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THE CAMP MEETING AND THE POLITICAL RALLY

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

Degree

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Joe Lyons Kincheloe

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ABSTRACT

In America a unique relationship has existed and still exists between religious and political institutions. Evangelical Protestantism, always a potent force in American life, has influenced not only the religious sphere of the nation but the political segment as well. American political leaders from Jackson to Franklin Roosevelt to Nixon in their attempts to develop a rapport with constituencies have made use of revivalistic methodology. Couching their appeals in evangelical rhetoric, utilizing the power of the once solely religious mass meeting, and elevating the importance of the emotional in relation to the rational, political leaders have tended to blur the distinction between political and religious appeals in America. The purpose of this essay is to explore one dimension of that relationship, namely the camp meeting as developed by the Presbyterians and Methodists and the political rally as used by the Whigs in the campaign of 1840.

Emerging as a dynamic and powerful force around 1800, the religious camp meeting spread throughout the American nation within a period of ten years. In three or four decades most Americans became acquainted with the camp meeting, and in many areas manners and lifestyles were permanently

affected by the power of the institution. As American politics began to search for an egalitarian base in the 1820's and 1830's, the new leaders, many of whom had been reared in close association with the camp meeting, began to apply the successful methods of the religious revival to the political campaign. At this point, for the first time, religious and political methodologies started to merge--never to separate completely. An outgrowth of this merger was the political rally. First envisioned on a limited scale by the Jacksonians in 1828, it was nothing more than a political camp meeting. By 1840 the Whigs realized the great potential of evangelical politics; and with the help of the political camp meeting, Old Tippecanoe was swept into the White House on the back of an emotionalized electorate filled with visions of log cabins and mugs of hard cider.

The similarities between the religious and political meetings were numerous. Both were founded upon an emotional base. Leaders of the assemblages were quick to admit that emotion took precedence over reason at the meeting ground. Many of those who attended the gatherings and some of their leaders saw themselves as crusaders in a "good fight" against sin and worldly corruption. As both groups stressed the worth and integrity of the individual, the cult of the common man soon came to occupy an important position in the concerns of both the leaders and their followers.

In the attempt to establish control over their respective congregations, the directors of the camp meeting and the political rally used similar methods. Leaders appealed to familiar symbols cherished by all present to develop a sense of likemindedness, as social psychologists would later define the phenomenon, throughout the congregation. By tapping the fears of the assembled multitude by constant references to hell's eternal suffering and in the political context the hell of a Democratic victory, leaders increased the crowd's sense of interdependence thus making the group even more submissive and malleable. When devices such as group singing were added, the emotional power of the gatherings were further increased. The leader often assumed the role of a mass hypnotist, as he acquired the power to move and to mold the crowd in a desired direction and manner.

The power of the meetings was so great that traditional roles and assumptions sometimes crumbled in their presence. Women often expressed themselves in a manner incongruous with the spirit of the times. Speaking at both the camp meeting and political rally, females failed to elicit any objections from the male members of the congregation. The meetings also possessed power enough to alarm those not enamored by the religious and political crusades. In an attempt to counteract the influence of the assemblages, opponents engaged in vocal and often violent means of opposition. Other evidence

of the power of the gatherings concerned their permanent influence upon religious and political institutions in America. Subsequent revivalists and political campaigners never forgot the lessons taught by the success of the early camp meeting and political rally.

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CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAMP MEETING AND THE POLITICAL RALLY

Long before the camp meeting became a familiar concept in the American mind, various peoples were participating in religious services which significantly resembled this later institution. Although the camp meeting flourished between the years of 1800 and 1850, the earliest example of such a gathering can be found in England in 1739. When the Anglican hierarchy forbade Methodist participation in the Church of England, John Wesley gathered his followers and led outdoor worship services. All classes of people attended these meetings which were characterized by extreme emotional expressions. The zealous Methodists were described by one contemporary as:

> . . . crying "Hurrah! with one breath, and with the next bellowing and bursting into tears on account of their sins; some poking each other's ribs, laughing and throwing stones and dirt, and almost pressing one another to death; others joyously shouting "Halleluiah," . . .[1]

Like their American counterparts of a century later, Wesley's meetings evoked vicious opposition. Local residents

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[1]Holland N. McTyeire, A History of Methodism (Nashville, 1885), 154.

threw stones at speakers, led animals through the congregation, and employed various other harassments which would serve to disrupt the spirit of the meetings.[2]

The services of Wesley and his followers were only one of many forerunners to the nineteenth century camp meeting. The two-day outdoor communion services of the Pennsylvania Germans also foreshadowed these later events. These great assemblies or Grosse Versammlungen were attended by thousands and marked by extensive emotional expressions.[3] The Separate Baptists of Revolutionary Virginia actually referred to their outdoor services as "camp meetings." This splinter group rejected the strict Calvinism of the Regular Baptists and pursued an "experimental" form of religion. Emotionalism ruled their meetings as members of the congregation would "cry out, fall down, and for a time, lose the use of their limbs. . . ."[4] The Separate Baptists, also, encountered violent opposition from their fellow citizens. Preachers were stoned, beaten, and unjustly jailed throughout the

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[2]Ibid., 154, 157.

[3]Emory Stevens Bucke (ed.), The History of American Methodism, I (New York, 1964), 508-09.

[4]John Leland, The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland, ed. Miss L. F. Green (New York, 1845), 105.

latter quarter of the eighteenth century.[5] Methodists of Virginia and North Carolina in the 1780's and 1790's held so-called camp meetings and, like many others, felt the pain of persecution.[6] Phillip Cox, in a letter to Methodist Bishop Thomas Coke, described a meeting in Sussex County, Virginia, attended by 5,000 to 10,000 people. Hundreds of men found salvation while scores of agonizing souls lay moaning on the ground. Cox was certain that nothing of this nature had occurred since the day of Pentecost.

> Here were many of the first quality in the country, wallowing in the dust with their silk and their broadcloths, powdered heads, rings, and ruffles, and some of them so convulsed that they could neither speak nor stir.[7]

While such meetings possess many traits characteristic of later camp meetings, there is a significant difference. An essential element in the definition of the camp meeting is that the congregation "camped out" at the meeting site. At the earlier assemblages provisions were made for the

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[5]Robert B. Semple, History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia (Richmond, 1810), 13, 294; W. T. Thom, The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Virginia: The Baptists, Johns Hopkins University Studies, Series XVIII (Baltimore, 1900), 17.

[6]W. M. Gewehr, The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790 (Durham, 1930), 169-170; Albert M. Shipp, The History of Methodism in South Carolina (Nashville, 1884), 271-72.

[7]Arminian Magazine (American), II, 1790, letter of Phillip Cox to Bishop Thomas Coke, Sussex County, Virginia, July, 1787, 91-92.

congregation to spend the nights in local homes. This practice limited the number of people attending the meetings to the number of available beds in the community. Around the end of the eighteenth century congregations began to camp where they held services, thus allowing unprecedented numbers to attend the gatherings. Equally important, the camp meeting at the turn of the century had found much wider recognition than was the case in previous years.

Many factors contributed to the maturation of the woodland gatherings. After an era of general religious unconcern, the country was ready for a period of spiritual stimulation. Beginning in the 1790's revival fires of the Second Great Awakening swept the nation, placing a new importance on religious matters. About the same time there emerged a new group of young evangelists who were seriously concerned with the salvation of souls and who began to work with a new spiritual zeal toward the goal of a Christianized America. Prominent among this group was a young Presbyterian minister, James McGready. Known as "Son of Thunder" to his parishioners in Orange County, North Carolina, McGready soon began to draw significant criticism in the rough Carolina backcountry. Much of the population of this area came to resent his "pious" interference in their lives. Unlike many other preachers, McGready was unwilling to let the

backwoodsmen enjoy their "sinful diversions" in peace. In 1797 he accepted an invitation to move to Logan County, Kentucky, where he was better accepted and much more successful in his efforts to stimulate religious enthusiasm.[8] By the summer of 1800 McGready's Gasper, Red, and Muddy River congregations were emotionally prepared to participate in a spiritual outburst which would affect American religious institutions for decades.[9]

On the third Sunday in June, 1800, McGready conducted services at his Red River congregation. News of the emotional outpouring characteristic of this meeting spread across the country like wildfire.[10] Impressed by the results of the Red River service, McGready issued invitations to another meeting scheduled for the fourth week of July at Gasper River.[11] For years church historians have disagreed about the date of the first modern camp meeting, but recent

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[8]John Opie, Jr., "James McGready: Theologian of Frontier Revivalism," Church History, XXXIV (December, 1965), 446; Catharine C. Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805 (Chicago, 1916), 37-39.

[9]James McGready, "A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County, State of Kentucky from May 1797 until September 1800," in the New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence, IV (1803), 151-52.

[10]Ibid., 154.

[11]Peter Cartwright, The Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, ed. W. P. Strickland (Freeport, New York, 1972), 36-37.

historiography has tended to designate this meeting at Gasper River as the original.[12]

The crowd flocked to the Gasper River meeting house in unprecedented numbers. Families traveled hundreds of miles in order to observe or participate in the curious occurrences about which they had heard.[13] Peter Cartwright, a famous Methodist itinerant minister and successful camp meeting leader, described the spectacle.

> The Church would not hold the tenth part of the congregation. Accordingly, the officers of the church erected a stand in a contiguous shady grove, and prepared seats for a large congregation.
>
> The people crowded to this meeting from far and near. They came in large wagons, with victuals mostly prepared. The women slept in wagons, and the men under them. Many stayed on the ground night and day for a number of nights and days together.[14]

Even McGready was surprised by the overwhelming success of this meeting. Scores of men, women, and children were "brought to Christ." Throughout the congregation former sinners lay on the ground screaming for redemption of their sins and shouting praises for their new-found religion. As McGready gazed over the camp ground he heard men crying out:

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[12]F. R. Cossitt, The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing (Louisville, Kentucky, 1853), 66; Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas, 1955), 34-36. Johnson must be considered the foremost historian of the camp meeting.

[13]James McGready, The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James McGready, ed. James Smith (Nashville, 1837), ix; B. W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Nashville, 1899), 13.

[14]Cartwright, Autobiography, 37.

> I have been a sober professor; I have been a communicant; O! I have been deceived, I have no religion--Oh! I see that religion is a sensible thing. . . . Believe what the ministers tell you--religion is a sensible thing. . . . I feel the pains of hell in my soul and body![15]

The phenomenal victories won for the cause of religion at Gasper River received the immediate attention of church leaders concerned with evangelical methods. The power of the camp meeting to attract large numbers and elicit unheard of spiritual passion was undisputed. Clergymen of the Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist churches began preparations to utilize this new tool in their respective circuits and districts. Before January of 1801 ten more camp meetings were held in western Kentucky, and all were remarkably successful.[16]

The people who traveled numerous miles to witness the camp meetings carried back home descriptions of their power. One group of young laymen were so excited by the Gasper River services that they held an all-night meeting the first day of their return to Sumner County, Tennessee.[17] The evangelical successes in Kentucky intensified religious

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[15]McGready, "A Short Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Logan County," in New York Missionary Magazine, 193.

[16]William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: 1783-1840, Vol. II, The Presbyterians: A Collection of Source Materials (New York, 1936), 86.

[17]Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 68.

concerns in East Tennessee.[18] Gideon Blackburn, a Presbyterian minister from Blount County, found that during the summer of 1800 the rekindled religious flame forced him to work harder than ever before to satisfy the spiritual needs of his parishioners.[19]

Religious awakening was not limited to Kentucky and Tennessee. Before the summer of 1800 had ended the woodland meeting had spread into North and South Carolina, western Virginia, western Pennsylvania, and the Old Northwest. In all of these areas the camp meetings deviated very little from the western Kentucky variety. This would seem to emphasize the impact which McGready and his meetings made on the American religious scene.[20]

With the summer of 1801 revival enthusiasm reached its highest point, and the camp meeting became a common religious institution. Emotion-laden assemblages were held from Pennsylvania to South Carolina, but one gathering in western Kentucky stands above all others in attendance and passionate

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[18] R. N. Price, Holston Methodism, I (Nashville, 1904), 337.

