the same address M'Gready combined fear with pity for Jesus Christ. While justifying the enormity of Hadean punishment, M'Gready contrasted the punishment with the redemption, the death of God's son. He said:

When the co-equal Son of God himself assumed humanity, and stepped in as a substitute under the weight of sin, his innocent humanity, supported by his omnipotence, was so crushed that he sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and to expiate the guilt of sin he yielded up the Ghost. O how dreadful is the damning weight of sin! How did it bruise the innocent Lamb of God until it brought him to the grave. Think then, O sinners, how it will sink you into the lowest regions of hell, when through all eternity you will writhe beneath the burning wrath of God, if you live and die in a Christless state.

---

137 Works, I, p. 306.
138 Works, I, p. 293.
In view of the preceding, M'Gready adopted the fear motivation as the dominant method for concluding his evangelistic addresses. His approach was not subtle nor disguised, but was a direct threatening of God's wrath and the probability of Hadean torment. He apparently did not care, if he was aware of it, that fear of non-immediate dangers is short lived, for if man's repentance and prayer brought God's new birth, M'Gready accomplished his mission.

**Contempt for Sin**

The second most frequent emotional appeal M'Gready utilized was contempt. Again, the philosophy upon which it was founded was that of total depravity, for as M'Gready stated:

> ... view his body or fleshy part, as it is acted upon by this totally depraved soul, and reason must acknowledge that it can act upon no higher principle than that of the brute. Its highest object, then, is the gratification of its appetites and propensities. Therefore, it follows as an unquestionable truth, that the fool /or any man/ is a compound being consisting of the brutal and infernal nature. In a word, he is half beast, half devil. 139

Although his position was extreme in light of modern thought, it provided a basis for condemnation of many forms of sin without regard for psychological causes or extenuating circumstances.

For example, in the "Revelation" address M'Gready soundly

139 Works, I, p. 217.
condemned intoxication by stating:

How common is it to see men of sense and education, possessed of superior talents, capable of serving their country in the field or in the councils with dignity and respectability, devoting themselves as slaves and dupes to their filthy appetites and propensities! See them degrading their reason below the brutes by intoxication--gradually sinking into contempt, poverty, and disgrace, by this abominable practice, until they become nuisances to society. And others of equal talents, render themselves odious by the lowest and most hateful grades of debauchery. 140

He attached no other motive to the actions of the drunkard than that he was depraved. In many cases, as illustrated here, M'Gready generalized unfairly.

But his condemnation of sin was built upon the dignity and purity of his God, a position which he extended to include all classes of sin. That which degraded the dignity of God was contemptible, as in the "Superabounding Grace" sermon when he said:

Reason and revelation both tell us that sin is the transgression of the law of God, either by omission or commission, and the very language of a transgression of the law is a reflection upon it either as impracticable, and, therefore, unreasonable, or else not adapted to the true happiness of the creature; therefore it must be either foolish or tyrannical. By casting such a reflection upon the law, the infinitely glorious Lawgiver is dishonored. . . . 141

As in the preceding passage M'Gready made his appeals of contempt too abstract. Especially is this true in the "Grace" address, where

140 Ibid., II, p. 383.

141 Works, I, p. 289.
he exhibited some of his best thinking, but sacrificed clarity.

Perhaps the best example of M'Gready's use of contempt for sin was in his personification of the sinner, "The Character, History and End of the Fool." At least six distinct appeals are evident in which the fool is graphically described and held up for derision.

For example, M'Gready depicted the fool's episode with Deism as follows:

The poor, unhappy fool, to quiet conscience, repeatedly promised that, at some future period, he would repent of his sins and seek religion, and as often left his promises unperformed. At length, he became acquainted with a profane, drunken profligate, who was a man of wealth, and bore the pompous title of Major, Colonel, Judge, or General; but he was a hater of God and religion. This contemptible sinner hinted to the fool that the religion of Jesus Christ was a mere deception; that the Bible was a cheat, the fabrication of designing men; that there was no future state, nor general judgment, and that men had not, after death, to give an account of the deeds done in the body. He furnished him with Paine's Age of Reason, and the works of Volney, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke. This confirmed him a fool, for infidelity put the cap stone upon his folly. Now he shouted victory, and he viewed all the efforts of reason, conscience, and the religion of Christ, as incapable of disturbing his peace, and all the admonitions, reproofs and entreaties of religious friends, as lost when addressed to him. Then the fool could tell what wonders his unerring reason had discovered; he had found out that the bible was a deception, when he had never read it through once in the course of his life, and knew little more of its contents than a Shawnee or Choctaw. If a person asked him for the evidences of the truth of the system on which he is venturing into eternity, he would reply that he had incontestible evidence. And what was it? All the half-read fops, who never made the Bible their study; Doctors, Majors, Colonels, Generals, Judges and Members of Congress, were deists. If he were asked for his unanswerable arguments, by which he supported his system, he would say that he had them at command. And what were they? Profane witticisms,
sneers, jests at sacred thoughts, and extravagant, loud laughter. 142

M'Gready blended contempt for willful agnosticism with ridicule for deism. The element of class prejudice to professional people, evident in the allusion, was both unkind and unnecessary.

Of the fifteen contempt appeals, only two are in the concluding sections of M'Gready's addresses. Generally, he combined such appeals with the doctrinal discussions contrasting sin and the sinner with the love of God or the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Security

As previously indicated, M'Gready felt that the fear of Hell was a dominant appeal, suitable to motivate the "sinner" to repent. While on the one hand, he condemned the "sinner" and attempted to take away all hope, M'Gready returned that hope with the assurance that Jesus wanted to "regenerate" the sinner. The security appeal was the assurance of divine willingness to save and, secondly, the assurance that once saved, eternal life was guaranteed. Eight separate appeals of this type appear in the selected sermons.

For example, M'Gready invited the sinner to escape the wrath of God by trusting in Jesus' willingness, as follows:

Escape for your lives to Jesus Christ, who stands with open arms ready to receive you, in whom you will find complete and

everlasting salvation. He will clothe you in the white robe of his righteousness, and cleanse you from all the filth and pollution of sin. He will fill you with the love of God, instead of his dreadful wrath, and give you eternal life in the immediate vision and full fruition of the everlasting God. Eternal life, sinners, is this day offered you; and the Lord Jesus Christ who purchased it with his own blood would with pleasure bestow it upon you. Nothing separates between your souls and Christ, but unbelief and your own unwillingness. . . . *43

Interestingly, he had immediately preceded his assurance with an attempt to cause doubt in the minds of those he believed duped. He had said:

It is much better that you should now see your own hypocrisy, the rotten foundation of your hopes, and cast away your pretended religion, than to sleep on in security, dreaming of heaven and eternal happiness at last to be undeceived in the flames of hell, when God will laugh at your calamity, and devils and damned ghosts will curse and deride your folly, in coming to such torments, after having enjoyed such fair opportunities of escape. 144

While there appears to be some inconsistency, M'Gready often warned of false conversions, believing, however, that once a true "regeneration" occurred, it would never be doubted. 145 In effect, he taught that if doubt could be created about one's conversion, it was not true; the doubt proved its invalidity. Therefore, he held out certain redemption on his terms, but questioned it on any terms that did not specify a conversion "experience."

144 Ibid., p. 116.
145 See Works, I, p. 317; II, pp. 3-4, 30, 56, 97.
146 See chapter on "Theological and Homiletic Views."
passages, the salvation that he promised was presented as a certainty; all that mattered was the willingness of the sinner.

M'Gready, however, went one step further when he promised a certain security in an eternal heaven. He promised the sinner that if once he was saved, no force could destroy "his everlasting inheritance."

In the second "New Birth" address M'Gready promised that the "regeneration" was permanent when he said:

The soul may indeed backslide, fall from its first love, and sink into a lamentable state. But the new life it received in regeneration, shall never be lost: though Satan, the grand enemy of God and man, shall muster all the legions of hell, and exert his infernal power to the utmost, and contrive with all the corruptions of the heart, to destroy this new principle of spiritual life, he shall not prevail; for the perfections of Jehovah are engaged for its support and preservation... the renovated soul shall never die, but shall be ever united to Christ.

In effect, therefore, M'Gready offered only one solution to man's religious problem. He offered salvation by faith through a "new birth experience" which, once accomplished, gave every spiritual blessing, but without which the certain destiny of any soul was an eternal hell. But his solution was comprehensive and offered every possible guarantee that faith could accept. This he stated confidently and expectantly, unable to comprehend a refusal to respond.

---

Other Appeals

Three other emotional appeals appear in the select sermons; pity for Jesus Christ, appeals for justice and fairness, and the appeal for high ethical standards. These appeals occur a total of twelve times in the select sermons.

With his assertion that redemption was possible for the sinner, M'Gready frequently combined pity for Jesus Christ in the agony of death. For example, in the "Excellencies of Christ" he asserted that the death of Christ was the ultimate proof of God's willingness to save, stating:

But if the word, promise, and oath of God, will not convince you of Christ's willingness to save, you are called to come and see plain matters of fact that silence every objection. View his incarnation, humiliation, bitter sufferings and dying agonies. All these proclaim his gracious willingness to save the chief of sinners. See him leaving his eternal throne of glory, veiling his Godhead in clay, born in a stable, and laid in a manger; and what is the cause of this amazing abasement and humiliation? Why, to save poor lost sinners! View Gethsemene's groans and bloody sweat! See him buffeted, spit upon, and scourged, till one might tell all his bones. See him crowned with thorns, carrying the cross on his bleeding mangled shoulders, through the streets of Jerusalem, and up Mount Calvary to the place of execution! See him there hanging on the cursed tree, suspended by four bleeding wounds. Hear him crying in the most extreme anguish, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" See him sinking in the agonies of death, and falling a pale, lifeless and ghastly corpse! Now sinner, had Christ been unwilling to save you, would he have endured all this to prevent you from sinking into hell? When he died justice cried, I am satisfied! and the language
of every drop of blood which flowed from his veins is, "Come and see."\textsuperscript{149}

In this passage, M'Gready narrated the death of Christ in a descriptive manner. By intensifying the manner of death, he hoped to demonstrate the willingness of Christ to save the sinner while developing an affinity for the person of Jesus through the pity appeal.

Similarly, M'Gready described the death of Jesus in a manner calculated to draw pity from his auditors in the "Meditation." His purpose was to intensify the reverent atmosphere of the Lord's Supper worship.\textsuperscript{150}

M'Gready's best use of more altruistic emotional appeals occurred in the apologetic sermons, the "Vindication" and the "Revelation." In the "Revelation" M'Gready relied on the social aspects of Christianity, apparently desiring to make an initial impression upon his skeptical listeners, for if they could not accept the theological aspects of the Bible, perhaps then the social. He argued that the "doctrines and precepts of the Bible point out a way to happiness far preferable to any prescribed by other systems." Continuing, he stated:

\begin{quote}
View the social and relative duties which it imposes upon mankind in every station and circumstance of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{149}Works, I, pp. 115-16. See also the same technique in "Superabounding Grace," Works, I, p. 301.

\textsuperscript{150}Works, I, pp. 269-71.
life--every rational, sensible deist acknowledges they are calculated to promote the happiness of mankind. 151

After listing eight specific social and domestic requirements, he concluded, "Now if every man and woman would be governed and directed by these rules and precepts, how happy would the world be!" 152 He appealed to the social self-interest of his listeners.

In the "Vindication" M'Gready found himself the defender of the psychological and physical phenomena of the camp meetings. While both atheists and religionists scoffed at the "exercises," M'Gready attempted to sway the religious detractor by an appeal for understanding or what may be termed, "Christian forbearance." One of the exercises he defended was extreme mental depression, for which he asked the detractor to exchange derision for kindness. He explained:

This exercise is entirely rational: our own experience teaches us, that there is a tender sympathy in human nature, by which good men are often affected with the miseries and distresses of their fellow creatures. It is strange, then, that Christians who have felt the terrors of an ungodly state, and who have clear views of the narrow escape which they made from the jaws of damnation, should be burdened and painfully distressed for their friends and neighbors--whose wretched and deplorable state they behold--and whom they see careless and unconcerned upon the trembling brink of hell? 153

151 Works, II, p. 394.
152 Works, II, p. 396.
M'Gready was not a psychologist, but he did understand that the "exercises" resulted from "extraordinary and overpowering impressions on the mind." Many of the exercises were not understood, but M'Gready appealed for justice and understanding. Of the "strange agitations" M'Gready said:

This wheeling over and those other agitations of the body, have nothing in them, either physically or morally, evil. I would ask the prejudiced mind, if any command of God is broken by these exercises. I presume none at all. If no command is broken by these exercises, and they have nothing in them, physically or morally, evil, then, your objections are trifling, and groundless, and you have no reason to be offended by what is innocent and harmless. To ascertain whether persons thus agitated are under the influence of the Divine Spirit, is to find out the views and exercises of their minds at such times; and if they are rational and scriptural, it is a matter of no consequence what their bodily motions are, or whether they have any at all.