[19] Extract of a letter from the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, dated Blount County (Tennessee), Sept. 29, 1800, in New York Missionary Magazine, II (1801), 238-39.

[20] Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 67-68; T. C. Anderson, Life of Rev. George Donnell (Nashville, 1858), 92-96.

expression. The Cane Ridge meeting, which began on August 6th and ended on the 12th, was planned by Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian associate of McGready. Differing estimates have been made of the number in attendance at this great meeting, but no exact figure exists. It would be safe to conclude, however, that twelve to twenty-five thousand people were present during the six days the meeting continued. The assemblage was so large that many times during the week as many as seven different preachers were speaking at the same time to separate audiences.[21] As Reverend James B. Finley looked over the multitudes, he saw that

> Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting most vociferously. . . . At one time . . . at least five hundred [were] swept down in a moment, as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them. . . .[22]

The public would never think of camp meetings in the same manner after the Cane Ridge gathering. The mammoth attendance and large number of converts fueled the arguments of those favoring the spread of the camp meeting. Those who feared and opposed the work of the meetings also found ammunition for their position in the high incidence of moral

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[21]James B. Finley, Autobiography of Rev. James B. Finley, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati, 1855), 166; Cartwright, Autobiography, 31.

[22]Finley, Autobiography, 166-67.

irregularities. Many examples of sexual abuses and drunkenness were witnessed in the electrically charged atmosphere of Cane Ridge.[23]

The controversy over the camp meeting, fanned by the Cane Ridge meeting, soon led to drastic changes in the evolution of the institution. In 1803 the leaders of the Presbyterian Church expelled from their denomination five ministers who championed such meetings. Although they continued to participate in the Second Great Awakening, the Presbyterians, by this action, divorced themselves from the camp meeting and virtually turned the future of these gatherings over to the Methodists.[24]

While other religious groups made use of the institution, Methodists were definitely the leaders of the camp meeting movement. The Methodist doctrine had special appeal to the individualistic, egalitarian people on the frontier. As opposed to the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and election, it stressed the importance of the individual in attaining salvation. The "common man" of the frontier could understand a simplistic, action oriented, emotionally based religion far better than the more rational, intellectually complex Presbyterian theology. The growth of the Holston

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[23] Ibid., 364.

[24] Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 34-36.

Conference of the Methodist Church, which included East Tennessee, Southwestern Virginia, and small parts of western North Carolina, northern Georgia, and northwestern South Carolina, makes the point especially with reference to the camp meeting. From 1792 to 1800 church membership in the Holston Conference increased by a mere 228. With the introduction of the camp meeting into that area around 1801, Methodist churches experienced an increase of 2,058 members by 1808.[25] Other denominations in the area who made use of the forest encampments also found great prosperity, even among those Presbyterians who refused to abandon this technique. The Methodists maintained a commanding lead however.[26]

The leadership of the Methodist Church kept a close watch on the results of the camp meeting from its very beginning. Bishop Francis Asbury, in Maryland at the time, was aware of the positive aspects of the Cane Ridge meeting within two weeks of its occurrence. Recognizing the power of the institution at this early date he declared, "Oh what

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[25]Price, Holston Methodism, I, 364-65.

[26]J. W. M. Breazeale, Life As It Is; Or Matters and Things in General (Knoxville, 1842), 247-50; Letter of Rev. Gideon Blackburn to a friend in Philadelphia, Maryville, Tennessee, January 20, 1804, quoted in Price, Holston Methodism, I, 351-52.

days of God's power are coming. . . ."[27] Asbury's prediction soon proved to be correct. The Methodists soon demonstrated that the camp meeting could be used as a tool in areas other than the trans-Allegheny West. The encampments found success along the Atlantic coastal regions. Asbury described the work in the East during the summer of 1802:

> In [New] Jersey we have a powerful work, Maryland east and west. The Delaware yearly meeting [camp meetings] attended by 5, 6, or 7,000, for five days, and most of the nights, were marked with great honor and glory. I hope 4 or 500 souls were blest, either with awakening, converting, or sanctifying grace.[28]

The character of conservative New England did pose problems for the Methodist clergymen. While camp meetings were common in Maryland, New Jersey, and parts of New York, the northeasterners of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire were much more reluctant to participate in the emotional expressions of the gatherings.[29] The persistent Methodists simply redoubled their efforts, and by 1805 successful camp meetings were being held in various portions of New England.[30]

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[27]Asbury to Thomas Haskins, August 22, 1801, J. Manning Potts (ed.), The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, III (Nashville, 1958), 223.

[28]Asbury to Thorton Fleming, August 21, 1802, Ibid., III, 246. First brackets are editor's; the second are this writer's.

[29]Asbury to Daniel Hitt, August 22, 1804, Ibid., III, 299; Asbury to Stith Mead, June 27, 1803, Ibid., III, 262.

[30]Asbury to Daniel Hitt, July 28, 1805, Ibid., III, 325; Journal entry for December 12, 1805, Ibid., II, 488.

Thus in a very few years the camp meeting had spread across the entire American nation, eliciting a similar response in practically every area. With natural ups and downs in popularity, the gatherings would enjoy importance and vitality for three to four decades. Significantly, however, as the institution persisted it lost a dimension of spontaneity and developed a stagnate, unhealthy predictability. Virtually every aspect of the meeting came to be planned in advance, and leaders developed a catalogue of techniques for the elicitation of desired responses. The growing formalization was a major factor in the decline of the institution during the last sixty years of the nineteenth century.

Religious value aside, however, the meeting in its popular years supplied entertainment where there were very few diversions, provided a welcomed time for socialization with neighbors, and it served as a vehicle for emotional release from the hardships and drudgery of everyday existence. Besides these contributions the meeting provided those perceptive enough to recognize it with a valuable tool in the realm of human reactions and responses. By studying the techniques of the camp meeting one could acquire the skill to excite a crowd or stimulate enthusiasm for a certain cause. Obviously, religion was not the only sphere of human activity in which such techniques could be put to use.

The methods of the camp meeting leaders were custom-made for the emerging political arena in America. With the extension of the franchise in the 1820's and 1830's the common man achieved a new status in American politics. Like the religious leaders who stressed the importance and worth of the common man, politicians now began to court and flatter these neglected members of society. These changes in the nature of the political system resulted in campaigns characterized by rallies, village meetings, barbecues, parades, and demonstrations. While actual political power remained in a relatively few hands, the Jacksonian era did witness a degree of popular involvement in the political process previously unknown in America.[31]

For years prior to the election of Jackson politicians had made use of the camp meeting. Recognizing the impact of the emotional atmosphere on the mind's propensity to accept suggestion, they were always among the first to arrive at the meeting ground. For hours they would shuffle through the congregation, introducing themselves to prospective voters. Many of the leaders of the political rally had been clearly impressed by the camp meeting. Thurlow Weed, a leading framer of the Whig campaign strategy of 1840 in which the political rally played such a strategic role, was a

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[31]Robert V. Remini, The Election of Andrew Jackson (Philadelphia, 1963), 87-90.

fervent supporter of evangelical religion and camp meetings. As a child Weed was a great admirer of Lorenzo Dow, the well-known Methodist camp meeting leader. Whenever "Crazy Lorenzo," as he was known to many of his contemporaries, conducted meetings in the state of New York, the future Whig leader made an effort to attend. In Weed's later life he became an enthusiastic follower of Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey. Impressed by the "reality and power" of their evangelical preaching and singing, the New York politician became a regular fixture in their revival congregation. Another leader of the political rally with a camp meeting background was William G. "Parson" Brownlow. During a camp meeting held near Abingdon, Virginia, in 1825, the young Brownlow was converted, and eleven years later the by then Reverend Brownlow was married at a forest encampment near Elizabethton, Tennessee. A voice in Tennessee politics from the late 1830's until his death in 1877, the Parson's political behavior, like so many of his contemporary political friends and enemies, seems obviously influenced by his early camp meeting experience.[32]

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[32]Walter Brownlow Posey, The Development of Methodism in the Old Southwest (Tuscaloosa, 1933), 22; Thurlow Weed Barnes, Memoir of Thurlow Weed (Boston, 1884), 159-60; E. Merton Coulter, William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands (Chapel Hill, 1937), 4, 34.

In 1828 the camp meeting was still a flourishing institution. Political leaders throughout the nation were exposed to the methods used by the religious leaders in their attempt to spiritualize the American people. In 1828 the political rally, like its religious counterpart, could be found in most areas of the nation. Unlike the camp meeting which spread by steps from one region to another, the political mass meeting virtually sprang up overnight. In the campaign of 1828, however, these political gatherings did not exhibit as many of the controversial emotional excesses common to the early camp meeting or, later, to the Whig rallies of 1840. Therefore they did not elicit the same degree of resistance.[33] Even at this early stage, however, rallies did stimulate critical comment as the supporters of presidential candidate Andrew Jackson paraded through the streets of various cities, hoisting his image on hickory poles, singing songs about the General, waving their hickory sticks, and shouting praises of the Hero's name. A Jacksonian rally in Nashville in September of 1828 prompted heated attacks by friends of the Adams administration. They

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[33]William Nisbet Chambers, Old Bullion Benton: Senator for the New West (Boston, 1956), 149; Charles Francis Adams (ed.), Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, VIII (Philadelphia, 1876), entry for September 5, 1828, 76.

characterized the meeting as a drunken orgy where Jackson men openly worshiped images of the Hero in the manner of barbarians. Extremely troubled by such allegations, friends of Jackson published a great number of vehement denials.[34]

The Jacksonian campaign techniques of 1828 were, of course, successful. Capturing 56 percent of the popular vote and an electoral vote of 173 to 83, Jackson's was to be the largest presidential victory of the nineteenth century.[35] Lessons were to be learned--the masses could be mobilized. While they did not act immediately, a new breed of political leaders took careful notice of the Jacksonian victory and stored their observations for future reference.

The Jacksonian enthusiasm continued unabated for several years, but, like all such movements, the freshness and vitality eventually waned. The mystique of "Jackson the Hero" never completely faded, but the Democrats could not rely upon appeals to his image indefinitely. With the president's retirement in 1837 sectional and personal disputes within the party rose to the surface, and much of the previous solidarity was lost. Jackson's choice for successor, Martin Van Buren, faced a host of problems including a popular

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[34]M. C. Jenkins to William K. Ruffin, September 11, 1827, J. G. DeRoulhac Hamilton (ed.), The Papers of Thomas Ruffin, II (Raleigh, 1918), 103; Nashville Republican and State Gazette, September 23, 1828.

[35]Remini, The Election of Andrew Jackson, 187-88.

image out of step with the spirit of the times, a weary, entrenched, unenthusiastic Democratic party, and an economic situation which squeezed the pocketbooks of the electorate.

The public was overwhelmed by the Panic of 1837. Banks failed in all parts of the nation, and bankruptcy was common in the circles of the rich and well-to-do.[36] Unemployment plagued the poor, as factory after factory closed its doors. In New York City one-third of the work force was out of work, and ten thousand people survived the winter of 1837-1838 only by the grace of the city's charitable organizations. Those who retained their jobs fared little better, for wages drastically dropped during the depression.[37] By January of 1840 the plight of the poor had not improved in New York or anywhere else. The editors of Washington's Daily National Intelligencer addressed themselves to the winter's bleak conditions in the nation's capital:

> The poor of the city are in a deplorable condition. Our alms-house is overrun. The city hospitals are full. There is a great deal of sickness aboard [sic], caused by the want of proper food, and from suffering in cold and miserable tenements.

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[36]Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (eds.), The Diary of George Templeton Strong, I (New York, 1952), entry for February 21, 1840, 131.

[37]Norman Ware, The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860 (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1959), 26; H. M. Hyndman, Commercial Crises of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1892), 46; John R. Commons and others, History of Labour in the United States, I (New York, 1918), 457.

> Of business we have none. . . . Even the journeymen printers now find it impossible to obtain. Nearly all book publishing is given up. Masons, mechanics, and etc. suffer much. There has not been a time, probably, since the war when there was such stagnation of all employ: and this is one great cause of our numerous riots and abundant police reports.[38]

Given this dismal economic state, the Whig party became increasingly confident of its chances to capture the White House and proceeded to blame every American malady on the disastrous policies of the "Dandy" from Albany, "Martin Van Ruin." Although some of the enthusiasm generated by the political rally rubbed off on state and local Whig candidates, the presidential contest held the center of attention at the gatherings. Few, if any, examples exist of meetings called for the sole purpose of promoting only a local candidate. Without the unifying and inspirational symbol of William Henry Harrison, the old farmer-soldier of Tippecanoe, the meetings never could have attained such a high level of enthusiasm. Thus, armed with a knowledge of Jacksonian and evangelistic campaign techniques, the Whigs prepared for the unforgettable presidential campaign of 1840.[39]

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[38] Daily National Intelligencer, January 9, 1840.

[39] Glyndon G. Van Deusen, Thurlow Weed: Wizard of the Lobby (Boston, 1947), 94; Thurlow Weed Barnes, Memoir of Thurlow Weed (Boston, 1884), 50; Nevins and Thomas, Diary of Strong, I, entry for May 10, 1837, 65; Lynn Marshall, "The Strange Stillbirth of the Whig Party," American Historical Review, LXXII (January, 1967), 460, 463. Marshall argues that the Whigs were brought back to life by their adoption of Jacksonian techniques.

As early as 1837 the Whigs began to hold mass meetings for the purpose of promoting the presidential candidacy of various party members. Thus, Whig zealots in New York City held a "great mass meeting" on June 28, 1837, "to urge the nomination of Daniel Webster for president in 1840. . . ."[40] On October 19, 1839, the Whigs of Sumner County, Tennessee, met to denounce the policies of Martin Van Buren and to place themselves in support of the candidacy of Henry Clay.[41] These meetings were of little practical consequence, but they did indicate the intense political feelings of the general public and its receptiveness to the mass rally.

With their multitude of problems, the Democrats in 1840 were unable to muster enough enthusiasm to hold successful political rallies. When the Democratic assemblages are compared with Whig gatherings in terms of total attendance and audience response, the Van Burenites always trailed the zealous partisans of Old Tip. This essay, therefore, will concentrate upon the Whig assemblage, for it was this party, not the Democrats, who found success with and thus incorporated the political rally into the American political system.

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[40] Allan Nevins (ed.), The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851 (New York, 1936), 265-66.

[41] Nashville Whig, November 1, 1839.

On December 4, 1839, a Whig nominating convention met in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to find a candidate that could defeat Van Buren. The names of William Henry Harrison, Henry Clay, and General Winfield Scott were placed in nomination, and for several ballots no candidate received a majority. Consequently, the usual "closed doors" bargaining procedure began, and on December 7 the convention nominated William Henry Harrison, the "Hero of Tippecanoe." For vice-president the tired delegates agreed upon John Tyler, a prominent member of the Virginia aristocracy and a Democrat![42]

The nomination of Harrison produced a rash of hurt feelings. Henry Clay and many of his supporters were crushed, but after an initial passionate explosion the "Mill Boy" pleaded for Whig unification in the "good fight" to defeat "Vanism" and all the economic horrors associated with it. All across the nation supporters of the defeated candidates rallied to the cause of "Tippecanoe and Tyler." In Tennessee, where support for Henry Clay had been very strong, all of the Whig papers soon placed the names of Harrison and Tyler on their mastheads and enthusiastically joined in the campaign.[43]

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[42]Anthony Banning Norton, The Great Revolution of 1840: Reminiscences of the Log Cabin and Hard Cider Campaign (Mount Vernon, Ohio, 1888), 22-25; Nevins, Diary of Hone, entry for December 6, 1839, 438-39; Robert Gray Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign (Lexington, Kentucky, 1957), 231-33.

[43]Henry A. Wise, Seven Decades of the Union (Richmond, 1881), 171-72; Nathan Sargent, Public Men and Events, II (Philadelphia, 1875), 94-95.

Whigs across the country began to hold meetings similar to the one at Harrisburg. As spring came and the weather improved, the meetings increased in geometric proportions. Very few localities, large or small, were denied the spectacle of a "Tippecanoe and Tyler" rally. The form became relatively standardized, as reports of gatherings from New England to the South verify. Whig orators or so-called itinerant preachers traveled across the land haranguing enthusiastic audiences. In every locality newspaper editors were overwhelmed by attendance figures as well as the emotional expressions of Whig loyalty developed at these meetings.

Like their camp meeting predecessors the Whigs recognized that enthusiasm was contagious. Although both the first camp meetings and political rallies arose without detailed planning, the spread and institutionalization of such devices for use in the achievement of a grandiose goal required tremendous behind-the-scenes manipulation. In the case of the camp meeting the grand objective was universal salvation; with the political rally it was the control of the presidency and the political power which the office supplied. As will be noted, however, the rhetoric often sounded the same. Moreover, despite the obvious differences between the two movements, both groups agreed that the mass meeting was the shortest and most direct route to their respective destinations. The similarities in the appeals and techniques

used to generate enthusiasm by the leaders of the campaigns and in the nature of the actual meetings themselves are striking.

The average camp meeting was a more lengthy affair than the typical political rally. Most camp meetings lasted for at least four and sometimes as many as nine days. The political rally averaged from one to four days. The standard four-day camp meeting commenced at noon Friday and ended at noon Monday, with little, if any, time wasted in between. On the first day wagons and horses could be seen coming from all directions. Most people carried their own cooking utensils, food, and bedding, as they prodded slowly toward the campsite. In these hours preceding the formal opening of the meeting one could watch the members of the congregation set up their tents, usually in a circular pattern, which formed the outside wall of the campground. It was a time of much confusion and frivolity, as neighbors and old acquaintances caught up on neglected socializing.[44]

The opening day of the political rally was very similar. The rallies, many of which were held on actual religious campgrounds, attracted people from various counties and, more often than not, from numerous states. Like their

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[44]Joseph Thomas, The Life of Pilgrim, Joseph Thomas (Winchester, Virginia, 1817), 13; Nathan Bangs, A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York, 1839), 266.

friends at the camp meetings, those who recorded their observations of the political rally were impressed by the sight of the people in wagons and on horses approaching the meeting site from all directions. Many participants arrived early in order to witness the unique and unusual scene of hundreds of people and vehicles crowding the roads leading to the camp.[45]

Preaching would begin at the camp meeting around noon the first day and last all afternoon. There would be a break for supper, and then the evening services would begin. Such gatherings must have been especially impressive at night with candles and torches reflecting off of the trees producing an unearthly glow around the campground.[46] Julia A. Trevis described the scene at a gathering in Smyth County, Virginia, in September 1823:

> My first night at the encampment was full of beauty. At each of the four corners of the campground was left the stump of a large tree, four or five feet high, the tops of which were rendered fireproof by a layer of brick and mortar, and upon these blazed burning pine knots, lighting up all the surroundings with their tall flames. Among the dark green foliage glittered the flickering lights of numerous

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[45] The Whig (Jonesborough), September 23, October 7, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, October 27, 1840.

[46] D. Sullins, Recollections of an Old Man (Bristol, Tennessee, 1910), 35; James Flint, Letters from America in Reuben G. Thwaites (ed.), Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, Vol. IX (Cleveland, 1904), 261-62.

> lamps attached to trees; beautiful white vapors floated in the starlit sky, now resting an instant then glancing onward. . . .[47]

A loud horn would sound at the beginning of the first full day at the campground to remind everyone to get up and get ready for the day's events. When the horn blew a second time it usually meant that a prebreakfast prayer service was beginning. At the end of this solemn service the congregation would retire to their tents, and while preparing breakfast, would sing the verses of familiar hymns over and over.[48]

Around ten o'clock the first worship service of the day commenced. This ceremony would last until the preachers chose to break for lunch. A second worship service was held from three o'clock until the supper break. Then, like the first night, the emotionally stimulating nighttime or candle lighting service would begin. If the conditions were favorable this service could last all night, ending finally with the crack of dawn. "I have seen more than one man converted at day break . . . after an all night's wrestle

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[47]Mrs. Julia A. Trevis, "Sixty Years in a Schoolroom," as found in Thomas W. Preston, Historical Sketches of the Holston Valleys (Kingsport, Tennessee, 1926), 168.

[48]Sullins, Recollection, 35; C. C. Sellers, Lorenzo Dow: The Bearer of the Word (New York, 1928), 21; James Hall, Legends of the West (Philadelphia, 1832), 9-10.

with the angel," said an old East Tennessean recollecting his memories of camp meetings in the area.[49]

The typical political rally usually began with a procession or parade in which all of the Whig symbols were proudly displayed. A log cabin with its latch string open and a coon on its roof would often lead the procession followed by banners which proclaimed their esteem and support of "Tip and Ty." Hard cider flowed freely, as those in the procession passed it out to eager observers lined along the parade route. A similar marching exercise, occasionally enlivened by the presence of alcoholic beverages, was used by the camp meeting leaders, but it evoked great criticism from those who felt that its martial air was not appropriate for a religious service.[50] In order to make the rallies as impressive and exciting as possible, the Whigs recruited hundreds of people to march in these parades which often stretched for over two miles. When a rally was held at a site near a city or town, the Whigs would route their procession down the main street. Attracting as much attention as possible, the excited crusaders hoped that the politically

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[49]Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 266-68; Sullins, Recollections, 37.

[50]Leroy M. Lee, The Life and Times of the Reverend Jesse Lee (Louisville, Kentucky, 1848), 449.

apathetic would follow them on their hike to the meeting ground and, in the process, experience a roadside conversion to the "Whig religion" as did Saint Paul on the road to Damascus.[51]

As the Whigs proceeded, they would usually sing or march to the rhythm of the music supplied by a local band. Like the camp meeting the political rally made great use of music and hymns. Hundreds of songs were written by exuberant partisans of both movements to excite the crowds and to enhance the congregational solidarity of the meetings. Upon reaching the prearranged location of the rally, the Whigs would begin their meeting. Customarily, around noon a sympathetic local preacher would make his way to the speaker's stand and issue a "most fervent prayer" calling upon God for good health and victory for the Whigs. No time was wasted after this formality, as nonstop speaking and singing continued until the end of the "festival," a word often used by the Whigs in reference to their assemblages. Orator after impassioned orator would fan the emotions of the crowd. The "sermons" would extend from two to four long hours. When one

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[51]The Hiwassee Patriot (Athens, Tennessee), June 16, 1840; The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840; The Tennessee Whig (Elizabethton), March 12, 1840; The Tennessee Whig was moved by its editor, W. G. "Parson" Brownlow to Jonesborough where he merely called it The Whig.

speaker finished the congregation would open their Log Cabin Song-Books, the campaign hymnals, and sing Tippecanoe and Tyler songs until another one began. If the people were bored by the length of the discourses they did not display their disenchantment. Crowds were consistently described as interested, alert, and aware of every word spoken. The meeting would adjourn for supper and then reassemble for the candle lighting service. In a manner similar to the camp meeting the leaders of the political rally used the awe of a campground at night to stimulate audience response. A stranger traveling through such a gathering would experience great difficulty in distinguishing the nighttime political rally from a camp meeting.

The same traveler would have almost as much difficulty differentiating the two assemblages in broad daylight. Physical aspects of the meetings were strikingly similar. As previously mentioned, Whigs often staged their "festivals" at Methodist or Presbyterian campgrounds apparently copying the camp meeting arrangements. The wagons, horses and tents were situated around the camp or in a designated area behind the speaker's stand. Only by locating the Tippecanoe banners, the log cabins and other political paraphernalia could one decide if the prevailing spirit was political or religious.[52]

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[52]The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, August 19, 26, July 15, 22, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, October 27,

The second and third day of the political "camp meeting" were essentially the same as the first. The only difference being the absence of another procession. Campers would awaken to the sounds of the local band playing patriotic or specially written Tippecanoe music. The necessary chores of human existence were executed, and the speeches, singing and all other facets of the rally would again commence.