Understandably, M'Gready's answer is not altogether satisfactory, but his appeal to the audience to seek more information and to judge each instance of the "agitations" on the basis of its motive is an appeal to the listener's sense of fair play and justice.

In general, therefore, M'Gready employed a narrow choice of pathetic appeals. His basic reliance on fear was not unusual for his time, nor was it foreign to the Bible, but he made fear of God more fundamental than the love of God, apparently seeking a more

---

155 Ibid., p. 355.
immediate response from his listeners in the form of repentance and prayer. The fear appeal was constantly before the audience, even when occupying a secondary position. For example, in the second "New Birth" address the words "satan," "hell," "fire," or their synonyms appear over seventy times. His other appeals often contributed to the fear as when he combined contempt for the sinner or the joy of heaven with the "brimstone" of hell.

William Warren Sweet concluded that "emotion has been so completely squeezed out of present-day Protestant worship that the people are becoming emotionally starved," but it is doubtful whether any reputable modern critic would advise the adoption of M'Gready's pathetic appeal pattern.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Preaching on the American frontier during the 1800 revival called for adapting speech materials to relatively uneducated audiences prepared only for easily followed argument and straightforward emotional appeals. M'Gready's purpose was to bring the listener's mind to a point of submission to the will of God. The design

156 Works, II, pp. 96-118. The sermon, "The Doom of the Impenitent," is an interesting comparison. The topic lends itself to extreme emotionalism, but the same words or synonyms appear less often than in the second "New Birth." Works, II, pp. 166-82.

of both his preparation and presentation was to inform, stimulate, and actuate the listener to repentance and prayer.

During the Revival of 1800, M'Gready's personal reputation was outstanding. His sincerity and piety were not questioned, but rather known to many, a factor which contributed to his acceptability as an evangelist. While his work during the revival had many critics, no serious charge was ever made except that of fanaticism.

The basic authority and source of supporting materials for M'Gready's sermons was his infallible Bible, although he drew other materials from history and contemporary life. With these materials he constructed simply designed outlines, simple when viewed from distance, but unnecessarily confusing and complex when studied in detail. He included extraneous materials in his outlines, and while choosing and stating his major divisions wisely, he did not apply the same degree of selectivity to his supporting materials.

M'Gready built his sermons from Scripture quotations, secular analogies and illustrations, and deductive reasoning. Through exposition he expanded and developed the thought introduced by the sermon text. Bible illustrations or allusions clarified Bible doctrines, for M'Gready believed that the minister must rely on the "Word" rather than a personal display of learning in the areas of logic, geography, or philosophy. Consequently, he almost never quoted a statistic. The strength of M'Gready's approach lay in the acceptance
by the audience of his infallible authority. In view of the current acceptance of the Bible by every frontier denomination, he was reasonably secure, but this strength also limited his study and use of secular testimony and "artistic proof." He did not appear concerned with developing logical consistency since he considered a Bible assertion based on a Bible quotation the strongest possible argument. When addressing those who did not accept the authority of the Bible, he made only a partial accommodation to their mental patterns, for he quoted no fewer Bible passages, but did introduce more secular testimony and chains of argument.

M'Gready, like many other revivalists, combined logical proofs with a large number of emotional appeals. He concentrated on the fear appeal in combination with contempt for sin and the security which God would grant to the "saved." He stated his appeals through description and narration, the expository nature of the speech method tending to amplify the impression.

When developing a line of argument, M'Gready's dominant pattern was that of assertion followed by Biblical proof, followed by exposition of the doctrinal assertion. Where desirable to defeat opposing views, he either reversed the opposing position or assigned ignoble motives to the opposition.

M'Gready's rhetorical approach displays vulnerability from several directions. First, he relied too completely on Biblical
evidence, a pattern tending to destroy originality, freshness, and breadth in his speaking. Secondly, he was weak in his extreme use of the fear appeal. The expediency of this appeal probably should have been weighed with fear's ability to influence listeners after they have dispersed and assumed their normal patterns of life. Finally, M'Gready was vulnerable by his complete abandonment to the premise of total depravity. His concept was too harsh, sometimes leaving the impression that his auditors were vile, iniquitous persons, filled with evil desires, and conversely implying that only M'Gready and his fellows were moral. The philosophy must have affected the good will of his audiences, and while the view was traditional Calvinism, it was not a known postulate of 1800 frontier Americanism.

The critic is forced to consider two elements prior to a final judgment of the preaching of James M'Gready. First, to what extent was M'Gready the speaker weakened by the theology he defended. Perhaps the question seems foolish when first considered, but certain fundamental criticisms applicable to M'Gready assign themselves because of the philosophical platform upon which he stood. Calvinism to this preacher was God's point of view, and who was he to question it. If the critic finds fault with the evangelist's message or approach to an audience, he must either criticize the man's school of thought or attempt that impossible task of evaluating a speaker's art apart from a speaker's message. Secondly, the critic who evaluates
M'Gready's emotional appeals must consider the ethical obligations of one who believes in an eternal hell. If the critic is sympathetic, he is subject to a less stringent appraisal of M'Gready's fear emphasis. If he rejects the very idea of hell, however, the critic is liable to a revulsion and a consequent loss of objectivity. M'Gready, however, believed in hell, as did most of his listeners, and he made the most of their joint dispositions.
CHAPTER IX

ARRANGEMENT, STYLE, AND DELIVERY

While the preceding chapter discussed the preparation and methods of proof employed by James M'Gready, this division is intended to analyze his methods of sermon organization, his speech style, and platform delivery. In order to facilitate analysis, the ten sermons previously identified will be the primary sermon group studied, but they will be supplemented, where desirable, by a secondary group of addresses, the twenty sermons of the second volume (1833) of the Posthumous Works. In this way, a total of twenty-five sermons will be used to identify and classify the speaking characteristics of this frontier evangelist.

I. ARRANGEMENT

Charles Reynolds Brown strongly warned against poorly organized sermons. He said:

You cannot afford to be one of those preachers who always give the impression that having lost the trail, they are now going hither and yon on any chance impulse like silly sheep which have erred and strayed from the way. Have a definite plan but do not have it too much in evidence. ¹

Although he was not trained in a regular seminary, M'Gready knew the value of unified organization. One of the strengths of his preaching was in the orderly progression of ideas. Thonssen and Baird concluded that the speech critic must determine the quality of three elements of speech organization. These were (a) the emergence of a central theme; (b) the method of arrangement adopted for the addresses; and (c) the order in which the separate parts are developed. Therefore the design of this analysis is to determine and evaluate the nature and quality of M'Gready's sermon organization in reference to these considerations.

Like George Whitefield, M'Gready often prepared his sermons to lead to emotional conclusions or "applications." His method of

\[2\] Raymond Smith reported that organization is desirable in effective persuasive address. "An Experimental Study of the Effects of Speech Organization Upon Attitudes of College Students," *Speech Monographs*, XVIII (1951), pp. 292-301. Although this study applies to college students, no apparent reason negates its application to M'Gready's auditors. Smith found that disorganized speeches have a negative effect on listeners.


\[5\] Eugene White, "The Preaching of George Whitefield During the Great Awakening in America" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1947), p. 286. The "application" was a regular portion of the discourse. It was intended to apply the logical discussion to the lives of the listeners.
division consistently followed an order of introduction, division of the discourse, discussion, and conclusion.

The Introduction

Gray and Braden state that the function of an introduction is:

(a) to draw attention to the subject, (b) to develop a friendly attitude toward the speaker, and (c) to prepare the listeners to understand the subject. M'Gready made no consistent effort to create good will or to displace personal criticism. He used the introduction to establish the Biblical-historical setting for the subject and to stress its importance, while giving the auditor necessary information for understanding the message.

M'Gready began each of his addresses by an allusion to a Bible text. Having quoted the text of his address, he adopted two basic approaches. First, as is evident in fifteen of twenty sermons in the second volume, M'Gready began with an assertion designed to arouse interest. In the second "New Birth" address, for example, he stated: "There are no questions of greater importance or of such general concern, as those suggested by this subject. Am I born again, or still dead in iniquity?" Although he did not always make

---


statements to elicit interest first in his discourses, M'Gready frequently placed them early in the introduction. In the "Fool" address, M'Gready asserted that the text defined the character of the Fool:

He "hath said in his heart there is no God." This expresses the highest grade of unbelief, which is the root of all sin, blinds the mind, hardens the heart, and sinks the soul beneath the damming weight of sin. . . . As every thought, word and action of the fool proceeds from this desperately wicked heart, the consequence is that the whole of his conversation and conduct is sin.  

In the "Sacramental Meditation" sermon, M'Gready appealed for attention because of the gravity of the occasion. He said:

Every place where God and the believing soul hold communion, is solemn and dreadful; but as the sacrament of the supper is one of the most affecting institutions of heaven, and one of the nearest approaches to God that can be made on this side of eternity, and in which believers are permitted to hold intimate conversation with their blessed Jesus, we will particularly accommodate the subject to that occasion; and when we behold the table of Christ spread and the memorials of his broken body and shed blood upon it, with propriety we may adopt the language of the text: How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 

In the first of the "New Birth" addresses, M'Gready stressed the importance of the subject, calling the doctrine the beginning point of true religion. He said:

My dear fellow-creatures, if you would be the followers of Christ, here your religion must commence. You must

---

8 Works, I, p. 206.

9 Ibid., p. 268.
be regenerated before you can live a spiritual life. If you neglect this one matter, all your endeavors will be in vain, how strong soever your hopes for heaven may be.  

The second introductory method M'Gready adopted was to begin immediately with a discussion of the Biblical background or context of his text. In this practice he applied the theory of George Campbell in the Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence. Edney summarized this view as follows:

Campbell suggests that an explanation of the biblical text be "subjoined" to the exordium of the sermon. This suggestion is, unquestionably, an application of classical instruction which recommends that narration immediately follow the introduction.  

Ten of the twenty-five sermons begin with references to the text or context without other initial introductory remarks. Only one of the twenty-five does not have a discussion of the text or context. Utilizing this context discussion, M'Gready oriented the audience to the topic by providing a narrative of the Bible event or logical setting for the Biblical assertion he was to discuss. For example, M'Gready chose Hebrews 11:6 as his text for "The Nature and Necessity of Faith." The passage stated in part, "For without faith it is impossible to please him." M'Gready's introduction was as follows:

10 Works, II, p. 71.

I. The background of the text is an epistle designed to prove the superiority of the gospel above the previous dispensation.
   A. The writer shows that on God's part all things are ready for man's salvation.
   B. The tenth chapter shows faith as the great means which man must use for salvation.
   C. The eleventh chapter is a catalogue of faithful men.

II. From the text there are two observations worthy of attention.
   A. Faith is the instrumental cause by which life is planted in the soul.
   B. Faith performs man's duty to God and is therefore a spiritual necessity. 12

Interestingly, M'Gready used the title, text, and last paragraph of the introduction to state his proposition or thesis. Having chosen a Biblical assertion which exactly stated his contention, he focused attention on the assertion by his discussion of the entire epistle of Hebrews.

This sermon also illustrates the clear manner in which M'Gready identified the theses of his addresses. First, the subject frequently stated his purpose, for, in the ten primary sermons, only the subject "A Sacramental Meditation" does not identify the theme. In this address, however, he explicitly informed the auditors of his goal. 13 Secondly, M'Gready allowed the text of the day to constitute a statement of his central theme. He used this method in seven of the primary sermons. These were "The Character,

13 Ibid., I, p. 268.

Finally, M'Gready stated his propositions explicitly in the early portion of the addresses, usually in the textual exposition or explanation of context. In the ten primary sermons, he adopted this method in all but the second "New Birth" address. For example, M'Gready identified his thesis in "The Superabounding Grace of God" when he contended that his text identified the function of divine grace. He said:

It /grace/ abounded much more than sin— that is, the free grace of God which reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life, is much more powerful to pardon and save, than sin is to deform and damn, and in its works of salvation does far exceed any thing that sin has done in its works of damnation.  

In the "Christ Has Done All Things Well" address, M'Gready was less definitive, but kept his listeners informed of his intent to "show in a few particulars that Jesus hath done all things well." He designed each of the five points of his sermon to demonstrate the nobility of the redemptive actions of Jesus Christ. In the

14. This address does not contain a textual exposition and is built logically upon the context discussion of the first "Birth" address. Works, II, pp. 96-7.

15. Ibid., I, pp. 288-89. The text was Romans 5:20.

"Revelation" address M'Gready broadly defined his thesis in his introduction. He stated:

... reason, in its fallen and depraved state, can never lead us to true happiness, or teach the knowledge of God and his will concerning us. The happy man that finds wisdom or the wise man that finds true happiness, has a surer guide--which is nothing less than a revelation from God himself. 17

Division

Only three of the forty-two sermons in the Works do not contain a division or preview of the major points of the address. These are the "Sacramental Meditation," "Scriptural Testimony of the Character and Works of Christ," and "Christ Has Done All Things Well." In every case where the division appears, it follows the introduction and precedes immediately the first major point of the discussion. The divisions are always quite short and concise. For example, the division for the "Superabounding Grace" is as follows:

From this view of the text, it appears natural, in its farther consideration,
I. To shew some things in which the abounding of sin is discovered by the law.
II. Mention some things in which the saving grace of God in Christ does much more abound.
III. Improve the subject. 18

M'Gready consistently numbered the major points in numerical order as illustrated above, although he varied the introductory

17Ibid., II, p. 381.
18Works, I, p. 289.
sentence. This was always short and yet indicated the nature of his following remarks. For example, in the "Nature and Necessity of Faith," he stated, "In attending to the farther discussion of this subject we shall. . . ." In the "Vindication of the Exercises" he said, "To obtain this object we shall . . ."; while in the "Excellencies of Christ" address, he asserted, "In the prosecution of this subject, I shall observe the following method. . . ."  

Although providing the listener with a prestatement of M'Gready's speech outline, the division was often abrupt and stereotyped. M'Gready used it too often and without adequate transitions. Except for the introductory statement, he adopted no other transition method. After the statement of the last point of the outline, M'Gready immediately restated his first major contention and proceeded with the body of the sermon.  

Discussion  

In the organization of his speech materials, M'Gready relied heavily on what Thonssen and Baird call the distributive method, the ordering of materials about a common thought center. He followed

---

19Ibid., II, p. 136.  
20Works, II, pp. 343-44.  
21Ibid., p. 106.  
22Speech Criticism, p. 394.

In "Christ Has Done All Things Well" McGready ordered divisions according to a chronological sequence or historical method. In two primary addresses, "The Superabounding Grace" and "The Nature and Necessity of Faith," McGready built his sermon about the parts of his sermon text, producing what Broadus called a "text-sermon." McGready also utilized the text method in two of the secondary group. In the "Revelation" address McGready followed a logical method of development, his major headings virtually forming a syllogism.

In effect, his method of ordering sermons was distributive with occasional departures to other types. Even the textual sermons are very similar to distributive sermons as the major divisions are few and are connected by the thought furnished in the text. Without the text, they would be classified as distributive. The method became

---

23 Ibid.

stereotyped, indicating that M'Gready fell into a pattern, unfortunately tending to destroy freshness and vitality in the handling of sermon subjects.

M'Gready's discussions vary, however, in their complexity of organization. For example, he employed a simple organization in "Christ Has Done All Things Well" and 'A Sacramental Meditation.' In the first of these sermons, M'Gready chose a general statement from Mark 7:37, "Christ has done all things well." After explaining the context, he developed the discussion about five topical categories of the work of Christ. The major points were as follows:

I. Jesus did all things well when he determined to pay the sinner's price.
II. Jesus did all things well in his righteousness wrought for sinners through his active and passive obedience.
III. Jesus does things well in the conversion moment.
IV. Jesus does things well as seen in the trials of the children of God.
V. Jesus will do all things well in the general judgment.  

M'Gready chose ambiguous terminology to state his divisions, especially in the second point. The continual restatement of his text-theme provided a relative unity to the outline, but the separate categories are too broad for adequate treatment in a single sermon. He arranged the heads according to a chronological method, determined by the work of Christ in accomplishing Christian redemption.

\[^{25}\text{Works, I, pp. 257-64.}\]
In the second address of this type, "A Sacramental Meditation," M'Gready chose for his text Genesis 28:17 which said in part, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Defining the word "dreadful" as pertaining to a place where "God and the believing soul hold communion," M'Gready introduced four major points. They were:

I. The sacramental table is a dreadful place for God is there.
II. The sacramental table is a dreadful place as it exhibits the redemption of sinners.
III. The sacramental table is a dreadful place for here Christ confers and sups with pardoned men.
IV. The sacramental table is a dreadful place, for here heaven is brought down to earth.

This organization is simple, based upon a topical division of the sacramental occasion. The major divisions define the sanctity of the occasion with increasing complexity. The second division builds upon the first and the third division upon the previous two, while the last point appears forced.

These two sermons are similar in organization; both are subject sermons dealing with the Christ and the Lord's Supper respectively. Both have a similar method of ordering the major headings, and they repeat the central theme in each heading, giving an internal unity. In each case the last point of the body is made into the conclusion which allowed the listener to follow the thought to a natural climax. The

26Works, I, pp. 268-74.
thought progression was obviously simple to follow, while the general
unity did not destroy the separateness of each division.

M'Gready utilized a logical ordering of major points in the
"Revelation" sermon. His theme was that complete wisdom and
happiness were taught only through a divine revelation, the Bible. He
stated his outline as follows:

In speaking farther from this subject I shall attempt--
I. To shew that a revelation from heaven is necessary
to lead man to true happiness.
II. That the Bible has all the features and evidences of
such a revelation.
III. Answer some objection, made by the deist, against
the Bible as a revelation from God. 27

Only slight rewording is necessary to make the first and second points
into the major and minor premises of a syllogism. He stated his
thesis in the title and in the introduction. The final point was necessary
to answer the critics of the Bible.

In the three outlines reviewed here, M'Gready stated each major
head prior to his discussion of its supporting material and, in the
majority of cases, he phrased the opening assertion to restate the
unifying thought in the address. In this manner he kept his theme
before his listener while showing a progression of ideas. He followed
this pattern in the "Character, History, and End of the Fool," "The

27Works, II, p. 381.
Superabounding Grace of God," and "Christ Has Done All Things Well."

The average number of major points in a M'Gready sermon was three. Thus, he kept his outline simple with regard to the major thought units. Even in the two "New Birth" addresses, he kept the total number of points to four, though he designed the two addresses to be one discussion of this central evangelistic doctrine.

While M'Gready's major sermon divisions were relatively simple, the evangelist did not maintain this consistency in his supporting materials. His sermons often became complex through numerous subpoints. For example, the sermon, "The Superabounding Grace of God," has three major points of which two are doctrinal and the third an "application." However, there are eighteen minor points in addition to the introduction. Based upon a text from Romans 5:20, M'Gready's thesis was that the law (natural and Mosaic) defined sin and prepared the way for God's redemptive, pardoning grace. The body of the address may be outlined as follows:

I. The abounding of sin is shown by the law of God.
   A. The law shows the evil in the nature of sin.
   B. The law shows the infectious nature of sin.
   C. The law discovers the strength in sin.
   D. The law discovers a damning weight in sin.

II. Grace abounds much more than sin.
   A. Grace is more abundant in that it completely conquers sin.
   B. Grace abounded during the reign of sin in that it was anticipating the recovery of sinners.
   C. Grace did much more abound in that its righteousness was greater than that taken away by sin.
D. Grace much more abounds when one considers the covenant head that sin destroyed with the one grace has provided.
E. Grace has much more abounded in that the restored relationship is much nearer to God than that from which man fell.
F. Grace much more abounded in that God is more clearly evidenced and man's happiness is more exalted through Christ than was true before sin entered the world.

III. Improve the subject.
A. Because of the nature of sin, the enlightened believer hates it and longs to be delivered from it.
B. As sin is abominable, the love of Christ is evident in his willingness to have sin imputed to him.
C. It is understandable that convinced sinners are so heavy laden when struggling for salvation.
D. If sin is so great, then the unrepentant sinner living contentedly must be "dead in trespasses and sin."
E. If sin's weight is so great, then spiritual death will damn the unprepared beneath it.
F. It is evident from the nature of sin that believers are deeply in debt to free grace for deliverance.
G. Grace has provided an absolute salvation for the believer through Christ.
H. It is obvious that every man must determine under which government, sin or grace, he lives.28

M'Gready's restatement of the theme in the major and minor heads helped his auditors to refocus their attention on the basic consideration. There are two major doctrinal points, while the third point applies the doctrinal inference to the spiritual condition of the listeners. M'Gready based the "improvement" section on the assumption that the auditors were convicted of the preceding fund of knowledge.

28Works, I, pp. 287-310. M'Gready used numerals for the minor points rather than letters; otherwise his own wording and outlining are closely observed where possible.
Although M'Gready stated the major divisions of his addresses simply, he tended to develop them through unnecessarily complex minor points. For example, he based "The Nature and Necessity of Faith" on the thought from Hebrews 11:6 that faith is indispensable to a man's salvation. His first point was a definition of saving faith, with the definition following this confused outline:

I. We are to speak of faith.
   A. Faith is not a simple belief of the written word by the exertion of natural powers.
   B. Faith is not a faith of evidence which assents to Bible truth and results in partial reform.
   C. Faith is not temporary in nature.
   D. Scripture teaches that factual acceptance of Bible truth must be mixed with the heart's choice of the Christ.
   E. The Biblical definitions of faith are:
      1. A receiving of Christ as the beggar receives alms.
      2. A flying to Christ, as the man-slayer to a city of refuge.
      3. A looking to Christ as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent.
      4. A feeding upon Christ by the soul.
   F. The Westminster Confession indicates faith includes the soul's seeing, choosing, and trusting in Christ.
   G. Faith implies conviction of sin, knowledge of God, and a will that chooses him.
   H. What is faith's nature and use?
      1. It is not an occasional act, but an abiding principle.
      2. Faith is a bond uniting the soul to Christ. 29

Without deleting any content of the address, he could have made points A through C subordinate to point D, and combined points F and G.

---

29 Works, II, pp. 138-43. See also the third division of the "New Birth" addresses and the second major division of "Superabounding Grace" in which minor points are not mutually exclusive. Works, II, pp. 102-10; Works, I, pp. 293-99.
The result would have been a simplified presentation and probably more satisfactory to the audience. M'Gready was apparently interested not so much in the amount of material that could be remembered after the close of his address, but in the total impression upon his listeners. In this sermon with the introduction, statement of major points, and developed discussion, M'Gready provided the auditors with three repetitions of the central theme. The fact that a large number of minor points recalled the thesis tended to refresh the memory of the audience. Further, the constant recall created a total effect of logically oriented persuasion rather than the retention of a series of minor points.

M'Gready sometimes appeared to simplify his complex outlines by decreasing the number of major divisions when he increased the minor points. In the case of his most elaborate outline, the "Revelation" address, he held the major points to three while the minor points numbered seventeen. 30 In the unusual situation of the two "New Birth" sermons which he designed as separate addresses to cover one subject, M'Gready kept the total number of major divisions for both addresses to four. In the first address he discussed the first major point and based an improvement on the single major point. 31 In the second address M'Gready developed major points two

---

31Ibid., II, pp. 68-96.
and three, and made point four an improvement based on the preceding material.  

The organization of M'Gready's sermons was generally simple, each address being clearly outlined. His major proof divisions supported the thesis while each stood as an exclusive thought unit. In this manner M'Gready achieved an inherent unity in the body of his address and prepared his listeners for his conclusions or applications which followed. His minor points were often complex with overlapping categories of thought. A simpler method of developing major divisions probably would have aided his sermon organization.

The "Applications" or Conclusions

M'Gready did not always prepare in manuscript full conclusions, often extemporizing them at the time of delivery. James Smith wrote:

Many of the sermons, even to the ordinary reader, will seem to close abruptly, owing to an omission of the author in writing out the applications--that being a part he almost uniformly delivered extemporaneously, and according to the circumstances of his audience. . . . The reader may infer something of his powers in this way [the applications], from the sermon "On the Superabounding Grace of God." [33]

The normal congregational worship of a Presbyterian church was more formal than the camp meeting. In the revival meeting, M'Gready probably varied the length of his addresses, enlarging them if

---


additional information or emotional appeal were desirable. Consequently, many of the sermons were prepared without full conclusions. 34

At the 1800 meetings, M'Gready left the pulpit after the sermon to walk among the worshipers, exhorting them individually or as a group. 35 At these times the exercises and emotional outbursts were frequent. M'Gready considered that the sermon concluded when the exercises commenced, but his point of view was somewhat illogical. 36


35 M'Gready was not consistent in his practice as minister during the revival. He apparently adapted himself to each need as it developed. See Chapter Four. See also "Narrative of the Commencement and Progress of the Revival of 1800," Works, I, pp. xii-xv.

36 In the "Vindication" M'Gready curiously defended the confusion of the camp meetings by saying, "The exercise which you deem confusion, always comes after, or at the close of public worship, and is commonly the effects produced by public preaching." Works, I, p. 350. Preaching was apparently the last official or planned activity. Exhortation (impromptu oral encouragement) continued for as long as necessary. If the exercise was the result of preaching and occurred after the sermon proper, then M'Gready did not consider any remarks by the preacher during these exercises as part of the sermon. M'Gready's oldest daughter, Jane, stated that his common practice was to close his sermons with a prayer. Not one prayer is attached to the concluding remarks of a M'Gready published sermon. See Lucien V. Rule, "Glimpses of Rev. James M'Gready, 'Thunderbolt of God,'" The Oldham Era (July 11, 1941), p. 6.
His contemporary, Barton W. Stone, seemingly considered
impromptu introductory remarks as foreign from the sermon. 37
M'Gready probably thought similarly, considering any impromptu
remarks separate from the formal sermon whether delivered before
or after his prepared address. The distinction is unfortunate, for
any remarks delivered to an audience tend to affect its response.