The feelings engendered at the camp meeting and political rally may seem artificial to the detached historical observer, but to those caught up in the spirit of the assemblages few previous experiences could compare in intensity and impact. The versatile William G. "Parson" Brownlow traveled from one Tennessee political rally to another in the summer of 1840. Familiar with both religious encampments and political gatherings, the "Parson" recognized the energy behind the Whig cause as he wrote the following:

> . . . How strong must be that feeling of enthusiasm which thus drew together from such remote points such a multitude of men and women--of all tempers, habits, pursuits--various in their local peculiarities, and diverse on their opinions on different matters--summoning each from his individual business,--some from the plough, others from the shop, the counting house, and at the sacrifice of personal convenience--how deep and strong, we say, must be that feeling which could thus bring together, and keep together so many ladies and gentlemen of different pursuits, and cause them when assembled together, to hail each other as

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July 8, 10, 23, 1840; Spirit of '76 (Nashville), June 10, 1840; Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 124.

> bretheren--to plight with hearty good will the hand of political fellowship, and to blend all thoughts and feelings in harmony on the great subject they met to confer upon. . . .[53]

Without a strong optimism in the strength of America and Americans to change their environment the camp meeting and political rally never could have attained such a great degree of popularity. Both found a firm base in the popular assumption that sufficient hard word and perseverance could stem the tide of debauchery and decay, whether it be political or moral. Another philosophical foundation beginning to take shape in the nation concerned the public's conception of the worth of the common man or the individual. Basing the appeal of their gatherings on these fundamental attitudes of society, the perceptive leaders of the religious and political meetings achieved sometimes startling results. Before these results could be achieved, however, a large group of people had to be assembled and the leaders' control over them established.

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[53] The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840.

CHAPTER II

THE CROWD AND THE APPEAL TO ITS HEART

The leaders of the camp meeting and political rally knew that their devices could generate tremendous enthusiasm for the "good causes." They also recognized, however, that small crowds at the assemblages would not be conducive to the formation of that atmosphere in which enthusiasm and enthusiastic responses were common. Success for the organizer of the mass meeting revolved first around his ability to bring out the crowds. As long as the congregations were large, other problems were small.

To insure that the crowds were sizable, both groups resorted to advertising. The camp meeting promoters placed notices of impending gatherings in various religious periodicals weeks before the events were scheduled. In some isolated cases, they purchased advertising space in secular newspapers. The Methodists, with their army of itinerant ministers, possessed a natural group of camp meeting publicity agents. As the ministers traveled from one area to another, they reminded parishioners of upcoming meetings and urged their attendance. Posters with information concerning time, location, and fines for disorderly persons were often tacked to trees standing along the roads in hopes of

attracting the attention of wayfaring sinners. With this publicity, thousands of people were made aware of gatherings long before they actually occurred.

Leaders of the Whig political rallies relied mainly upon newspapers for their promotion. The Whig press alone could not offer as much publicity as the organizers would have liked, so a group of special campaign newspapers were founded all over the nation to promote the Whig cause and advertise their rallies. Nashville's special Whig newspaper was called the Spirit of '76, and in other cities names such as the Hard Cider Press, the Harrisonian, Old Tip's Broom, and the Tippecanoe were used. "Parson" Brownlow, editor of Whig newspapers first at Elizabethton and then at Jonesborough, printed information concerning future Whig rallies in Tennessee and her surrounding states weeks before the day the festival was to begin. Like the camp meeting, the political rally was a widely heralded event.[1]

Publicity techniques apparently were successful, for both the religious and political meetings were well attended. The immense assemblage of twelve to twenty-five thousand at

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[1]Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 86-88; Gunderson, The Log Cabin Campaign, 156-57; The Whig (Jonesborough), May-September, 1840; Thomas B. Alexander, "The Presidential Campaign of 1840 in Tennessee," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, I (March, 1942), 30.

Cane Ridge was unusual, but attendance figures of other camp meetings were surprisingly large. The meetings in the period immediately following Cane Ridge were often estimated between three and twenty thousand people. In later years attendance figures like these were rare; congregations composed of one or two thousand people were more common.[2] During the presidential campaign of 1840, people gathered together for rallies in numbers never before envisioned in America. On May 29, people assembled at the Tippecanoe Battleground in Lafayette, Indiana, for a Whig mass meeting. All of the common Whig symbols were present, and the crowd of 20,000 to 30,000 cried, sang, and shouted praises of Harrison and Tyler.[3] Abraham Lincoln addressed 15,000 people at a Whig convention held on June 2 in Springfield, Illinois.[4] On June 11 at Fort Meigs, near Perrysburg, Ohio, at least 25,000 Whigs listened to General Harrison as he made an unprecedented campaign appearance.[5]

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[2]Finley, Autobiography, 166; Cartwright, Autobiography, 31.

[3]George W. Julian, Political Recollections, 1840 to 1872 (Chicago, 1884), 16; Daily National Intelligencer, June 11, 1840.

[4]Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years, I (New York, 1929), 246.

[5]Daily National Intelligencer, June 23, 1840.

Parson Brownlow felt that words could not describe the spectacle presented by 35,000 to 40,000 Whigs at an assemblage in Nashville on August 16. Conventions held in East Tennessee attracted great numbers of people from all over the area to witness the unique events. Estimates of eyewitnesses agreed that 5,000 or 6,000 excited Whigs attended rallies held at Cumberland Gap and at Jonesborough.[6] Undoubtedly, the largest Whig rally of the campaign was staged at Dayton, Ohio. At this "Miami Valley Convention," the crowd was estimated by various sources at 100,000. These mammoth rallies were only a few of the hundreds held by Whigs in various portions of the country.[7]

The leaders of the camp meeting and political rally displayed great psychological intuition in their understanding of the importance of large crowds. Many decades would pass before the emerging disciplines of sociology and psychology would attempt to explain the "crowd" phenomenon. When this occurred, analysis would be little more than a categorization of the fundamental knowledge that the leaders of the meetings possessed early in the nineteenth century.

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[6] The Whig (Jonesborough), August 25, September 23, October 7, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, September 4, 1840; Nashville Whig, August 17, 1840.

[7] Daily National Intelligencer, September 18, 21, 1840.

The responses that a "crowd atmosphere" can produce are profound, and, in no other circumstances will human behavior take on the same characteristics. A normal individual often can be overwhelmed by mere numbers and, in the process, lose his rational overview of a given situation. In a partisan meeting of any kind, there is a tendency for the individual to repress his own feelings on various issues and to merge with the prevailing sentiment of the crowd regardless of how irrational the multitude's position may be.

The basic appeal to which a crowd best responds is an emotional one. A systematic and intellectually complex presentation has much less effect. The crowd is linked together not by reason but by emotion; and the successful manipulator will seek to generate that emotion, avoiding the controversial, working with familiar images loved and revered by those present. Thus, at camp meetings, religious leaders avoided theological debate stressing rather the salvation of the righteous, wrapping this promise in familiar phrases such as "the Holy Word," "the good book," "the love of God," or "eternal damnation." Leaders of the political gatherings also neglected rationality, preferring to dwell on such symbols as "liberty," "equality," "democracy," "the flag," or "patriotism." The use of these words and expressions served to unite the crowd while exempting its members from the duty of thinking for themselves. When a group of people

think for themselves, they cannot be described as a crowd, for a crowd by definition reacts not individually but collectively.[8]

An effective crowd leader can be described as a sort of hypnotist, taking the spirit of the crowd and molding it to his will. He makes use of the crowd's close physical proximity and does not expect the desired emotional response immediately. The crowd atmosphere takes time to develop, and the longer a group remains together, the more intense its emotional response.[9] Leaders of camp meetings and political rallies well understood these principles.

Thus the camp meeting preacher made use of all possible tools to produce excited and passionate congregations. Mere mention of the hereafter or God's eternal punishment served to arouse the interest of the assemblage. Unique and vivid descriptions of the nature of this future punishment often stirred an audience to an emotional frenzy. An individual, extremely frightened by visual images of the terrible suffering of hell-fire, was a promising candidate for conversion. Since the purpose of the camp meeting was to convert as many

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[8]W. J. H. Sprott, Social Psychology (London, 1952), 57-69; Gustave Le Bon, The Crowd (Dunwoody, Georgia, 1968), 95-97; Frederick M. Davenport, Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals (New York, 1905), 25-27.

[9]Edward A. Ross, Social Psychology (New York, 1920), 49.

sinners as possible, the frightening descriptions of hell became a refined art among the evangelists. If a camp meeting leader could scare the sinner, conversion was just around the corner.

Various ministers achieved some notoriety with their descriptions of hell and its suffering. William S. Manson, a camp meeting leader in East Tennessee, was known throughout the region for his expertise in this area. One writer, recalling his memories of several Methodist preachers, described Manson in the following manner:

> His great forte . . . was the camp-meeting, where he was generally put forward in a crisis to preach or exhort. Upon such occasions he would dwell largely upon the terrors of the law, and what with his fierce denunciations of sin and delineations of its God-provoking and soul-destroying character, the awful picture he gave of its fearful retributions, in his strong, clear voice, and with his animated manner, the effect upon his vast audiences was startling. I recollect one occasion at a camp meeting, when, at the conclusion of such an exhortation at night, the mass of people actually seemed affrightened, and rushed to the altar, as for safety, until it was filled, and then they crowded around in great numbers, screaming and pleading for mercy.[10]

With his flamboyant style and shoulder length hair, Lorenzo Dow presented a striking image to his camp meeting audiences, which readily responded to his convincing

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[10]W. Garrett, "Recollections of Methodism in East Tennessee" quoted in John B. M'Ferrin, History of Methodism in Tennessee, II (Nashville, 1869-1873), 507.

descriptions of the life after death.[11] The following is an excerpt from one of his many sermons concerning the subject:

> Death! What is it? Dying, simply considered, is but the changing of states! To leave the prison and prison-yard; the body, the house of clay, which confines man to the Terraqueous ball through the power of gravitation. The laws of nature being reversed, what scenes present to viewl Man, who was an inhabitant of time; is now disembodied and becomes an inhabitant of eternity! . . .
>
> How dreadful and terrific to a guilty mind!-- What awful honors must seize the condemned soul, who hath sinned against a righteous God! . . .
>
> Death is called the King of terrors, and is justly said to be a terror to Kings. But why? The sting of death is personal sin! And the strength of sin is the Law. For sin is the Transgression of the Law, which is the revealed will of God; and hence the soul comes under the divine displeasure; and the person is afraid to appear before a Righteous Judge; being conscious of self-condemnation.[12]

Many times the camp meeting leaders discovered there was no need to generate fear within their congregations. Other occurrences had prepared the people for emotional expressions. The New Madrid earthquakes and a comet of great brilliancy in 1811 and 1812 spread anxiety throughout the society which, in turn, proved a boon to camp meetings and organized religion in general. Preachers observed a new interest in spiritual matters, and camp meeting leaders found

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[11] Lorenzo Dow, History of the Cosmopolite (Pittsburg, 1849), 3, 120.

[12] Sellers, Dow, 131-32.

conversions much easier to obtain.[13] Immediately following one earthquake, Bishop Asbury reported that "our western conferences gave an account of about 12,000 increase."[14]

To emphasize the importance of emotionalism at the meetings, a special section of the campground was set aside for individual caught in the agony of conversion. The mourner's bench was located in front of the pulpit and was usually the center of activity and attention at any given camp meeting. The agonized souls were separated from the unsaved who might counteract the influence of the preacher. It was also believed that keeping the mourners together would help to intensify the crowd psychology, hopefully resulting in mass conversions.[15] James Flint described the action around a mourner's bench at one Methodist camp meeting:

> I gazed on a preacher vociferating from a high rostrum, raised between two trees, and an agitated crowd immediately before him, that were making a loud noise, and the most singular gesticulations

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[13]Walter Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission (Lexington, Kentucky, 1966), 35-36; Dow, History of the Cosmopolite, 224-25; Finley, Autobiography, 269; Cartwright, Autobiography, 180-82.

[14]Asbury to Zachary Myles, December 3, 1812, in Journal of Asbury, III, 467.

[15]Cartwright, Autobiography, 233; Francis Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (New York, 1949), 171.