However, for purposes of this study, an attempt was made to
select representative sermons which are complete. Smith considered
the "Superabounding Grace" a complete sermon. With the exception
of the "Vindication," each of the other eight primary sermons
considered in this study shows the same degree of internal complete-
ness or more than the "Grace" address. 38

Gray and Braden stated that the conclusion must "pull the
speech together into a unified whole" in which "the audience must feel
the impact of the speech in its entirety, must appreciate its
significance, and must respond. . . ." 39 M'Gready's conclusions
concentrated on motivation or persuading the audience to respond to
the doctrines he had presented. The primary sermons illustrate three

37 Evan Ulrey, "The Preaching of Barton Warren Stone"
(unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1946),
p. 264.

38 M'Gready promised a fourth point which was never given in
the published sermon. See Works, II, pp. 344, 356.

39 Public Speaking, p. 372.
basic methods for accomplishing this goal.

In the first "New Birth" sermon, M'Gready explicitly stated that he would "conclude, with some improvement of what has been said." Both "New Birth" addresses close with an "improvement." In each case the content of the improvement divisions was highly emotional, consisting of a series of short arguments based on implications of the new birth doctrine, appealing to the listeners to act. The "improvement" was his first method of concluding sermons. For example, the second "New Birth" improvement included this paragraph:

Then, is it not a matter of infinite moment for each of you, my brethren, to examine all your past and present religious exercises? Oh may you never rest until you find evidence, sustained by the authority of God's word, that you have been born again, children of God, and heirs of glory! And if upon strict examination, your consciences tell you that the exercises of your souls, and the desires and longings of your hearts, are not after God, but the things of the world... cast away your old religion, and all your false hopes and begin anew. Fall in the dust before God, beg of him the pardon of your sins, and plead earnestly with him, by his Holy Spirit, to cut you off from all your refuges of lies, and effectually persuade you to close with Christ upon his own terms.

The purpose of this paragraph and the rest of the improvement was to force the listener to make a practical application of the doctrine which

40 Works, II, pp. 89-95.
41 Ibid., p. 110.
42 Works, II, pp. 115-16.
M'Gready explained in his address.

The "improvement" was also M'Gready's concluding method in the sermon, "Superabounding Grace," which Smith described as illustrative of M'Gready's applications. The "improvement" and the "application" were therefore synonymous. In the "Grace" address, M'Gready introduced eight applications of the grace doctrine. They were:

Improve the Subject

1. Because of the nature of sin, the enlightened believer hates it and longs to be delivered from it.
2. As sin is abominable, the love of Christ is evident in his willingness to have sin imputed to him.
3. It is understandable that convinced sinners are so heavy laden when struggling for salvation.
4. If sin is so great, then the unrepentant sinner living contentedly must be "dead in trespasses and sin."
5. If sin's weight is so great, then spiritual death will damn the unheeding sinner beneath its weight.
6. From the nature of sin, it is evident that believers are deeply in debt to free grace for deliverance.
7. Grace has provided an absolute salvation for the believer through Jesus Christ.
8. It is obvious that every man must determine under which government, sin or grace, he lives.  

Each improvement point is an inference from the larger grace doctrine. In each case M'Gready sought to present a compelling reason why the listener must make a decision. The final point stated the alternatives for the listener as M'Gready conceived them.

43 Ibid., I, pp. 299-310.
M'Gready's second concluding method, indicated by the ten primary sermons, was to make a conclusion of the last point in the discussion. He utilized this method in the "Fool" address, "A Sacramental Meditation," "The Superabounding Grace of God," and "Christ Hath Done All Things Well." The "Fool" address closed with a description of the fool in hell. The "All Things Well" sermon had as its final point, "Jesus will appear to do all things well in the general judgment." The evangelist closed his remarks with the assurance that at the judgment Christ would justify all the reproaches of evil persons upon his disciples, saying:

Then all the revilings and reproaches, and false charges of the wicked shall be wiped away, whilst Christ, their beloved friend and elder brother, will ascend to heaven with the ransomed, who shall proclaim throughout eternity, "He hath done all things well." He closed the address with a final reference to the theme and a completed scheme of thought. Any further application would, of necessity, digress from the pattern of thought.

The final method of concluding remarks M'Gready adopted in his sermons was to state and answer hypothetical objections. The "Revelation" sermon concluded in this fashion but he varied this

---

44 Works, I, p. 229.

method by making his last remarks an apology for concluding.

M'Gready's revival address, "The Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation," illustrates the use of objections in conclusion. He stated six objections, each representative of a class of persons who had not been converted. In each case M'Gready answered the question by impressing the urgency of salvation on his listeners. In each answer he seemed to be building upon the emotional tide of the preceding reply. The last objector was the man who stated that he had tried for salvation and failed; therefore, he asked, "What shall I do?" M'Gready's answer was:

The vengeance of God pursues you--the flaming sword of divine justice is unsheathed. There is no hope, help nor safety for you but in Christ: therefore, escape for your life, storm the heavens with your cries. Jesus stands with open arms ready to receive you--his bleeding wounds and dying groans invite you--all that he did for your salvation bids you welcome; therefore venture upon him and you shall see the glory of God.

In general, therefore, M'Gready employed three methods of conclusion. The improvement was always the last portion of the body, but it generally introduced new material. It was highly emotional with practical applications of the doctrines which had been previously discussed. He incorporated hypothetical examples in his

---

46 M'Gready closed the "Revelation" address poorly, indicating that he might make numerous other observations but was prevented by lack of time. Works, II, p. 404.

47 Works, I, p. 265.
objections and rhetorical questions. In one instance there was the restatement of the theme, and in every case there was an implied call for action or belief. Each of the three concluding techniques was compelling, each highly pathetic. Where M'Gready employed the application or improvement section, he attempted to overcome every mental obstacle in the auditors' minds as a deterrent to action, while providing as much motivation as possible.

II. SPEECH STYLE

The study of a speaker through an examination of his prose style is a difficult task, at best. The essayist Hazlitt wrote:

...the orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of his voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude, the inexplicable dumb show and noise—all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear"—are no longer there, and without these he is nothing;—"his fire and air" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the god of eloquence and of our idolatry sinks into a common mortal, or an image of lead, with a few labels, nicknames, and party watchwords stuck in his mouth. 48

While Hazlitt presented an extreme view, he illustrated the frustration that the critic feels in studying printed words intended for the impassioned platform. Nevertheless, the language with which an

orator clothes his concepts is vital to his ideas' continued existence. The critic must appraise style practices when making a circumspect judgment of an orator.

James M'Gready was a frontiersman addressing his peers, and his manner of speech conformed to the current trends of acceptable platform performance. Occasionally his auditors were accomplished men of letters, but more generally they were familiar only with their Bible and general history. Richard Whately stated the style required in addresses presented to such an unlettered audience when he said:

The vulgar require a perspicuous, but by no means a dry and unadorned style; on the contrary, they have a taste rather for the overflorid, tawdry, and bombastic: nor are the ornaments of style by any means necessarily inconsistent with perspicuity; indeed Metaphor, which is among the principal of them, is, in many cases, the clearest mode of expression that can be adopted; it being usually much easier for uncultivated minds to comprehend a similitude or analogy, than an abstract term. 49

The stylistic practice of James M'Gready is remarkably similar to the Whately description.

Hugh Blair stated that the "qualities of good style may be ranged under two heads, perspicuity and ornament." 50 This discussion will


50 Hugh Blair, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (Philadelphia: Troutman & Hayes, 1851), p. 102. Witherspoon
be divided into these recognized areas of investigation.

Clarity

Homiletic writers have been particularly concerned that ministers develop clear speech. Webb Garrison found that at least nine Beecher lecturers considered that clarity was the most important stylistic element. He continued, "Works on homiletics pose the problem but offer no solutions based on data more substantial than personal impressions." What type of style did James M'Gready develop for frontier public address.

Wording and sentence considerations. In his speech style M'Gready was a man of contrast. Capable of simplifying complex subjects, he made his ideas abstract and vague. In his "Revelation" address he adopted simple language when asking the deist to explain complex natural phenomena. He said:

Infinite space is another great mystery. Reason cannot comprehend, nor yet deny it. Were you to travel one hundred thousand millions of leagues from this spot, you would be no farther from its centre, and no nearer to its circumference than when you started. The diurnal motion


51Preacher and His Audience, pp. 90-91.
of the globe of our earth is a mystery. It revolves on its axis every twenty four hours, yet we never see it move. In its annual motion, it passes round its orbit in three hundred and sixty five days, the semi-diameter of which is more than ninety millions of miles, and yet we perceive not its motion, notwithstanding we move with surprising velocity. 52

Using over seventy single syllable and twenty-four two syllable words, he presented a reasonably complex "mystery." The sentences were short, and the development was within the mental abilities of most listeners.

However, when he addressed his listeners on religious subjects, he tended to become less clear and less simple. In his address on the "Excellencies of Christ as Displayed in the Plan of Salvation," he said of Christ:

Here you may see everlasting love exhausting the very funds of heaven, --laying out the boundless riches of the Godhead, and presenting to perishing sinners the richest, the greatest, and the most precious gift that God could bestow: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here you may see the holy, strict and inflexible justice of God, receiving the most complete and ample satisfaction in the streaming blood and dying agonies of the incarnate God; a satisfaction commensurate to its highest demands--infinitely more glorious than it could have received in the damnation of the whole human race. Here you may see rich redeeming mercy, flowing in scarlet streams from the bleeding heart of a dying Jesus: Here you may see the burning throne of justice sprinkled, and the flaming sword of divine wrath cooled in the blood of the incarnate God, and the living way

52 Works, II, pp. 402-3.
laid open by which God can be just and the justifier of the worst of sinners. 53

The passage illustrates a variety of M'Gready's style characteristics. Long sentences, abstract concepts, and personification combine with his unique triplet linking of adjectives or nouns to make this passage a composite of certain fundamental characteristics.

George Campbell held that very long sentences constituted a fault in style. 54 In the simple addresses such as the "Fool" or in the opening remarks of his sermons, M'Gready generally made shorter and more colloquial sentences. At other times, however, his sentences tended to become longer while the thought patterns became more complex. Defining his exact meanings became extremely difficult. An example of this was his description of the grace exemplified in the death of Christ. He said:

Thus grace hath brought about a glorious method of salvation, in which mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other, and into which adoring angels desire to look, and through all eternity sinners redeemed from wrath will contemplate the wisdom, love and grace therein displayed, with wonder, joy and praise, and they will forever dwell in the presence, and enjoy the smiles of Jesus, who swam through a sea of blood, yea, through the burning ocean of God's wrath, to save them from the lowest abyss of misery, and bring them to the highest summit of glory

53 Works, I, p. 114.

of which their natures are capable. 55

Here M'Gready utilized one sentence of over a hundred words, his complicated sentence structure, however, anticipating oral delivery. Fifteen phrases allowed him to punctuate orally. Yet one must question such long sentences in sermons designed for the 1800 frontier audience.

The passage illustrates the manner in which M'Gready linked three concepts in triplet form. The phrases "wisdom, love and grace" and "wonder, joy and praise" are evident. The triplet form occurred often. In the "Excellencies of Christ" sermon, he used several in two subpoints. They were: "the attributes of the Godhead meeting, uniting and harmonizing"; "the richest, the greatest, and the most precious gift"; "the holy, strict and inflexible justice of God"; and "the wounds made by the thorns, nails and spear." 56 These phrases and the other selections previously presented indicate that a rhythm characterized M'Gready's public speaking. His method of writing provided for oral punctuation.


56 Works, I, p. 114. In the sermon, "The Saving Sight," M'Gready inserted this passage concerning Christ. "Here faith can gaze and admire, and drink from the shoreless, bottomless, boundless ocean of his sufficiency, all that guilty, ruined, lost sinners can need. In him condemned rebels may see the . . . plan of redemption . . . accomplished by the incarnation, the obedience, and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ." Works, II, p. 194.
Another characteristic of M'Gready's language and sentences was his extensive use of rhetorical questions, a device by which the speaker attempted to make his appeals personal and compelling. He presented these questions alone or in groups. In the "Revelation" address, for example, M'Gready introduced six reasons why the Bible evidenced itself as a revelation from heaven. In all but one of these points, he gave the evidence and then, through a question, asked for an unspoken judgment from his auditors. But he also adopted the rhetorical question in multiples or in series form. In the "Superabounding Grace" address, he linked thirteen consecutive rhetorical questions at one time in his last point or application.