> which can be imagined. On advancing a few paces, I discovered that the turmoil was chiefly confined within a small inclosure of about thirty feet square, in front of the orator, and that the ground occupied by the congregation was laid with felled trees for seats. . . . The inclosure . . . was for the reception of those who undergo religious awakenings, and was filled by both sexes, who were exercising violently. Shouting, screaming, clapping of hands, leaping, jerking, falling, and swooning. The preacher could not be distinctly heard, great as his exertions were; certainly had it not been for his elevated position, his voice would have been entirely blended with the clamors below.[16]

All camp meeting leaders recognized the evangelical value of the mourner's bench. The preachers were upset by references to the "hog pen," as the special section was labeled by many contemporaries.[17] There were also other upsetting matters. Because of the peculiar and unique occurrences associated with the mourner's bench, it naturally became an area of great interest. "Idle professors and idle spectators," as Peter Cartwright referred to them, often crowded into the area motived by mere curiosity toward events there. When this occurred, the minister's effectiveness was destroyed, and scores of probable converts were lost. On one occasion Cartwright decided that he would no longer allow such disruptions to take place and initiated measures to preserve the value of the bench. The sly preacher allowed only those who asked his permission the right to enter the area, and forbade

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[16]Flint, Letters, 258.

[17]Trollope, Domestic Manners, 171.

any standing in the aisles leading to the section. With various members of the congregation on hand to enforce the new regulations, Cartwright persuaded more than one hundred sinners to seek entrance into the holy zone. Claiming total success for his unusual methods, Cartwright maintained that the meeting was one of the most productive ever held in its region.[18]

Preachers often made use of the lay exhorters in their campaign to bring lost souls to God and emotive level to a peak. While the preacher was concerned with other duties, previously appointed lay exhorters, usually joined by self-proclaimed ones, would harass sinners throughout the camp-ground. Exhortations usually consisted of wildly emotional warnings of eternal damnation and fervent appeals to surrender one's will to the saving grace of the Lord. Asbury saw great value in the use of exhortation and urged that it be employed more frequently as a substitute for preaching. In reality, the Bishop's appeal was unneeded. When the camp meeting congregation became emotionalized and the "spirit had descended" upon them, preachers always had abandoned their traditional sermons and resorted to exhortation. Indeed any orator would find it difficult to continue in a normal manner with perhaps one hundred or more individuals

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[18]Cartwright, Autobiography, 233-34.

shouting and screaming emotionally in the mourner's section directly in front of him.[19]

The leaders of the Whigs and their political rallies made little effort to conceal the fact that the appeal of their campaign was also to the heart. Their placement of Harrison and Tyler on the same ticket evidenced their indifference to the issues, for on almost every contemporary topic the two men disagreed. One man summed up the situation with a simple statement, "Tip is Whig, Ty is Democrat."[20] In 1836 the Whigs unsuccessfully ran four sectional candidates against Van Buren. Harrison soon emerged as the most unobjectionable of these Whig presidential prospects--a characteristic which enhanced his chances for nomination at the Whig convention in 1839.[21] Even before the election of 1836 Whig strategists were recommending that their nominee say as little as possible. Nicholas Biddle, an influential Whig, reflected this viewpoint in the following letter:

> If Genl. Harrison is taken up as a candidate, it will be on account of the past, not the future. Let him then rely entirely on the past. Let him say not one single word about his principles, or his creed--let him say nothing--promise nothing.

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[19]Sullins, Recollections, 35-36; Asbury to Daniel Hitt, July 28, 1805, in Journal of Asbury, III, 327.

[20]Oliver Perry Chitwood, John Tyler: Champion of the Old South (New York, 1964), 194.

[21]Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America: Society, Personality and Politics (Homewood, Illinois, 1969), 176-77.

> Let no committee, no convention--no town meeting ever extract from him a single word, about what he thinks now, or what he will do here after. Let the use of pen and ink be wholly forbidden as if he were a mad poet in Bedlam. Genl. Harrison can speak well and write well--but on this occasion he should neither speak nor write--but be silent--absolutely and inflexibly silent. . . .[22]

Indeed Harrison and all the other Whig campaigners judged the content and delivery of their speeches by the same criteria used by the camp meeting preachers. Would the speech, the political and religious leaders asked, appeal to the emotional nature of its audience? An excellent example of such solicitation at the political rally is a speech by Daniel Webster at a mass meeting in Saratoga, New York. Speaking of the log cabins and the common man, Webster brought the assemblage to an emotional peak with the following passage:

> Gentlemen, it is only shallow-minded pretenders who either make distinguished origin matter of personal reproach. Taunt and scoffing at the humble condition of early life affect, in this country, but those who are foolish enough to indulge in them, and they are generally sufficiently punished by public rebuke. A man who is not ashamed of himself need not be ashamed of his early condition.
>
> Gentlemen, it did not happen to me to be born in a log cabin; but my elder brothers and sisters were born in a log cabin, raised amid the snow-drifts of New Hampshire . . . Its remains still exist. I make to it an annual visit. I carry my children to it, to teach them the hardships endured by the generations which have gone before them. I love to dwell on the

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[22]Biddle to Herman Cope, August 11, 1835, Reginald C. McGrane (ed.), The Correspondence of Nicholas Biddle (Boston, 1919), 256.

> tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affections, and the touching narratives and incidents, which mingle with all I know of this primitive family abode. I weep to think that none of those who inhabited it are now among the living; and if ever I am ashamed of it, or if I ever fail in affectionate veneration for him who reared it, and defended it against savage violence and destruction, cherished all the domestic virtues beneath its roof, and, through the fire and blood of a seven years' revolutionary war, shrunk from no danger, to toil, no sacrifice, to serve his country, and to raise his children to a condition better than his own, may my name and the name of my posterity be blotted forever from the memory of mankind![23]

Tears, shouts, long embraces, hurrahs, and other more passionate expressions could be found among the assembled multitudes at the religious and political meetings. A Peter Cartwright or a Daniel Webster could send a quiet hush over the crowd with a sudden change of temperament or bring both the men and the women in an audience to tears with a melancholy phrase. Generally, the camp meeting witnessed more extreme emotional expressions than the political rally. Such a finding is not, of course, surprising. Much more surprising is the extent to which the expressions and prevailing spirit of the two meetings were similar.

Like the camp meeting leaders who frightened their audiences with vivid descriptions of hell, Whig speakers often painted pictures of a political hell. In the political adaptation America took the place of the individual in the

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[23]Daniel Webster, The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster, III (Boston, 1903), 29-30.

heaven and hell motif. If salvation, obtainable only through the Whig "gospel," was not accepted, Van Buren and his forces of darkness would wreck the great nation. "You can and you must" deliver the nation from the demonic Democrats, pleaded the ladies of Leesburg, Virginia, to their sons and husbands. Calling himself a political missionary, Mississippi Whig orator Seargent S. Prentiss wished that he could fight against the evil of the Van Buren administration in the same manner the Apostle Peter battled "in behalf of the temple of our holy religion."[24]

Writing in his Jonesborough Whig, Parson Brownlow recognized the comparison between a Democratic victory and his church's conception of hell. He urged every Whig to work for the cause, as if he were a dedicated preacher who "sees and knows" that his flock is "in danger of everlasting burnings." Reflecting the idea behind a popular poster which read "do or die," many Whigs felt that the hell presented by a Democratic victory must be averted at all cost. Prominent Whigs throughout the country threatened armed violence if Harrison was defeated. A Judge in Nashville announced that he was for the "ballot box, or the cartridge box." William C. Preston, senator from South Carolina, threatened "to use all the weapons which God and nature" put in his hands, if the Whigs were not victorious. Representative William J.

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[24]The Whig (Jonesborough), September 30, 23, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, October 27, August 17, 1840; Dallas C. Dickey, Seargent S. Prentiss: Whig Orator of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1946), 181, 185.

Graves of Kentucky promised to lead a march to Washington to depose a re-elected Van Buren. Only by a Tippecanoe victory could the nation be saved from a holocaust. Whig leadership, it was claimed, would bring a new vitality to the depressed American nation.[25] To what else but heaven did the Whig refer when they sang about a Harrisonian victory in the following song:

> In peace we all shall then be blest,
> Sons and sires will be at rest,
> Our country be no more oppress'd
> No more will be deceived.[26]

In the camp meeting congregations emotionalism often reached such intensity that even the preachers were alarmed. The physical manifestations of this emotionalism were called "the exercises." Various exercises existed including jerking, dancing, falling, wheeling, impression, running, laughing, barking, marrying, and others. Often as the members of the congregation participated in one or more of these exercises they would be heard speaking in tongues.[27]

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[25] The Whig (Jonesborough), July 22, 1840; The Tennessee Whig (Elizabethton), March 12, 1840; Argus and Commercial Herald (Knoxville), October 7, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, May 28, September 23, 1840.

[26] Thomas A. Knight, Tippecanoe: Being the Story of Tippecanoe and Tyler Too! (Cleveland, 1940), 32.

[27] Ficker, Friendly Adviser For All Who Would Emigrate to America and Particularly to Wisconsin, trans. Joseph Schafer (Leipzig, 1853) as found in Wisconsin Magazine of History, XXV (June, 1942), 463. The most common exercises were jerking and falling, which were of such a severe nature that the victim often was injured, sometimes fatally. The jerks would attack various members of the congregation without

The conversion or re-conversion experience which produced the exercises was usually traumatic and achieved only with abnormal stress and tension. It has been described

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any forewarning causing scores of people to be rendered helpless by these violent muscle spasms. Peter Cartwright had seen more than 500 persons jerking at one time in his congregations. Those afflicted, Cartwright noted, would often engage in the dancing or the running exercise in order to obtain relief from the jerks. When caught in the running exercise an individual would run in a straight line totally oblivious to the obstacles which lay in his path. At one meeting in western Pennsylvania over fifty noses were broken and more than 100 were bleeding when trees got in the way of victims of the running exercise.

Many camp meeting leaders claimed that the falling exercise occurred more frequently than the jerks. When a person "came under" the falling exercise, he entered into a semiconscious state usually falling from his seat onto the ground. Sometimes the victim would lay motionless for only a few minutes, but on other occasions he could remain in this state for several days.

The laughing exercise usually affected newly converted members of the congregation, causing them to laugh so loudly that they could be heard far from the campground. Wheeling was a variation of the dancing exercise. Wheelers would spin around and around, sometimes rolling in the dirt and turning handsprings. The barking exercise usually was associated with the jerks. As a person jerked, he would make a sound closely resembling the bark of a dog. Sometimes, however, members of the congregation actually took on the characteristics of a dog, running through the campground on all fours barking at various individuals. When converts were afflicted with the impression exercise, they felt as if the Lord had instructed them to take a certain action. The marrying exercise was a special form of impression, as members of the camp meeting congregation, many times old maids, would announce that the Lord had directed them to marry a certain person. The individual selected for marriage usually complied in deference to the fear that a refusal would condemn him to eternal damnation. Flint, Letters, 258; Cartwright, Autobiography, 48; Breazeale, Life As It Is, 249-50; Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, 99-100; Herbert Asbury, A Methodist Saint: The Life of Bishop Asbury (New York, 1927), 256; G. G. Johnson, "The Camp Meeting in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," North Carolina Historical Review, X (April, 1933), 101-06; Finley, Autobiography, 167; Price, Holston Methodism, I, 386-87.

as a crisis in which the existing sinful life and the desired pious, God-loving one were "pressed together in intense opposition, and were struggling for possession of consciousness."[28] The conflict produced in the mind of the individual was so great that he looked for a quick and easy resolution. In the camp meeting atmosphere he fell under the influence of suggestive examples, resolving the painful conflict by a physical expression which could take form as one of the exercises.[29]

While the leaders of the political rally could not stimulate actions comparable to the exercises, they did elicit powerful responses from their political crowds. The combined effects of the processions, symbolism, the speeches, and the underlying discontent with Van Buren and his hard times prompted emotional expressions previously unimagined at political affairs. At the great meeting on the Tippecanoe Battleground in Lafayette, Indiana, an observer stated that he had "never seen men so profoundly excited as they were at this meeting. . . ." A traveling preacher in the Old Northwest was heard to declare that "in his life he has never witnessed such excitement, such sweeping gusts of public

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[28]Edward Scribner Ames, The Psychology of Religious Experience (Boston, 1910), 261.

[29]Ibid.

feeling" as evidenced in the Whig campaign. He went on to say that he thought "the people are actually going crazy about Harrison and Tyler." Speaking of the great Nashville rally in August of 1840, Parson Brownlow maintained that "it is not in the power of man to describe the deep enthusiasm of looks and words which filled the vast assembly. . . ."[30]

Often at the political meetings individuals, finding themselves overcome by the emotional features of the gatherings, would burst into tears. The scene was much like that of a camp meeting, with mature men and women openly crying and embracing one another.[31] When Henry Clay rose to address the great convention at Nashville, the crowd became emotionally overwhelmed. James Phelan described the scene in the following manner:

> When he arose, the audience, as if electrified, arose with him. The applause rose and swelled like the roar of the waters at Niagara. Hats were strown into the air. Men acted as if possessed, some of them embracing each other as in the transports of rapture, others with tears in their eyes choking with emotion. In those days the fever of political frenzy had spread even to the women and many were present. They were as ungovernable in their emotions as the sterner sex, and several fainted, overcome by an excess of zeal and enthusiasm.[32]

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[30] Daily National Intelligencer, June 11, July 6, 1840; The Whig (Jonesborough), September 2, 1840.

[31] Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (Boston, 1898), 197; Daily National Intelligencer, June 11, 1840.

[32] James Phelan, History of Tennessee (Boston, 1889), 391.

The comparison between the camp meeting and the political rally was obvious enough for some contemporary observers to recognize it. A reporter from the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser was struck with the comparison as he wrote the following article concerning the meeting at Fort Meigs:

> . . . by 9 o'clock there could not have been less than 20,000 on the ground. These were divided into groups of from 1,000 to 5,000 men, listening to and cheering some favorite speaker, or singing Tippecanoe songs. It is surprising, the spirit with which their hymns are sung. All know the words and the tunes, and when one hears them chanted as by a common impulse by many thousands of farmers, mechanics, and hard working artisans of every description, he will be pretty thoroughly convinced that a spirit is abroad that cannot be stayed or put down.
>
> On the brown of the bank, and on the edge of the neighboring forest, were ranged the white tents of the military and citizens.--The heavens were without a cloud, the moon was up, and under the softened and mellow radiance of its blessed light the river, the valley, and the whole scene seemed reposing in quiet beauty, forming a strange contrast to the sights and sounds which met the eye and ear on every side. Let our readers suppose some ten or twenty of the largest camp meetings they ever attended, all thrown into one, with all the accompanying exhortations and singing, these heightened in effect by the music of innumerable bands and they will be able to form a better idea of the aspect of Fort Meigs, the night of the 10th, than we could give by the most labored description. Indeed, the feeling which seemed to pervade each one of the mighty host therein assembled was akin to, and apparently was not less fervent or sincere than the most exaulted religious sentiments in a period of great excitement.[33]

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[33]Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, n.d. as quoted in The Whig (Jonesborough), July 8, 1840.

The Whigs were so impressed by the revivalistic aura of their campaign that they employed evangelical jargon in describing certain aspects of it. Speakers were referred to as itinerant preachers; campaigning was often labeled missionary work; Democrats were heathens; rallies were sometimes called camp meetings. Victory at the polls was termed deliverance or salvation; speeches were called sermons; and the log cabin, Harrisonites claimed, served as a symbol for Whiggery as the Cross did for Christianity.[34] Similarities between the camp meeting and political rally did not end with mere rhetoric, however, for the two groups employed identical crowd control techniques, achieving very similar results in the process. Successful methods of crowd manipulation were not limited to only those discussed in this chapter. Other procedures designed to warm the hearts of the multitude were used by both the religious and political leaders with equally fascinating degrees of success. The use of music is a case in point.

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[34]Dickey, Prentiss, 185-86; Alexander, "The Presidential Campaign of 1840 in Tennessee," THQ, 26.

CHAPTER III

THE MUSIC

Of the various methods used by the religious and political leaders to stimulate the emotions of their audiences, none was more effective than group singing. In both the camp meeting and political rally music played a major role and directly contributed to the degree of success which the gatherings achieved. For years singing had been neglected at religious gatherings, as religious leaders failed to recognize the power of music upon the unity and spirit of a crowd. Once introduced into the camp meeting, however, music would occupy a new and elevated position at all religious and eventually political assemblages. Learning from the past, Dwight Moody would have his Ira D. Sankey; Billy Graham, his George Beverly Shea; and the Whigs in 1840, their Joseph Hoxie.[1]

In colonial America many churchmen considered singing an unessential portion of the worship service. When singing was used, the melodies and rhythms originally intended for a song were disregarded. This resulted in utter chaos, as

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[1]Robert Stevenson, Patterns of Protestant Church Music (Durham, 1953), 151; Gunderson, The Log Cabin Campaign, 8, 124.

100 people sang a particular song in 100 different ways, John Adams described the sound produced as "the braying of asses."[2] During the early eighteenth century young church leaders made attempts to upgrade the quality of congregational singing. These efforts sparked great debates and splits within the churches, as one side supported "regular singing" and the other side advocated "new singing." "New singing" involved singing in unison making use of prearranged melodies and rhythms. By the middle of the eighteenth century the "new singing" had won the battle, and by the conclusion of the Revolution most churches had abandoned the old method.[3]

With the emotional expressions engendered by the preaching of the First Great Awakening in the middle of the eighteenth century, singing began to take on a different purpose at religious gatherings. The song began to be viewed as an emotional stimulant employed to augment the effects of the preaching. Various evangelical movements, like the Separate Baptists of Virginia in the latter eighteenth century, made use of singing in their emotional services.[4] After the spiritual explosions in western

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[2]George Pullen Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals (New York, 1943), 17.

[3]Robert Stevenson, Protestant Church Music in America (New York, 1966), 21, 24; Ola Elizabeth Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill, 1630-1783 (New York, 1972), 150-70.

[4]Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals, 32-33; Thom, The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Virginia, 17.

Kentucky in 1800, which resulted in the rise of the camp meeting, the use of music was entrenched in American religion. Early observers of the Kentucky revival concluded that group singing was largely responsible for the great emotional outpouring. Although this viewpoint was an obvious oversimplification, the application of the power of music did enhance the work of the camp meeting leaders.[5] More importantly, however, group singing was now viewed by evangelical leaders as an indispensable tool in the production of an emotional atmosphere at religious services.

The extreme emotionalism of the early camp meetings required a new type of song to fit the occasion. The singing of psalms, which had been used in religious services for years, was too tame and inexpressive for the passionate congregations. Many of the songs used in the new camp meetings were written spontaneously by an inspired preacher. In the middle of his sermon the evangelist would begin to sing verses from the Bible or common phrases of evangelical rhetoric to the multitude one line at a time. Slightly changing the verses for simplicity and enhancement of the poetic value, members of the congregation would repeat the

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[5]Robert Davidson, History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky as quoted in Louis F. Benson, The English Hymn (Richmond, 1962), 292.

verses back to the minister. Soon the lines were memorized by all present, and a new song was born.

At first, all of the songs used at the camp meeting were sung from memory, and, consequently, many were lost to history. As the camp meeting evolved, however, many of the songs were written down, facilitating their standardization and dispersion throughout the country. Around 1805 many small songsters or songbooks specially designed for use at the camp meeting began to appear, thus insuring the institutionalization of the emotionally based camp meeting spiritual. These books were used for decades at meetings, and many of the songs found in them are still sung by religious organizations in the present era.[6]

As the camp meeting became more regulated and less spontaneous, leaders strove to improve the quality of singing while insuring its continued use as an evangelical tool. Methodist leaders placed great emphasis upon singing. The Discipline of the Methodist Church directed preachers to "exhort every person in the congregation to sing; not one in ten only." Nathan Bangs, one of the earliest historians of Methodism, declared that the music "served to excite the feelings of devotion, and keep alive that spirit of excitement which characterized" the camp meeting. Bishop Asbury, who

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[6]Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals; 82-83; Benson, The English Hymn, 292-93.

always recognized the value of music in a worship service, worked throughout his life to provide songbooks for Methodists all over the world.[7] The Methodists, however, were not the only denomination to use group singing in their camp meetings. Leaders of the Baptist Church in North Carolina declared that "nothing seemed to engage the attention of the people more" than music. The preachers realized that congregations could be prepared for evangelical preaching with just a little singing. In order to insure a large number of conversions, spirituals were sung before the preacher issued his invitation for sinners to come to the mourner's bench.[8]

By 1840 the leaders of the political rally had been exposed to group singing and its effects at the thousands of camp meetings for several decades. Undoubtedly, they were influenced by this lesson in crowd psychology and subsequently applied their knowledge when they began to plan the Whig festivities of that year. Throughout the entire campaign leaders urged the people to sing, and at every rally observers were impressed by the quality and emotional impact

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[7]Joseph J. Tigert (ed.), The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (Nashville, 1894), 100; Asbury's Preface to the Pocket Hymn Book quoted in Journal of Asbury, III, 398; Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 105.

[8]Joseph Biggs, A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association (Tarborough, North Carolina, 1834), 114-15.

of the music. "After a song or two," said Horace Greeley, the people "are more ready to listen to the orators."[9] On another occasion in a letter to fellow Whig, Thurlow Weed, Greeley declared, "our songs are doing more good than anything else."[10] Obviously, singing was used for the same purpose in the religious and political meetings. The sound of hundreds of people singing familiar songs excited everyone present and apparently opened the people's minds for the preacher or the orator to fill with their respective religious and political "emotionalisms." Philip Hone's assertion that "Gen. Harrison was sung into the Presidency" was not without substance.[11]

Music played a major role in the creation of the previously discussed "crowd unity." The simple act of singing together gave the audiences that feeling of solidarity required by all "crowds." When all the people at a meeting were singing, each individual felt that he was making a contribution and thus considered himself an important part

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[9]Thomas Hart Benton, Thirty Years View, II (New York, 1856), 205; Ben:Perley Poore, Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis, I (Philadelphia, 1886), 232; Henry Luther Stoddard, Horace Greeley: Printer, Editor, Crusader (New York, 1946), 54.

[10]Don C. Seitz, Horace Greeley: Founder of the New York Tribune (Indianapolis, 1926), 81.

[11]Nevins, Diary of Hone, entry for March 21, 1843, 652.

of the group. The nature of the music also contributed to the formation of an emotional atmosphere. Musical rhythmns bound swaying bodies together producing a degree of like-mindedness which practically insured emotional expressions at the camp meetings and political rallies. Whenever speakers were confronted with unresponsive, uninterested, or apathetic audiences, they knew that singing was an emotional trump card which could be played when everything else had failed.[12]

Those who recorded their observations at the camp meetings were always impressed by the power of music. As James Flint watched a group of Methodists worship at a camp-ground in the woods, he saw the meeting take on a new enthusiasm after the congregation joined in a song. James B. Finley felt that singing was greatly responsible for the extreme expressions at Cane Ridge. Describing a camp meeting held in Smyth County, Virginia, Julia A. Trevis referred to the power of music upon the assemblage. After singing the announced hymn the congregation fell to its knees in prayer. Suddenly all arose singing another song with great spirit and enthusiasm. No other method, she thought, could produce the

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[12]Kimball Young, "The Psychology of Hymns," The Journal of Abnormal Psychology, XX (January, 1926), 392; Ross, Social Psychology, 50-55; Le Bon, The Crowd, 95-97; Davenport, Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals, 25-27.

feelings, the love for religion that the sublime singing of a camp meeting congregation could inspire.[13]

Francis Trollope, visiting a camp meeting in Indiana, watched several preachers repeatedly call for mourners with no success. Finally the preachers came down from the speaking stand and stood in the mourner's section. As they repeated their call to the mourners, they began to sing a familiar hymn. The following is Trollope's description of the result of their labors:

> As they sang they kept turning themselves round to every part of the crowd, and by degrees, the voices of the whole multitude joined in chorus. This was the only moment at which I perceived anything like the solemn and beautiful effect, which I had heard ascribed to this woodland worship. It is certain that the combined voices of such a multitude, heard at dead of night from the depths of their eternal forests, the many fair young faces turned upward, and looking paler and lovelier as they met the moonbeams, the dark figures of the officials in the middle of the circle, the lurid glare thrown by the altar-fires on the woods beyond, did altogether produce a fine and solemn effect, that I shall not easily forget. . . .
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> . . . above a hundred persons, nearly all females, came forward, uttering howlings and groans, so terrible that I shall never cease to shudder when I recall them. They appeared to drag each other forward, and on the word being given "Let us pray," they all fell on their knees; but this posture was soon changed for others that permitted greater scope for the convulsive movements of their limbs with such incessant and violent motion, that I was every instant expecting some serious accident to occur.[14]

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[13]Flint, Letters, 259; Finley, Autobiography, 167; Mrs. Julia A. Trevis, "Sixty Years in a Schoolroom," in Preston, Holston Valleys, 168-69.