He obviously attempted to make the auditors recognize that the doctrine he taught demanded a personal decision. He filled his applications with these questions. He made his last point in the first "New Birth" address largely of such questions. He said:

How did you find relief from your distress? Was it by a spiritual, supernatural discovery of the dignity, glory and excellency of Christ? of his mediatorial fulness, suitableness and willingness to save you? Did you see such a glorious beauty and fitness in the plan of salvation by free grace as gained the full consent of your soul, without any reserve, to fall in with the terms upon which Christ offers himself to sinners? What effect did such a discovery of Christ in the gospel, produce...?

---

57Works, II, pp. 388-89.
59Works, II, pp. 93-94.
McGready asked fourteen questions in sequence, each one built upon the preceding question or from the thesis of the address. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the question device tended to be weakened by overuse.

The speech patterns of the frontier, said Edward Everett Dale, were "picturesque" and "salty." He said that they enabled the frontiersman to say "so much in so few words and to bring such vivid pictures to the mind. . . ."60 Although McGready was a preacher of complete seriousness, almost never adopting humor in his addresses, he was able to drop to the frontier vernacular at times. In the "Fool" sermon McGready spoke in picturesque style with the following expressions: "catching flies"; "give me none of your jaw"; "began to cool off"; "death stared him in the face"; "half-read fops"; and "a hankering anxiety."61 Other sermons also contained such pointed expressions. 62

———

60 "The Speech of the Frontier," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXVII (October, 1941), 362-63. Dale's observations tend to be true for the whole frontier, not just the Oklahoma section which was the area of his investigation.


62 McGready apparently had no sympathy for the hypocrite and obviously had bitter experience with that segment of the religious audience. He said that if one touched the hypocrite's religion, "it is like pricking the sore backed horse--immediately he begins to kick and spurn the truth." "Hope of the Hypocrite," Works, II, p. 35. He compared preaching to a hypocrite with taking "a dog by the toes: they begin to bite and scratch--and cast forth the venom of the Old Serpent." Works, II, p. 39.
In evaluating the clarity of the speeches of M'Gready, one must recognize both strengths and weaknesses. M'Gready was capable of being quite clear, but he too often was vague and abstract. Yet when evaluating a M'Gready sermon and concluding that any portion is bombastic and verbose, one must then consider the total effect of an address. It appears that M'Gready sought to impress his auditors with a broad concept, even if the complexity of the doctrine was still unclear. He used broad concepts, almost as colors which should blend together on a canvas; he was not an architect who traced lines with a very fine pencil. He often adopted religious terminology that appears semantically beyond the mental grasp of many listeners. His knowledge that the addresses were for oral presentation probably influenced his involved style.

**Impressiveness**

Matthew Simpson recommended that sermons contain simple language, saying, "There is no reason why the gold in your sentences may not be burnished; nor will your steel be less strong because it is polished." M'Gready utilized two elements to make his sermons impressive to his auditors; Bible phrasing as the language of the address and various forms of imagery.

---

The language of the Bible. M'Gready accepted his Bible as the truth of God revealed to fallible man. He said to fellow preachers:

... he/the preacher should also live habitually as a scholar at the feet of Jesus, under the teachings of the Divine Spirit. ... So says the apostle: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" but it is the peculiar privilege of those that attempt to preach the gospel or declare the counsel of God. 64

His conception of the minister's study resulted in his adoption of Biblical language (King James version) in sermons. In describing the need of faith in the daily life of the Christian, M'Gready combined an image with Biblical phrasing. He said:

In a word, faith is the feet of the soul which keeps it daily travelling between its own emptiness and depravity, and the boundless fullness and sufficiency of Christ. Every step of the Christian's pious walk with God--every act of holy obedience--every victory he gains over sin and the world, and every pious breathing of the heart after God and holiness, springs from the living exercise of faith in the blood of Christ; and, hence it is, that our Lord tells his disciples, "Without me ye can do nothing." And says Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Indeed, "without faith it is impossible to please God." 65

The evangelist alluded to three passages, John 15:5, Philippians 4:13, and Hebrews 11:6. They do not perform the function of proof. Primarily they complete the thought, being the language of the sermon. In the same address M'Gready stated the necessity of the new birth


for the sinner. He said that God had judged them and that:

... all their thoughts, words and actions, must be sinful in his sight. --For a polluted fountain cannot send forth pure water, and says the wise man, "the ploughing of the wicked is sin." That is, even the best actions of the unrenewed man are sinful and abominable to God. 66

Although not identified, the allusion to the polluted fountain was a well-known Biblical illustration found in James 3:11. In this instance the Biblical language is undeniably the language of the sermon.

Biblical language often formed M'Gready's phraseology, perhaps without his awareness. In his second "New Birth" address he spoke directly to the believing, but unconverted, when he said:

Let me entreat those, who have ever felt the spirit of God striving with them seriously to put home to their consciences--Have I been born again? or am I yet a child of wrath and heir of hell? A person may, for a long time, feel the spirit striving with him. --may feel the most piercing convictions, and yet never arrive at the new birth. Pharaoh and Simon Magus had such horrors of conscience, that they desired the prayers of others, but still they remained in the "gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." 67

Here M'Gready adopted three phrases from the Bible and illustrated his point by two allusions to Biblical characters. He took the phrase, "the spirit of God striving with them," from Genesis 6:3: "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh. ..." M'Gready took the phrase "child of wrath" from

Ephesians 2:3, while he adopted the familiar "new birth" and "born again" phrases from John 3:3-5. The allusions to Biblical personalities required an auditor to have a background of Bible knowledge. In the first instance, M'Gready alluded to Pharaoh's request of Moses to intercede with Jehovah as recorded in Exodus 10:17. The second allusion is from Acts 8:18-24 where Simon Magus is told that he is yet in the "gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." M'Gready did not identify his Biblical source nor give sufficient information for the non-Bible-reading listener to recognize the Biblical language. But the well-read Bible student would recognize the phrases, and the scripture allusions would be further evidence for the doctrine presented. However, M'Gready is not using the Bible as proof; the passage is from the application and illustrates his normal communication pattern of adopting Bible language.

Imagery. Lucien V. Rule found that M'Gready was in the habit of writing verses to persons close to him. These included his wife, two babies who died in infancy, and a Mrs. Mary Posey. M'Gready's poetic nature occasionally added substantial beauty and impressiveness to his preaching. In his sermon on "The Christian's Journey to the Heavenly Canaan," he attempted a description of

68 Lucien V. Rule MS supplied by Mrs. Rule of Goshen, Kentucky. The typed manuscript is without numbered paging, this being taken from page two of three pages.
heaven, but remarked of its futility:

Here we undertake a task far above the untried wisdom and eloquence of men and angels. Were Gabriel to leave his shining seat in Paradise, and stand in the midst of this assembly, he could not fully describe the glory and blessedness of this country. Had I a quill, plucked from the wing of a cherub, and dipped in a ray of glory emanating from the divine throne, and were I to write for millions of ages, I should fall infinitely short of having portrayed its transcendant glory. 69

M'Gready obviously concerned himself with the images that clothed his thought. Apparently, he often felt inadequate when describing spiritual places or concepts. In the sermon prepared for his wife's funeral, he said of his attempt to describe heaven:

Were the tallest archangel to come down from the heaven of heavens--were Enoch who has near six thousand years experience of it, to descend from his shining seat--or a beloved John or a glorified Paul, --I have no doubt, that they would tell us that created language is too feeble, too barren to express the ten thousandth part of the boundless glories and blessedness, of the heavenly state. 70

Nevertheless, M'Gready attempted to make his sermons impressive and extensively adopted image factors which Victor Alvin Ketcham called the "Doorways to the Mind." 71

69 Works, I, p. 326.


Imagery to communicate feelings or concepts. M'Gready utilized images to create a sense of shame and disgust for sin. In the first "New Birth" address he said that when the sinner is given knowledge:

Thousands of abominations now lift their heads, which the sinner never saw in himself before. Pride, unbelief, hardness of heart, legality, atheism, enmity against God, and dreadful blasphemous thoughts of God and religion, rise in his bosom, so that his heart is a very hell within him. Whilst he is endeavoring to cleanse his heart of these foul monsters, which is not yet sprinkled with gospel grace, those corruptions which before lay quiet in the corners and neglected fly up like dust.  

Interestingly, he personified the sins of pride and legality, with their fellows, as monsters inhabiting the heart. Building on this image, he stressed the point, saying, "his heart is a very hell within him."

He presented elements of visual, kinesthetic, and organic imagery, attempting to make the abstractions real. In the same way he personified sin as a dreaded snake and deadly dagger in the "Fool" sermon. He said the sinner:

\[\ldots\text{neglects the salvation of his soul, and treats the offers of mercy with contempt. But he hugs to his heart that poisonous viper, sin, that stings him to the inmost soul, and, with pleasure, he kisses the dagger that pierces his soul.}\]  

At other times M'Gready made the general concept of sin repulsive by

72 Works, II, p. 79.
reference to disease or filth. For example, he had the believing
sinner say, "I am polluted, overspread with the leprosy of sin, from
the sole of the foot even to the crown of the head, wounds, bruises,
and putrifying sores." 74

The connection between sin, judgment, and the wrath of God was
a common theme with M'Gready. To emphasize the personal nature
of the theme, he employed a series of images. In the "Superabounding
Grace" address, he said:

Sinners, who are out of Christ, are all chargeable with
this crime [original sin]. You are chargeable with reject-
ing Christ and that salvation which infinite wisdom, love
and grace have provided; and that threatening of Christ
already quoted, will unavoidably fall upon you, if you
continue in your present state; you shall die in your sins and
be eternally crushed beneath their damning weight; and where
will you fly when the compassionate Jesus becomes your
enemy? or how will you escape from the fury of the lion of
the tribe of Judah, when his wrath begins to burn? or what
will your feelings be when he comes to deal with you for your
heaven-daring conduct in despising his grace and trampling
upon his precious blood? When you see, as it were, all his
perfections marching in battle array against you, and
engaged for your everlasting ruin; when the poisoned arrows
of the Almighty, which makes the stoutest Devils in hell to
roar, come upon you, barbed with wrath, and pierce your
inmost souls, O how will you endure when he will run upon
you with all his fury, grasp you in his omnipotent arms and
tear you to pieces, when none can or dare attempt to deliver
you? Then, in vain, will you cry to the rocks and mountains
to cover you from his vengeance; then the rocks and the
mountains will be as deaf to your entreaties as you are now
to the calls of the gospel. 75

74 Works, II, p. 81.

75 Works, I, pp. 304-5.
The thoughts take on life even though he combined too many images in one section. One weakness is the forced picture of perfections which shoot, march, tear, and grasp. However, for a frontier audience well acquainted with the stories or, in many cases, the experience of Indian warfare, the idea of an enemy with barbed arrows which rushes upon his victims was probably appropriate. The rocks and mountains as possible hiding places were familiar images, as well as the thought of a one-time friend becoming an enemy.

Perhaps one of M'Gready's most familiar themes was the experience of the theopathy or new birth. He thought of it as a cataclysmic personal experience, extremely difficult to explain to the unbeliever. When referring to the new birth in "Christ Has Done All Things Well," he employed images:

Christ does all things well, when he makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. When by his Word and Spirit he reaches the hardened heart of the sinner; when he awakens him out of the deep sleep of sin and carnal security; drives him from all his refuges of lies; strips him of his own righteousness, and finally shuts him up to the necessity of believing; when he strikes off the iron bolts of unbelief, opens the heart, and reveals his ineffable glory to the soul, whereby he wins the affections, and bows the will in sweet submission to his law and government; and when the believing sinner feels the blood of Jesus applied to his conscience, communicating a sense of pardon, attended with peace and joy unspeakable; when he has within his breast the witness of the Spirit, and reads his title to a heavenly inheritance—then, indeed, is he astonished beyond measure, saying, "He hath done all things well."  

---

76 Works, I, p. 262.
M'Gready conceived of the spiritual struggle prior to the new birth as similar to the condition and attitude of a runaway slave. He alluded to the false security of a slave in a hiding place, dressed in stolen clothing. M'Gready implied these thoughts in the phrases: "refuges of lies," "carnal security," and "strips him of his own righteousness." The phrase, "shuts him up to the necessity of believing," completed the image. He alluded to the freed slave with "he strikes off the iron bolts," "opens the heart," "sense of pardon," and "reads his title to a heavenly inheritance." M'Gready and his listeners well knew the conditions of chattel or bond slavery.

M'Gready felt that the slavery of sin was an appropriate comparison to the slavery of men. Unfortunately, he did not make the full comparison, choosing merely to hint at the relationship, asking the listeners to make the mental transference.

Metaphors and similes. M'Gready used metaphors and similes to clarify his thought, thereby adding connotations to simple thoughts. For example, in the "Superabounding Grace" sermon, sin became a serpent's poison when he said:

The first drop of the venomous contagion presented by that old serpent, the Devil... shed its deadly venom through the whole human nature, and mortally poisoned every faculty of the soul and every member, nerve and muscle of the body, every thought, word and action of all the numberless millions of mankind in every age of the world... 77

77 Works, I, p. 291.
McGready expanded the image to illustrate his doctrine of the depravity of mankind. He compared the circulatory system and the movement of human blood into every portion of the body to the influence of sin upon mankind. Snake bite and poisoning were common frontier occurrences.

McGready adopted the names of Bible places and personalities when he described the environment of the sinner. He said: "Why will you linger in Sodom, till the flames of divine wrath consume you? Why stay in the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram till you are swallowed up in the bottomless pit of hell?"78 In this instance McGready allowed the well-known Biblical city of Sodom to represent a sinful society or environment, while the Biblical characters of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram illustrated rebellious persons in the family or company of the sinner addressed. The connection is not stated, forcing the audience to make the transference of thought alone.

Similar to the metaphor is the simile, distinguishable from the metaphor in that the simile is identified as standing for the concept under consideration. In the "Nature and Necessity of Faith" address, McGready identified true faith through four Biblical similes. The first was that saving faith was "a receiving of Christ" as a beggar accepts alms. Secondly, saving faith was "a flying to Christ" as

though seeking a place of shelter from one who seeks to kill. The third image was that of Christ as a visual remedy, corresponding to the brazen serpent of the Old Testament. Finally, Mc'Gready said the believing man has a faith which feeds upon Christ, "as the hungry man receives and eats food." 79 In the following point Mc'Gready stated that saving faith could be compared to a child. He said, "As the infant lives upon its mother's breast, and derives its whole nourishment, support, and daily growth from her, so faith lives... upon Christ for righteousness and strength..." 80 The simile here was common to the experience of all the members of his audience and expressed his thought in a way suitable to clarify all confusion.

In the first "New Birth" address he chose the simile to illustrate the mental and moral changes in a man when he is converted. Of the conscience Mc'Gready said:

Like a lamp trimmed and newly supplied with oil, it sends forth its light into the darkest and most secret corners of the soul, discovering sins which the soul had never before suspected, especially the original corruption and depravity of our nature: that seed and bitter root from which all actual sin proceeds. 81

In this instance the simile, which is identified by the word "like," is

---

79 The Biblical allusions in this series are respectively to John 1:11; Numbers 35:9-14; Numbers 21:1-9; and John 4. Works, II, pp. 141-42.

80 Works, II, p. 142.

81 Ibid., II, p. 84.
changed and a metaphor is introduced, that of depravity being a "seed and bitter root." In both instances the thought is clothed with an image easily recognized by the auditors and easily assimilated into their thought patterns.

Summary

M'Gready's method of composition was complex. His broken sentence structure indicates that he prepared for oral presentation, trusting in his ability to interpret effectively his prepared remarks. Although capable of simple word selection, he too often tended to become abstract, relying on religious terms not easily defined. M'Gready apparently aimed toward a general effect. His auditors probably did not always understand the intricacies of his doctrinal discussion.

C. Harold King reported that the speech style of George Whitefield had three characteristics; simplicity, colloquial flavor, and vividness. M'Gready displayed elements of these qualities in his sermons. He relied on image words, notably the simile and metaphor, making his addresses vivid and picturesque. At times he was colloquial, but he lacked consistency in adapting his language and grammar to the simple needs of his listeners. He was capable of

---

simplicity, but he did not present his themes in a consistently simple manner. Intellectually, he was capable, but he tended to destroy good thought through complicated style.

III. DELIVERY

O'Neill and McBurney stressed the importance of delivery in speaking by saying, "It delivery is this third dimension especially which makes of argument a dynamic, living thing, which cannot be analyzed and labeled apart from the personality who gives it utterance." Augustine recognized the importance of the preacher's delivery when he said, "It is more by the Christian fervor of his sermons than by any endowment of his intellect that the minister must hope to inform the understanding, catch the affections, and bend the will of his hearers." J. Berrien Lindsley described James M'Gready as "the most powerful preacher" of the Kentucky Synod during the Revival of 1800, while Richard Beard called him the Revival's "leading spirit . . . most earnest advocate, and powerful promoter."

---


84Quoted in Simpson, Lectures on Preaching, p. 188.

85"Sources and Sketches of Cumberland Presbyterian History," The Theological Medium, IX, No. II, 129.

The purpose of this division is to determine the part that delivery had in the total speaking success of M'Gready. Some of the evidence cited here has appeared in earlier discussions, but where necessary for completeness will be utilized again in order to present a complete picture of M'Gready as a speaker.

Mode of Delivery

The prevailing custom of frontier Baptist and Methodist ministers was to speak either extemporaneously or impromptu, while most Presbyterian ministers read from a prepared manuscript. 87 Foote, however, stated that by rigorous preparation, M'Gready spoke with "fluency and correctness without reference to notes." 88 This evidence appears inconclusive, for Foote did not state that M'Gready had no notes, but that to his knowledge, M'Gready did not refer to notes. In contrast, J. Berrien Lindsley, a Cumberland Presbyterian historian, recorded that M'Gready "wrote many sermons, and made use of them in the pulpit." 89 This assertion is also questionable for no evidence exists that Lindsley ever witnessed a M'Gready address or


89 Lindsley, Medium, VIII, p. 274.
that he quoted an eyewitness.

As previously indicated in this chapter and elsewhere, M'Gready's speech style and organization were complex, probably forcing him at times to utilize notes. Even granting that his memory might have been above average, the recall problem probably demanded some form of notes or a full manuscript especially in such sermons as "The Superabounding Grace of God" and the "Revelation."

In view of M'Gready's respect for his teacher, John McMillan, he may have adopted the delivery practices of the Pennsylvania educator-revivalist. Dwight Guthrie summarized McMillan's practice as follows:

McMillan wrote out his sermons in full and memorized them. He wrote them on pages of such a size that he could put them in a pocket Bible, hold the pages with his thumb, and by careful manipulation keep his audience from realizing that he had even so much as short notes. It is remarkable, indeed, that he was able to hide the mechanics of mind and hand while he was preaching with vehemence and profound conviction. 90

M'Gready adopted the McMillan practice in several known respects. 91 He wrote out his sermons in full, spent considerable time in restudy, perhaps memorization, and did not allow the audience to be aware of


91 The close association of these men in the student days established a lasting friendship and apparent respect. See MS letter from James M'Gready to John McMillan (Nov. 18, 1801) Pittsburgh Theological Seminary library, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
notes at the time of delivery. Furthermore, certain of McMillan's sermons are extant in the Presbyterian Historical Society offices in Philadelphia. Written on small pages, back and front, the script is extremely fine. Interestingly, if these sermons were printed, they would strongly resemble the sermons of M'Gready in general form.

A reasoned judgment is therefore possible. M'Gready was probably an extemporaneous speaker who relied heavily on his memory. The nature of his sermon material required him to use either complete or partial notes, but he kept these from the auditors' view. There is no conclusive reason to suspect another practice and in view of the custom of McMillan, this conclusion appears justified. It is possible and probable that M'Gready used some notes at all times as mental assistance.

Appearance and Manner of Delivery

Thonsсен and Baird pointed out the importance of the speaker's general appearance. They said that in all probability, "rhetorical effectiveness can be enhanced by the impress of a striking personality."\(^92\)

When he moved into the regions of the Kentucky revival, M'Gready was about forty years of age, and as Alexander Finley put

\(^92\)Speech Criticism, p. 441.
it, "in the strength of his manhood, both physical and intellectual."93

William Warren Sweet, perhaps influenced by Barton W. Stone's view, described M'Gready as "exceedingly uncouth in his personal appearance, with small piercing eyes, coarse tremulous voice, and so unusual was his general ugliness as to attract attention."94

Granting that M'Gready was never described as handsome, Stone is singular in suggesting that M'Gready's physical appearance detracted from his speaking. Foote spoke of him as "not to be despised, large in form, some six feet high . . . with the appearance of great weight and bodily strength."95 Z. F. Smith, a Kentucky historian, pictured M'Gready as "tall of stature, and large and angular of frame, with a small piercing eye, set beneath a rugged brow, and with a sombre mien, he commanded attention at once."96

93The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky., Which is to some extent a History of Western Kentucky (Russellville, Ky.: Gaines & Barclay, 1879), I, p. 12.


96Z. F. Smith, "The Great Revival of 1800. The First Camp-meeting," Register of Kentucky State Historical Society, VII, p. 24. Richard Beard of Cumberland University saw M'Gready in his later years. He said, "Mr. McGready was an unusual man. God had evidently endowed him, and raised him up, and given him a spiritual training for a special work. He had great physical strength, and a voice like thunder." See Brief Biographical Sketches, p. 14.
M'Gready's daughter Jane mentioned his "very large beak" of a nose, and said that he had light blue eyes and brown hair. She also described her father's piercing eyes, which Stone reported as having a flickering effect, similar to that of a flame. The description of M'Gready's eyes resembled those given about Charles G. Finney.

In later years M'Gready inclined to corpulence but his physical appearance still added to the force of his message. He is specifically said to have been "remarkably plain in his dress."

Barton Warren Stone remarked that even if not physically appealing, M'Gready's manner was striking. Of his first view of the revivalist, Stone wrote: "His person was not prepossessing, nor his appearance interesting, except his remarkable gravity, and small

---

97 Lucien V. Rule MS supplied by Mrs. Rule of Goshen, Kentucky, page two of three pages.


100 Hanford A. Edson, Contributions to the Early History of the Presbyterian Church in Indiana; Together with Biographical Notices of the Pioneer Ministers (Cincinnati: Winona Publishing Company, 1898), p. 32.

piercing eyes." Though inclined to disagree with the sentiments of
the address, Stone said:

Everything appeared by him, forgotten, but the salvation
of souls. Such earnestness--such zeal--such powerful
persuasion . . . I had never witnessed before. My mind
was chained by him, and followed him closely. . . . 102

M'Gready recognized the importance of earnestness and the
appearance of sincerity in speech delivery. He said:

We should declare our message in the most solemn and
earnest manner, as though we believed what we said. We
should be deeply affected with our subject, and use all
reasonable means to affect the minds of the people--strike
their judgment and their passions, and gain access to the
heart. . . . 103

He had no respect for the minister who could coldly preach the great
Christian themes. He demanded that the minister's attitude at the
moment of delivery conform to the subject matter. To his fellow
ministers, he said:

What judgment must the unthinking world form of the
matter, when the ministers of Jesus speak of the glory of
Immanuel--the dying love of a Redeemer--the joys of
Heaven, with coolness and indifference? or, when they
preach of death and hell, judgment and eternity, as
dispasionately as if they believed nothing about them. 104

M'Gready's delivery often increased in fervor during an address.

James Smith wrote that "in the opening up of his subject √he√ was very

103 "The Duties and Qualifications of a Minister of the Gospel,"
Works, I, p. 322.
104 Ibid., pp. 322-23.
clear and dispassionate; but in his applications, he pressed the truth home . . . with heart piercing efficacy . . . himself completely absorbed in his subject. . . ."105 Foote reported that M'Gready's delivery reflected his emotional involvement in his message: "In his delivery he was always solemn, and sometimes very animated from the commencement. Generally he began very calm and waxed warmer as he progressed, and in the application was always fervent."106 This increasing fervency provided the listener the opportunity to become involved mentally and emphatically and be carried with the tide of emotional address. Because of this dynamic manner of delivery, Foote said of the printed sermons:

... the printed sermons, exhibiting much good thought and power of language, will be less impressive than the discourses that fell from his lips, possessing all the excellencies of the written ones, and enriched by the tide of feeling from a burning heart. 107

The solemnity of M'Gready's delivery seems to have been singularly impressive. Richard Beard witnessed a M'Gready address in the late years. Beard said:

105 History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; compiled from Various Authors, including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835), pp. 588-89.


107 Ibid., pp. 372-73.
He stood at the foot of a tree in a grove, as the house could not contain the congregation. I have a very distinct recollection of his appearance and manner. He was not boisterous, but rather chaste, solemn, and impressive. Solemnity was most conspicuous in his manner, and he shed tears very freely. It was a solemn day. 108

Others remembered M'Gready's dynamic style of delivery.