[14]Trollope, Domestic Manners, 171-72.

Music at the political rally was no less powerful. Observers watched the crowd thrill to the sounds of the martial music of the parade and the singing of the multitude. A reporter from the Detroit Advertiser was very impressed with the singing at Fort Meigs. Between each speech, he recorded, 10,000 individuals joined in a popular Tippecanoe song producing an "electric" effect upon the assemblage. According to the reporter, "a perfect tumult of enthusiasm seemed to pervade the entire mass of people present" during the actual singing.[15] Another reporter at Fort Meigs described the convention at night. Throughout the battleground individuals had formed into several groups consisting of 1,000 to 1,500 people. As the hour grew late they began to sing popular Whig songs with great enthusiasm. Continuing his description, the observer was amazed by the

> spirit with which their hymns were sung. All know the words and the tunes, and when one hears them chanted as by a common impulse by many thousands of farmers, mechanics, and hard working artisans of every description, he will be pretty thoroughly convinced that a spirit is abroad that cannot be stayed or put down.[16]

John W. Bear, a famous Whig orator in 1840, traveled around the country "preaching" to various Whig rallies. Speaking to an assemblage of Whigs in Washington, D.C., the "Buckeye Blacksmith," as he was known to his contemporaries,

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[15] The Detroit Advertiser, n.d. as quoted in Daily National Intelligencer, June 23, 1840.

[16] The Whig (Jonesborough), July 8, 1840.

concluded his speech by leading the Whigs in song. "So great was the enthusiasm of the moment" said a reporter, that the orator was not allowed to walk away from the speaking stand, but was "borne over the fence on the shoulders of his fellow-citizens." He was then carried "in a sort of triumphal procession" down the streets of Washington to his boarding house.[17] At Whig rallies held in Tennessee music played an especially important role. Copying the methods of New York merchant Joseph Hoxie, who led Whig choral groups throughout the summer and fall of 1840, Tennessee Whigs established Tippecanoe singing societies in order to spread the Whig songs and to train individual song leaders for the rallies.[18] In Jonesborough, Whig editor Brownlow printed notices to publicize the singing societies which met every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday night in the upper story of an old storehouse. Brownlow concluded one publicity article concerning the singers with the following:

> Let it be remembered that all good Whigs love music, and that it is as true in politics as poetry, that--
> He who hath no music in his soul,
> And is not moved by concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fet for treason, stratagems and spoils![19]

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[17]Robert Gray Gunderson, "John W. Bear, "The Buckeye Blacksmith"," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, LXI (April, 1952), 266; Daily National Intelligencer, June 15, 1840.

[18]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 124; The Whig (Jonesborough), September 30, 1840.

[19]The Whig (Jonesborough), October 14, 1840.

Once while Brownlow was in the small town of Rutledge, Tennessee, he walked into the local tavern where he saw a prominent Democrat sitting with a group of Whigs. The Democrat was trying to convince one Whig in particular that the songs, log cabins, and hard cider characteristic of the Tippecanoe and Tyler enthusiasm were really very ridiculous when examined rationally. Without any prompting the Whigs spontaneously burst into song, singing a famous Tippecanoe tune called "Ye jolly young lads of Ohio." The Democrat, realizing the hopelessness of the situation, turned and called for a room and "with his saddle bags in hand, put off upstairs."[20]

Like the conventions at Fort Meigs, Dayton and countless others, the Tennessee "festivals" impressed observers with their musical quality. One spectator described a parade in Knoxville with its "bands of music" as "the most imposing scene I ever beheld. . . ." He went on to say that surely the Whigs produced "the finest music in the world."[21] As Colonel Ephraim H. Foster approached the speaker's stand at a convention in McMinn county, he was greeted by the music of a local band. When he reached the stand the ladies at the rally arose and sang a song in honor of the Hero of

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[20] Ibid., August 19, 1840.

[21] Ibid., July 15, 1840.

Tippecanoe, "which created quite a sensation throughout the vast multitude." Colonel Foster was so emotionally affected that many wondered if he could deliver his speech. Quickly composing himself, the orator, apparently inspired by the "heavenly" music, delivered one of the most eloquent addresses of his career.[22] The three-day convention held in Jonesborough was filled with music from choirs, bands and the voices of the people themselves. The people went to bed at night with the sounds of Tippecanoe songs in their ears; and after the sound of the cannon firing to awake them, the music was the first thing they would hear in the morning. As speakers approached the stand, the Tippecanoe choir and a local band would join together to sing and play a Tippecanoe melody. As Brownlow watched the events transpire, he noted that the music always produced such an effect that words alone could not convey a correct impression of the emotional excitement.[23]

Since both the religious and political crusaders designed their music primarily for group singing, the actual songs of the camp meeting and political rally were amazingly similar. So they could be easily learned and memorized by large groups, the songs were simplistic both musically and lyrically. Both types made use of repetitious lyric and many times borrowed

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[22] Spirit of '76 (Nashville), June 10, 1840.

[23] The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840.

their melodies from well-known ballads and folksongs.[24] The Whigs used such tunes as "Hail to the Chief," "Auld Lang Syne," "Yankee Doodle," "Little Pigs," "White Beams the Bright Morn," and many, many others in their campaign songs. A German visitor to America recognized that many of the melodies used in the camp meeting were copied from old German folk songs.[25] To study the lyrics to the songs of the camp meeting and political rally, is to learn much about the two institutions, for the words are often autobiographical in nature. Many times the songs describe the meetings at which they were sung, while providing great insights into the personalities and attitudes which surrounded them.

Both the religious and political enthusiasts tended to channel their zeal toward a single individual. The religious crusaders sang praises to Jesus, of course, while at the political rally William Henry Harrison was the object of adulation. In the following Whig songs the treatment of Harrison is very similar to the treatment of Jesus in the religious song:

> I knew by the smoke as it grace fully rose
> From the log cabin top as I passed the North bend;
> That the statesman and Hero the sacred spot chose,
> To a retirement dear, a retreat for a friend.

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[24]Benson, The English Hymn, 293; Jackson, White and Negro Spirituals, 86-87.

[25]Knight, Tippecanoe, 30-35; Ficker, Friendly Adviser as found in WMH, 463.

As I said to myself, thus do honors recline,
When age calls the Hero from dangers he brav'd;
Content with his lot--may he never repine,
His honors are full--his country he sav'd.

The Briton and red face before him have fled,
The mother and babe now secure from their blow;
He stood as a wall to protect them from dread,
From the inroads of Proctor who led the red foe.

Yes longer in service--more battle he fought
Than any compatriot called into the field:
He ne'er met defeat his laurels were bought,
By untiring ardor, no spirit to yield.

Ten years in the NorWest in counsel he sat,
Executing the laws both equal and just--
Many states there arose in a wilderness, that
Was co-equal in spre'd to half the far west.

And where is the wight who ever complained
Of his justice, his honor, oh! tell me of one:
When you show him I'll point to the tool that's been
train'd.
In the school of aetraction a loco-a drone.

Has he ever stole pelf, like some I could tell of,
Or lied for an office another might fill:
No never! he scorn's it--thus to buy or to sell off,
So like the low minions that do both so well.

The friend of the poor of the vet'ran to the letter,
His arms spread as wide as philanthropy full,
He shares out his cider and wishes it better,
And the welcome so noble makes it wine to my
soul . . .[26]

Both revivalists and those involved with the political rally considered themselves fighters in a "holy cause." Probably the best example of this "holy zeal" among the camp meeting singers is the following song called "Holy War":

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[26]The Whig (Jonesborough), July 8, 1840.

I've listed in the holy war,
Content to suffer the soldier's fare,
And we'll all shout for joy,
And we'll give God the glory,
And I hope to join the army by and by.

I've fought through many a battle sore,
And I must fight through many more;
And we'll etc . . .

I take my breast plate, sword and shield,
And boldly march into the field.

The banner o'er my head is love,
I draw my rations from above.

The world, the flesh and Satan too
Unite and strive what they can do.

On thee, O Lord, I humbly call,
Uphold me, or my soul must fall.

I've listed and I mean to fight,
Till all my foes are put to flight.

And when the victory I have won,
I'll give the praise to God alone.

Come, fellow-Christians, join with me,
Come, face the foe and never flee.

The heavenly battle is begun,
Come, take the field and win the crown.

With listing orders I have come;
Come rich, come poor, come old or young.

Here's grace's bounty Christ has given,
And glorious crowns laid up in heaven.

But if you will not list and fight,
You'll sink into eternal night.[27]

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[27]George Pullen Jackson, Spiritual Folk-Songs of Early America (New York, 1937), 213-14.

The following excerpt illustrates the "holy cause" motif within Whig campaign songs. It was titled "The Log Cabin Song":

> By whom, tell me whom, will the battle next be won?
> By whom, tell me whom, will the battle next be won?
> The Spoilsmen and Leg Treasurers will soon beg in to run!
> And the "Log Cabin Candidate" will march to Washington![28]

Many times the songs expressed the attitudes of those who attended meetings toward the meetings themselves. The following is a song about the camp meeting:

> The pleasing time has roll'd around,
> And we have met at the campground;
> And free from world by fears and cares,
> We'll wait on God with song and prayers.
>
> The spirit's aid we will implore,
> And pray for grace from grace's store;
> And while we seek we hope to find
> The Saviour merciful and kind.
>
> His arm will be reveal'd with power,
> His heavenly mercy down he'll shower;
> And while his saints are much revived,
> Dead sinners will be made alive.
>
> The gospel's joyful trump will sound,
> To free the souls by satan bound;
> And while the captives are set free,
> We'll sound the glorious jubilee.
>
> O! Jubilee, how sweet thou art,
> How good from every sin to part;
> And feel the sweets of liberty,
> Through him who died upon the tree.
>
> Come sinners, now the work begin,
> And part with every secret sin;

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[28]Nashville Whig, March 4, 1840.

Do not defer another day,
For fear you miss the heavenly way.

You've tried the plan of putting off,
Till you can now at mercy scoff;
And yet 'tis marvellous [sic] to tell,
You're out of a deserved hell.

In heaven's name you I invite,
To seek his face before 'tis night;
For that is fastly hast'ning on,
And working time will all be done.

Give to the Saviour all your heart,
And choose that good and better part;
Before our meeting shall be o'er,
And you shall rest on Canaan's shore.[29]

Parson Brownlow printed the song below which was written especially for the Jonesborough rally held at a Methodist campground in October of 1840. Like the preceding religious song, this song also describes a meeting:

Hark! the shouts of freemen ring--
Hark! what cheerful songs they sing,
While the joyous cannons fling
Their thunder peals afar.
See their flags o'er forest trees,
Proudly floating to the breeze;
At night their blazing camp fires please--
They burn no torch of war.

Hark! what states assemble here,
Not moved by gloomy doubt or fear,
But seeing glorious triumph near,
In cause of truth and right.
Virginia first hath led the way,
Nobly spurned a despot's sway,
And spread abroad the light of day
When all was gloom and night. . . .

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[29]Samuel C. Davidson, Camp Meeting Songster (Knoxville, 1832), 1.

And where is she whose blighted name,
Once filled the world with deeds of fame,
Degraded by her leaders tame,
Oh! where is Tennessee?
Tho' blush of shame rest on her cheek,
Yet will her gallant people speak,
Aye, do her moving mountains shriek
In power's ear--she's free.

No worthless motive makes us meet,
No tyrant brings us to his feet,
The story of our wrongs repeat,
A sinking country save.
A land once happy mourns in woe,
It never quailed to foreign foe,
Yet bleeds at every pore from blow,
Its own proud rules gave.