Robert Davidson, a Kentucky Presbyterian historian, characterized M'Gready as using a "highly decorated style of delivery" and continually "launching the thunders of Sinai" at the listening audience. Davidson felt that M'Gready's preaching was not to his taste, lacking "pathos," "ebullition of feeling," and "copious floods of tears." 109

The solemnity of delivery may have resulted from the worship procedure prior to the sermon. In a Presbyterian service, the minister was in charge. He called the people to worship, conducted the hymns where he was capable, and led a ministerial prayer immediately prior to the sermon. 110 M'Gready was noted for these prayers. Foote wrote:

He excelled in public prayer, and the prayer before sermon was usually long, free from repetitions, and filled with earnest wrestlings with God for the assembled people. Often the congregation was in tears, with the

108 Beard, Brief Sketches, p. 17. The occasion was the funeral for M'Gready's brother.


110 Smith, History of the Christian Church, pp. 563-64. Smith reported at least one North Carolina service where M'Gready led the congregation in a hymn. Apparently he was capable of melody.
influence of his devotions.\textsuperscript{111}

Assuming that Foote’s observation on the pathetic effect of the prayers applied during the revival period, then prior to the sermon M‘Gready often prepared his listeners for the reception of his message.

Voice

Apparently the continual training under the open-air conditions of frontier preaching enabled M‘Gready to perfect a voice of power and perhaps of flexibility. Alex Finley said that his voice was like "a trumpet," capable of being heard with ease for several hundred yards.\textsuperscript{112} James Smith ridiculed the weak comparison of a college and seminary trained preacher in the frontier preaching environment when he said:

Pray what influence would the dry formal written lecture, of a stripling from college, have exercised at those meetings where thousands had collected in the open air, to receive the bread of life, and where they had been accustomed to hear a M‘Gready, with a voice of thunder, denouncing the curses of the law upon guilty and impenitent sinners; and with words that burned--dwelling upon the Love of God in Christ Jesus, until all around were melted into tears; and all the passions of their souls were aroused, and all their powers


\textsuperscript{112}Alexander C. Finley, \textit{The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky., Which is to some extent a History of Western Kentucky} (Russellville: Gaines & Barclay, 1879), p. 12.
were brought into action.  

One peculiarity was evident in the vocal technique of M'Gready, an ability to adopt markedly different qualities. Alexander Finley stated that when describing the love of God or heaven, M'Gready's tones were tender and lingering, but were "harsh and uncomfortable" when denouncing the sinner or describing the conditions of hell.  

M'Gready's daughter Jane described her father's delivery:

In describing the beauties of Heaven his voice was soft, full of love for that state, thrilled, and gently longing, and joyful. His audience would be listening intently on the edge of the seats. Then in describing the horrors of Hell, his voice would grow harsh, filled with anguish and despair, and groaning with pity. Then an angry shout at the unrepentant sinner caused many listeners to fall off the seats! The men would get back with startled faces! The women often remained on the floor weeping! Then his voice would grow soft and comforting; . . . .  

M'Gready had probably observed and personally perfected this technique, as Bennett described the same vocal manner in John McMillan.  

M'Gready was obviously able to change both quality and duration of sounds, indicating great versatility in orally communicating his message. The harshness, when uncomfortable to listeners, was a serious

113History of the Christian Church, pp. 585-95.
114History of Russellville, p. 12.
Gestures and Use of the Body

Very little is known of M'Gready's gestures. Evidently, he did gesture, though his actions were not noted for expressiveness or beauty. He was especially known for earnestness. This quality infers that he did not have a stilted presentation. Barton W. Stone said that M'Gready's single thought was the salvation of souls, to which all was subservient. In this context Stone called the gestures of M'Gready "sui generis, the perfect reverse of elegance." Stone's observation applies to an address in 1790-91, but M'Gready certainly had established his habitual movements by that time. He probably gained little "elegance" by 1797. Benjamin McDonnell related an incident in which the revival supporters revolved against intolerance. He said:

The Red River church, in Logan County, Kentucky, was locked against the revival party, and McGready stood on the door steps and preached. One day while he or some other revival preacher stood there gesticulating violently, a

117 Franceway Ranna Cossitt, The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing. One of the Fathers and Founders of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. To Which is Added Remarks on Davidson's History, or, A Review of His Chapters on the Revival of 1800, and His History of the Cumberland Presbyterians. With an Appendix (Louisville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1853), p. 45.

118 Stone, Biography, p. 8.
backward stroke broke the lock, and the house was never
locked against the revival party afterward. 119

McDonnold could not positively identify the speaker. But the story
would never have been related of James M'Gready had he not
frequently gestured.

Barton Stone's record of M'Gready's bodily movements is the
only one suggesting that they detracted from his speaking effect, but
his comment was definite and cannot be ignored. M'Gready used
gestures, probably quite frequently; however, his preaching success
was not strongly aided by his use of the body.

Summary

Robert T. Oliver summarized the type of delivery best suited to
persuasive discourse in The Psychology of Persuasive Speech. He
said that it should be characterized by: (a) plain, straightforward,
unpretentious delivery; (b) lack of hesitation in forming words or
thoughts; (c) being free from glib fluency; (d) having direct reference
to setting or auditors; and (e) evidence of deep feeling for the
subject. 120 In general, M'Gready's delivery practice conformed to
this picture of desirable persuasive delivery. He was earnest, direct,

119 Benjamin W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland
Presbyterian Church (Nashville: Board of Publication of the
Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888), p. 40.

120 Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech
and unpretentious. He studied well before delivery and could speak with fluency, yet with sincerity, so that none doubted his personal involvement. He possessed a powerful voice, well adapted to the needs of open-air address. He was large of stature, the size of his body lending substance to the message. His size matched the strength of his voice, but his technique of gesture probably left much to be desired.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

James M'Gready utilized an orderly, easily followed method of speech organization. His organization method performed two desirable functions. It kept the theme of the discourse regularly before the audience and built each point as a new perspective of the theme. Secondly, the arrangement enabled him to order his thoughts during extemporaneous delivery.

M'Gready followed a general order of organization which prescribed that following the sermon text, the speaker should give an introduction built upon the context of the passage used as the text. This was followed by a statement giving the divisions of the discourse. The body of the address averaged three major divisions with the last division frequently serving as the conclusion or "improvement."

M'Gready's conclusions were of three types. First, he made the final point of the discussion the conclusion, building the logical
sequence of thought to a climax in the last point. Secondly, he concluded with a formal "application" containing a series of highly pathetic remarks based on the doctrines discussed in the body of the sermon. Finally, he introduced hypothetical questions, each usually designating a class of persons whom the speaker was addressing. His answers were compelling and pathetic. When he used this form of conclusion, he built each question upon the preceding one so that the answers provided a progression of emotion, if not of thought.

M'Gready's speech style had both strength and weakness. The printed sermons sometimes resemble rhetorical bombast with broad concepts expressed in abstract terminology. M'Gready was capable, however, of direct, simple explanation and progressive handling of sermon ideas. Having proven this ability in his introductions, he too often lapsed into a verbose style when dealing with the grander Christian themes. His compositions indicate that he prepared with platform delivery in mind. Long sentences frequently appear, but each is periodic in its phrasing.

M'Gready evidently possessed a poetic nature, adopting image words frequently, but his poetic quality is not consistent. He employed virtually every form of imagery, especially Biblical allusions, metaphors, and similes, either in isolation or built one upon another. A significant characteristic of his speech style was the rhetorical question. He utilized the question form often, either singly or in
series. As many as thirteen or fourteen consecutive rhetorical questions are found in his addresses. He uniquely used adjectives or nouns in a triplet form, suggesting a speech rhythm in his address.

M'Gready's delivery was a decided asset. He was a person of above-average build, evidently physically strong. His physique was an asset to the total picture of his speech delivery, though his features were not handsome. He had a proverbially strong voice, capable of being heard at great distances. This enabled him to speak successfully under open-air conditions to large numbers of listeners. His gestures were probably awkward, though only one author described them in a derogatory sense. He was energetic and evidenced complete sincerity. In the delivery of his addresses, physical grace was not a quality he consciously sought or upon which he concentrated. His message was the central consideration; all else was subservient.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS

American revivalism sprang from the German-Dutch pietistic awakenings in the second quarter of the eighteenth century under Theodore J. Frelinghuysen, William Tennent, and the Tennent Log College graduates. With Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield leading the way, the movement blossomed into the First Great Awakening, a revival era lasting until approximately 1745. A religious decline dominated until the turn of the century with the beginnings of the Second Great Awakening, an outgrowth of religious fervor dating from the 1780's, emerging first in the East and moving West with the population. A leader of the Southwestern phase of the Second Great Awakening was James M'Gready.

Roscoe Buley correctly observed that no "chapter in the history of religion in our country offers more complexities or more interest than that which deals with the Middle West in the first half of the nineteenth century." In the historiography of the period, significant

---


scholarly research reveals much of the denominational or sociological aspects of the Revival, but few studies analyze the work of the men who dominated the period. This rhetorical study has analyzed those qualities and techniques which made M'Gready a significant figure in the homiletic history of nineteenth-century America. Hopefully, it will contribute to an understanding of the Cumberland revival as well as indicate a beginning point for other studies of men who accepted the revival ideal and patterned their work after the M'Gready philosophy and methods.

I. GENERAL SUMMARY

Speech Idea Sources

Born to conservative Presbyterian parents of Scotch-Irish tradition, M'Gready received early religious impressions from David Caldwell, a teacher-preacher who accommodated to the strange milieu of conservative-liberal Presbyterian thought patterns. John McMillan and Joseph Smith, the revival ministers of Redstone Presbytery, augmented the practicality of these early impressions by liberal training. In his ministerial studies from 1782-1789, M'Gready learned the dispassionate logic of New England Calvinism, but acquired an ideal of fervent preaching designed to impress the mind and obsess the heart with the need for salvation. While in Western Pennsylvania, anticipating ordination, he underwent a "conversion experience" which influenced his preaching perhaps more than any other factor.
Thenceforth, he demanded that each convert have a theopathic moment when the subject felt his mystical migration from sin to the world of grace.

Three elements formed M'Gready's revival message. First, he appealed for acceptance of Biblical evidence as true and infallible which would be enhanced by the empirical knowledge granted mystically at the moment of conversion. Second, he stressed the possibility of salvation for every sufficiently penitent person. By this element M'Gready differed from the traditional Calvinist, and when this was mingled with his third emphasis, the need for the "new birth" theopathy, he philosophically became suspect to his tradition-honoring colleagues of the Presbyterian ministry. M'Gready's position was described as "modified" Calvinism\(^3\) or a "democratization of Calvinism."\(^4\) He did not present a group or aggregate solution to the religious problem, but an individual solution, consequently adapting to his frontier environment. For as William Warren Sweet said:

A society in motion is always an individualistic society. It is in a static society that institutions flourish, where the individual is more or less automatically merged into the group. A religion therefore which was to make an appeal to an individualistic society must make its chief concern the problems and needs of the common man; it must emphasize


the fact that salvation is to a large degree a personal matter that it is dependent upon individual decisions.

The sources of M'Gready's ideas, therefore, were his early impressions under David Caldwell, his theological and classical training under McMillan and Smith, his own experience, especially that of his "conversion," and his own study of the Bible. The North Carolina period from 1790 to 1795 tended to confirm the validity of his views, but did not provide any significant new impressions.

M'Gready's Methods of Preaching

Camp Meeting. In the years 1798 and 1799, M'Gready began experimenting with a variety of new or previously observed methods of audience conditioning. In 1799 and 1800, he developed the first recorded "camp meeting," an arrangement which provided for a maximum religious effect upon a large number of listeners. Separating the worshiper from his home environment, concentrating great quantities of religious suggestion into a short period of time while making pious acts socially acceptable, he evolved a revival technique, a combination of the new and old, which became a frontier institution repeated thousands of times in the following fifty years. During the years 1799-1805, M'Gready and his revival associates planned and conducted from seven to fifteen camp meetings a season. This method of audience preparation and planning of propitious speech settings was,

\[Revivalism\ in\ America,\ Its\ Origin,\ Growth,\ and\ Decline\ (New\ York:\ Charles\ Scribner's\ Sons,\ 1944),\ p.\ xii.\]
according to Charles Johnson, the "generating impulse" for much of the effect of the Revival of 1800. 6 The awareness of audience needs evident in M'Gready's new evangelistic tool reaped benefits for several decades. Though polished and sometimes refined, the basic outline of the camp meeting was maintained in the M'Gready fashion throughout the whole period of American frontier expansion. This, therefore, was M'Gready's most far-reaching contribution. He experimented with various features, keeping those that proved beneficial to religious audience conditioning. While his contemporaries gave him credit for the camp meeting, M'Gready did not claim personal distinction for the institution, either unaware of its significance or, characteristically, too humble to claim personal honor.

**Speech Preparation.** Although a revivalist, M'Gready was a working minister, serving usually two or three congregations. He prepared his addresses in manuscript form, reusable before a variety of specific audiences. He prepared methodically, making his sermon preparation the dominant activity of his weekly ministerial duties. After the preparation of a manuscript, M'Gready revised and restudied his notes, enabling him to speak with warmth and fluency. Presumably, he memorized large quantities of his manuscript

---

materials. He used his sermons in local and revival settings, then preserved them for future use at his discretion.

Speech Organization. M'Gready evolved his sermons from general themes, arranging his major points characteristically in a distributive outline. His average number of three major divisions allowed the listener to grasp the broad outline without confusion. However, the internal supporting materials of each point were sometimes confusing, having too many poorly arranged minor divisions. He followed the consistent pattern of stating a sermon text, followed by an introduction, division of the outline, discussion, and conclusion. The early portion of his speech was the more reasoned, the more impassioned sections occupying a latter position. He designed his speech introductions to prepare the listener for a doctrinal discussion in the body of the address, the introduction most frequently amplifying the setting of the sermon text.

M'Gready adopted three methods of concluding: (1) using the last minor division of the discussion as his conclusion; (2) adopting an "application" or motivating section; and (3) answering hypothetical questions. With the question form of conclusion, M'Gready tended to build each answer emotionally upon the preceding one so that the address rose to an emotional climax.

Use of Evidence. M'Gready relied on his Bible to furnish proof
of his sermon assertions. Knowing that most of his frontier listeners accepted the authenticity of the Bible, he most frequently appealed to Bible quotations for sermon proof. The Bible was his primary source for illustrations and allusions, as well as specific examples to prove the possibility of his inferences. Other sources of supporting materials included history, contemporary life, and, at rare times, the comments of religious authors. His historical allusions or illustrations were from the lives of famous personalities such as Alexander the Great and Napoleon, or Biblical characters such as Moses and Abraham.

M'Gready followed a deductive organizational pattern, stating a point by assertion, providing Biblical quotations as proof, then arguing from the inferences of the generalized assertion. A belief in an infallible Bible facilitated his deductive approach, while his philosophy that all unregenerate persons were "evil" provided him with the foundation for charging base motives and conduct to those who did not accept his doctrine.

In apologetic sermons M'Gready relied on more logical development, as in the "Revelation" where the major division assertions formed the premises of a categorical syllogism. Furthermore, the apologetic sermons did not contain the same degree of pathetic appeal as other types of addresses.

When utilizing ethical appeal, M'Gready characteristically emphasized the nature of his cause. While his own reputation was
adequate, he rarely called attention to himself. He spoke as a religious advocate, asserting the dignity, purposes, and social advantages of his cause.

This study confirmed that M'Gready's overriding emotive appeal was fear. Supporting the fear appeal were the promise of continual religious security if the "new birth" were experienced and social contempt for the man who chose sin rather than Christianity. The fear appeal dominated the latter portions of his sermons, while other appeals appeared in the opening divisions. A serious weakness evidenced itself in the narrow range of emotional appeals, while the persistent use of words like "hell," "fire," "wrath," and "judgment" gave an awesome tone or atmosphere to many addresses.

**Speech Style.** M'Gready employed an involved style, strong in the use of images and rhetorical questions. While his sermon language was generally easy to follow, he frequently adopted religious terminology having doubtful semantic concreteness. His sentences were long, the punctuation suggesting that he anticipated his delivery would clarify the literary weaknesses.

He utilized image words and figurative language having Bible referents. He possessed an effective descriptive ability, especially valuable when he attempted to portray heaven or hell. By his descriptions of contemporary life, M'Gready gave vitality to abstract concepts. His sermons displayed a perception which catalogued specific foibles
of men and, at appropriate times, ridiculed them as the price paid by the sinner for his home in hell.

**Delivery.** M'Gready believed that the manner of delivery evidenced the preacher's conviction. If the preacher presented the salvation message in a languid or mundane manner, the sinner would conclude that the preacher did not believe his message or that no immediate danger existed. Consequently, M'Gready made every effort to convince by manner, vocal technique, and bodily movement that he believed his message, demanding immediate consideration and action.

Possessing a powerful voice, M'Gready could be heard for great distances. His voice was flexible, as he frequently suited his vocal quality and volume to the subject. Significantly, warm and lingering tones dominated his description of heaven; but when describing hell, he assumed a grating rasping which tended to increase the emotive nature of his narration.

**II. SPECIAL FINDINGS AS A RESULT OF THIS STUDY**

First, M'Gready's training specifically prepared him for the task of frontier evangelism. His Redstone mentors chose purposes

---

and methods designed to train men for the frontier ministry. Furthermore, the emphases of John McMillan and Joseph Smith favored revivalism, stressing emotional preaching in primitive settings for persons of limited education.

Second, as a result of his own religious experience, M'Gready adopted a singular religious position. His demand for a specific conversion experience gave him a unique message with intensely personal religious significance. His position gave his preaching a tone of intensity, an "either--or" simplicity, a mysticism that tended to be confirmed by the "exercises" which occurred as he preached.

Third, the camp meeting resulted from M'Gready's experimentation and his constant evaluation of listening audiences. By 1801, M'Gready evolved the pattern which characterized these meetings for decades to come, his most significant contribution to the history of religious public address.

Fourth, M'Gready lost his position of leadership and suffered a decline in speech effectiveness through the combination of two factors: (1) the opposition of traditional Calvinists who rejected new methods of worship or preaching technique and any suggestion of compromise with those they opposed; and (2) M'Gready's inability to divorce himself from past religious moorings making it impossible for him to assume the leadership of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a denomination arising from his efforts. The effect upon M'Gready's speaking was indirect, for while no permanent speaking restrictions
were imposed upon him, he lost the active support of many colleagues and suffered a decline in reputation.

Fifth, connotation has falsely attached the flamboyancy of the later camp meeting to M'Gready's preaching. His preaching, however, was intensely serious, not allowing humor and flippancy in the perilous contest for souls. He employed a traditional method of speech organization, having very few deviations from a stereotyped pattern. He followed the simple plan of convincing listeners of the weakness of their spiritual condition, educating them to a desirable remedy, and then appealing for immediate action. Emotional proofs were often present, but he relied on scriptural quotations to prove his doctrinal assertions before motivating the "depraved" mind through appealing to its self-interest. While fear dominated many addresses, he believed that hell was an actuality and that fear was a God-given appeal to deter men from sin.

Sixth, M'Gready's style and organizational pattern provided for the motivational impact of one broadly defined thought or attitude. His involved style combined with a somewhat complex organization of minor divisions to weaken his ability to indoctrinate poorly educated listeners with sufficient knowledge from which to make enlightened decisions. However, he always directed his basic sermon organization toward establishing a single general premise. The complexity of information gave the impression that abundant proof existed for the
premise, even if the supporting evidence might not be assimilated. The involved style, utilizing so much Biblical phraseology, gave the premise a tone of Biblical authenticity, even if the language lacked precise definitional referents. When these factors combined with the use of a closing "application," a single doctrinal point or impression was the basis for appealing for personal listener response.

Seventh, M'Gready's sermon manuscript preparation provided for a variety of delivery techniques. It allowed him to satisfy the formality imposed by necessity or tradition or to assume the free, "off-the-cuff" manner that the camp-meeting circumstances required. Nevertheless, his manner of preparation was complete, each sermon apparently well-prepared and in most instances fully written in manuscript form.

Admittedly, the stage for M'Gready's preaching was crude; his sermons appealed to the most fundamental motives; and the conduct of his listeners was sometimes indelicate, if not irreverent. However, before he stepped to the Logan County pulpit, the stage was cruder still; and when the revival he sparked terminated its brief career, his society was changed and religion had a new weapon of grace for the battle with sin. If dignity and refinement were sacrificed, what was gained. Perhaps Weisberger made the most satisfying suggestion when he said:
All of this cost something in religious depth, religious learning, religious dignity. Yet there was not much choice. The American churches lacked the support of an all-powerful state or of age-old traditions. . . . They [the new institutions of the American churches] reflected a spirit of democracy, optimism, and impatience that would sweep us across a continent, sweep us into industrialism, sweep us into a civil war. That spirit demanded some religious expression, some promise of a millennium in which all could share.  

James M'Gready of Logan County, Kentucky, was a springboard for the onsurge of religious America.

---

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Collected Documents


_________. "Circular Letter Addressed to the Societies and Brethren of the Presbyterian Church, recently under the Care of the Council, by the late Cumberland Presbytery; in which is a correct statement of the origin, progress, and termination of the difference between the Synod of Kentucky and the former Presbytery of Cumberland," in Theological Medium, XI (October, 1877), 395-409.

Kentucky Synod. A Brief History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the Proceedings of the Synod of Kentucky, Relative to the Late Cumberland Presbytery: in which is Brought to View a Brief Account of the Origin and Present Standing of the People Usually denominted Cumberland Presbyterians; as Taken from Official Documents and Facts in Possession of Synod. Lexington: Thomas T. Skillman for Synod, 1823.


354


2. Diaries, Letters, Notes, and Narratives


Gaither, G. Manuscript letter to Joshua Wilson, dated December 7, 1808, from Beards Town, Kentucky, in Durrett Collection, University of Chicago Library.

Kentucky Synod. *A Serious Address From the Synod of Kentucky, to the Churches under their care.* Lexington: Daniel Bradford, 1804.

Lyle, John. *Manuscript diary for years 1801-1803,* in Durrett Collection, University of Chicago Library.


Mc'Gready, James. *Extract of letter to Thomas Coke (1801),* in *The Methodist Magazine for the year 1803; being a continuation of the Arminian Magazine,* *First Published by the Rev. John Wesley,* A.M. *Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises, on General Redemption,* XXVI (London, 1803), 181-84.

_________. *Manuscript letters to Archibald Cameron,* dated December 11, 1807, and November 6, 1811, in Shane Collection, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

_________. *Manuscript letter to John McMillan,* dated November 18, 1801, at library of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

_________. *Manuscript letter to Joshua Wilson,* dated July 25, 1808, from Henderson County, Kentucky, in Durrett Collection, University of Chicago Library.

_________. *Manuscript poem to Nancy Thompson (no date).* Original in possession of W. H. Ingram of New York, New York.


Rule, Lucien V. *Manuscript article (no date).* Original in possession of Mrs. Rule of Goshen, Kentucky.
B. BOOKS


Finley, Alexander C. The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky., Which is to some extent a History of Western Kentucky. 2 vols. Russellville, Ky.: Gaines & Barclay, Publishers, 1879.


McDonnell, Benjamin W. *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*. Nashville: Board of Publication of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1888.


March, Angier. *Increase of Piety, or the revival of religion in the United States of America; containing several interesting letters not before published. Together with three remarkable dreams*. Newberryport: /private/, 1802.


Rankin, Adam. A Review of the Noted Revival in Kentucky, commenced in Kentucky in the year of our Lord, 1801. Lexington: [private], 1803.


Redstone Presbytery. Minutes of the Presbytery of Redstone, of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. From the Organization of Presbytery, September 19, 1781 to December, 1831. Cincinnati: Elm Street Printing Company, 1878.


Ripley, Henry J. Sacred Rhetoric; or, Composition and Delivery of Sermons. Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1859.


Smith, James. History of the Christian Church from its Origin to the Present Time; compiled from Various Authors, including a History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Drawn from Authentic Documents. Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Office, 1835.


Stephens, John Vant. The Organic Union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Cincinnati: Lane Seminary Building, 1943.


Stratton, Margaret Barnes. *Place-Names of Logan County and Oft-Told Tales.* Russellville, Ky.: News Democrat, 1950.


Thomas, David. The Observer, Trying the Great Reformation in this State, and Proving it to have been originally a Work of Divine Power. With a survey of Several Objections to the Contrary, as Being Chiefly Comprised in Mr. Rankin's Review of the Noted Revival, Lately Published. Sent with an address to a friend in the country. Lexington: John Bradford, 1802.


C. ESSAYS IN COLLECTIONS AND PERIODICALS


Espy, Josiah. "Tour in Ohio, Kentucky, Etc.," Ohio Valley Historical Series, Miscellanies, No. 1 (1871).


MacLean, John P. "The Kentucky Revival and Its Influence on the Miami Valley," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, XII (1903), 242-86.


________. "Recovering the Story of a Great Evangelist," The Oldham Era /LaGrange, Oldham County, Kentucky/, July 18, 1941, p. 2.


D. THESES AND DISSERTATIONS


Edwin Harold Enzor, Jr. was born October 10, 1935, at Washington, D.C. He had his elementary and secondary training in the school system of Arlington County, Virginia, graduating from Washington-Lee High School. In 1957, he received the B.A. degree from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, and in 1959, the M.A. degree from Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas. While in residency at Louisiana State University from September, 1959, to August, 1961, he served as a Graduate Assistant in Speech.

Between June, 1957, and August, 1958, he served as minister of the Arlington Church of Christ, Arlington, Virginia. Since August, 1961, he has served as minister of the Rockville Church of Christ, Rockville, Maryland.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Edwin Harold Enzor, Jr.

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: THE PREACHING OF JAMES M'GREADY; FRONTIER REVIVALIST

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Clinton E. Bradford

Dallas Petruccio

E. H. Shames

Neil Nogle

Date of Examination:

May 12, 1964