Our patriot sires, unclothed, unshed,
Stained with their blood the soil they trod.
Their cause they deemed the cause of God.
Its leader, Washington.
And here on holy ground do we,
Their sons, in that great cause agree
To battle as becomes the free
For patriot Harrison.[30]

The religious and political crusaders regarded music as merely another method with which the zeal of their congregations could be controlled and channeled. When used in combination with other evangelical techniques, group singing could transform a dull, fruitless, meeting into a lively, productive one. The successful camp meeting or political rally was a powerful and influential force upon the lives of those who came in contact with it. So powerful, in fact, that age-old traditions and roles sometimes trembled in its wake. One of these roles was that of women.

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[30] The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840.

CHAPTER IV

WOMAN'S ROLE

In the first half of the nineteenth century women in America were powerless creatures confined to a life which revolved around their home and the duties it required. Generally excluded from the liberating influences of a higher education, women seemed content to devote their lives to the cradle, the kitchen and the man who provided their means of support. Female interests outside of the immediate concerns of the home were often deemed unimportant and quite secondary to their divinely sanctioned role as homemaker.[1] Besides her household obligations, the nineteenth century woman was expected to be society's model for morality and virtue. It was necessary that the virtuous woman be protected from the vulgarity and immorality found in the real world, for such exposure could adversely influence the "naive, yielding" female. The editors of the American Quarterly Review were quick to remind their readers that women were too easily swayed to participate in the affairs of the world. The women, they contended, should be content to

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[1]Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "Beauty, the Beast, and the Militant Woman: A Case Study in Sex Roles and Social Stress in Jacksonian America," American Quarterly, XXIII (October, 1971), 563-64.

> fill the world with men and women--to educate them--to instil virtuous and religious and chivalric principles--to encourage her own sex in all that is commendable and feminine--to assist her husband in all his schemes for the advancement of their mutual family--to mend his temper by her forbearance and gentleness, and to make her home his happiness. . . .[2]

That a woman could consider her exclusion from the marketplace degrading was "something inconceivable" to T. S. Arthur, the famous author of women's guidebooks. Those women who refused to accept the traditional female role were accused of most every disreputable motivation imaginable. They were troublemakers which respectable society could not afford to tolerate. Fanny Wright, the famous crusader for women's rights, was called a "man-milliner" by the editors of the Ladies Companion. The rather traditional editors went on to say that a less tolerant people than the Americans of the 1840's would have "dreadfully whipped" the crusader every time she stopped to speak. In a manner which demonstrated the intensity of feeling engendered by unorthodox feminine expressions the editors concluded that Fanny Wright would have "deserved every lash. . . ."[3] It is, therefore,

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[2]Review of Harriet Martineau, Society in America, American Quarterly Review, XXII (September and December, 1837), 37.

[3]T. S. Arthur, Advice to Young Ladies (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1854), 46; Carroll Smith Rosenberg, "The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in 19th Century America," Social Research, XXXIX (Winter, 1972), 655-56; "Female Irreligion," Ladies Companion, XIII (May-October, 1840), 112.

extremely interesting, in light of those prevalent attitudes, that women played such an important role in the camp meeting and the political rally.

Yet women's role at the gatherings was strangely dichotomous. In a society which drastically limited feminine autonomy the camp meeting and political rally allowed the woman a degree of freedom far exceeding the norm. On the other hand, however, many of the duties performed by women and many of the opinions expressed by men concerning women were entirely consistent with the prevalent female stereotype. The first portion of this chapter will emphasize the traditional feminine role at the assemblages, while the latter segment will examine more unorthodox behavior.

At the camp meeting numerous examples existed depicting the woman as the paragon of virtue and the dutiful, obedient homebody. Not unlike most religious services of the nineteenth century, men and women were segregated at the camp meeting. Leaders of the gatherings feared that the mingling of the sexes would divert attention from their main purpose.[4] When the congregation became emotionalized, however, this sexual segregation often broke down and the sexes freely intermingled. This would seem rather inconsistent, for the chance of sexual violations increased as the emotional state

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[4]Sullins, Recollections, 34; Sellers, Dow, 21; Cartwright, Autobiography, 130-31.

of the congregation was heightened. Nevertheless, many examples exist of the sexually integrated mourner's bench. James Flint recalled a time when he entered a camp meeting on the female side of the aisle. Although the mourner's bench was occupied by both men and women, a guard appointed to maintain sexual separation in the congregation immediately informed Flint of his mistake and politely asked him to proceed to the seats designated for the men.[5]

Peter Cartwright often had trouble keeping the sexes in their respective seating sections. On one occasion a young man insisted on sitting in the ladies' seats after Cartwright had repeatedly asked him to leave. Finally, Cartwright realized that his polite requests were not going to work and began to ridicule the man before the congregation. The young man became so enraged that he challenged Cartwright to a fight. Proud of his bravery and his consistent refusals to suffer indignities from any man, the preacher accepted his offer and stopped his sermon in order to meet the challenge. Cartwright stipulated that the fight take place outside of the campground with no spectators allowed. After tripping over a fence on the way to the selected site, the preacher grabbed for the leg which he thought had been injured. Believing Cartwright was going for a gun, the

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[5]Flint, Letters, 258.

young man began to back away. Cartwright realized his advantageous position and did nothing to dispel his opponent's notion. The young man lost no time getting away, as the old preacher once again came out on top of a difficult situation.[6]

While Cartwright was conducting a camp meeting in Illinois, an incident occurred which offered an interesting commentary on the attitudes held by the camp meeting attendants concerning women. While preaching, Cartwright noticed the presence of two beautiful young ladies in the congregation. As the two women became filled with the spirit and approached the mourner's section, an "old sister of the church" informed Cartwright that the women were "under ill-fame" and requested that he drive them from the altar. Cartwright, displaying a sympathy and understanding of feminine dignity out of step with his contemporaries, refused to interfere with the ladies' worship. Various members of the congregation, learning of the women's reputation, took it upon themselves to force them from the camp meeting. Cartwright begged his congregation to leave the ladies alone, saying,

> on the other side of the altar there are a dozen men that, in all probability, are guilty of as base conduct as these young women; why don't you go and drive them from the altar? Do let them alone. Do

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[6]Cartwright, Autobiography, 130-131.

> you go and talk to the men, and I will attend to these females; they must not be driven from the altar of prayer.[7]

Cartwright stopped the ladies before they left the campground and induced them to stay and worship with him. One was converted, but the other one left the campground weeping. She was "forever lost," Cartwright surmised because of the "uncalled-for rebuke." Reflecting on the incident the old preacher considered it odd that

> men, and women too, should feel such sensitiveness concerning females of ill-fame more than they do in relation to men; especially when they make efforts to reform their lives and live religious, but it is so, though I cannot see any just reason for it.[8]

Camp meeting observers who did not place positive value upon the passionate expressions of the meetings felt that women were more susceptible than men to the emotional appeal of the ministers. To these unsympathetic onlookers this emotional susceptibility exhibited the inherent weakness of the fair sex. Those who favored the camp meeting and all that it encompassed also recognized this susceptibility, but they argued that it domonstrated not weakness but rather the basic superiority of women in matters concerning sensitivity and morality.[9] Benjamin H. Latrobe, an unsympathetic camp meeting observer, was a firm believer in the

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[7] Ibid., 390.

[8] Ibid., 391-92.

[9] Flint, Letters, 204; William Forrest Sprague, Women and the West (New York, 1972), 60-61.

susceptibility and weakness of the opposite sex. While describing various camp meetings that he had observed he stated that

> I have always endeavored to prevent my wife from being led by her curiosity to attend the meetings of the Methodists . . . she joins a warmth of imagination which might receive a shock if not an impression from the incantations which form the business of their assemblies.[10]

Another manifestation of the traditional attitude toward women found at the gatherings was the expectation that the ladies take care of the cooking, cleaning and all of the other domestic chores required by the camp meeting situation. As the camp meeting became more institutionalized, the preparation of food became more and more refined.[11] One writer, describing the cooking at meetings held in Sullivan County, Tennessee, asserted that the women there had achieved no small amount of fame as a result of their efforts at camp meeting time. He went on to say that

> their cooking became as famous as their religion. Young women have gone there to learn the secret of those tempting dishes and today many a table that is spread in Sullivan County offers delicious evidence of an art learned around the kitchens at the old campground.[12]

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[10]Benjamin H. Latrobe, The Journal of Latrobe (New York, 1905), entry for August 8, 1809, 250.

[11]Finley, Autobiography, 317; Robert Carlton [Bayard Rush Hall], The New Purchase, ed. James A. Woodburn (Princeton, 1916), 369.

[12]Oliver Taylor, Historic Sullivan (Bristol, Tennessee, 1909), 189.

Many of the women described by camp meeting observers seemed to have no other ambition "but to please and entertain and worship." One lady in particular was an East Tennessean named "Aunt" Betsy Carlton. "Whether in the kitchen preparing the food or at the table serving it and begging you to have more or at the altar bending in prayer," Aunt Betsy was a missionary "of unpretentious tenderness and care."[13] All of the women at the camp meetings, however, did not accept their domestic role with the same willingness and exurberance of an "Aunt" Betsy Carlton. Many women rebelled against the hard work required by the assemblages, as cooking and cleaning chores often precluded their attendance of the worship services.[14]

At the political rally the same duality of role and attitude existed for women. As in the camp meetings the women at the political gatherings took an active interest in an area of human endeavor which was inconsistent with their traditional activities. The fact that they were defying tradition, however, did not cover up various examples of more orthodox feminine behavior. Like their religious counterparts Whig women often engaged in very traditional feminine labors. Throughout the weeks preceding

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 218.

a rally the female supporters of "Tip and Ty" would devote their time to the preparation of food and decorations. Woman's role as the paragon of virtue was also in evidence at the rallies. When Daniel Webster spoke to the Whig festival at Richmond he decided to address the ladies separately in order to pay his respects and to thank them for their often forgotten work. Accepting the age-old belief that women were suited best for work inside the home, Webster told the ladies that the

> rough-contests of the political world are not suited to the dignity and to the delicacy of your sex; but you possess the intelligence to know how much of that happiness which you are entitled to hope for, both for yourselves and for your children, depends on the right administration of good government, and a proper tone of public morals. That is a subject on which the moral perceptions of women are both quicker and juster than those of the other sex. . . . It is by the promulgation of sound morals in the community, and more especially by the training and instruction of the young, that woman performs her part towards the preservation of a free government.[15]

Throughout the campaign the women waved white handkerchiefs and cheered the "log cabin boys" of the Whig campaign. Ladies greeted Whig dignitaries with smiles and waves, inspiring them in their good fight against the debauchery of Van Burenism.[16] While describing a Whig

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[15] Daily National Intelligencer, October 12, 1840.

[16] Spirit of '76 (Nashville), April 29, 1840; Daily National Intelligencer, July 8, 10, 1840; Stanwood, A History of the Presidency, 196; The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840.

meeting at Bunker Hill, Philip Hone referred to the presence of the ladies:

> The balconies and windows were filled with women, well dressed, with bright eyes and bounding bosoms, waving handkerchiefs, exhibiting flags and garlands, and casting bouquets of flowers upon us; and this, too, was not confined to any particular part of the city or any class of inhabitants. Young children were exhibited in rows with flags in their little hands, and whenever their greetings were returned, mothers and daughters, old women and beautiful young ones, seemed delighted that their share in the jubilee was recognized.[17]

It seemed as if the Whigs looked to the chaste, virtuous, and noble ladies to sanction the campaign and its surrounding hoopla. With their smiles, their waves, and their mere presence, the Whig women seemed to place their virtuous "seal of approval" upon the commotion.

To this point the traditional role of women at the camp meeting and the political rally has been emphasized. While these expressions were common and important, the truly unique and outstanding feature concerning women at the assemblages was their assumption of a new and relatively equal role. At both gatherings women expressed themselves freely and were not frowned upon for doing so. Thus during the religious service women screamed, participated in the "exercises," exhorted, sang, and did anything else that men could do at

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[17]Nevins, Diary of Hone, entry for September 8, 1840, 497.

the meetings.[18] James McGready described a lady at one of his camp meetings who was filled with the spirit:

> She started to her feet, and in an ecstacy of joy, she cried out, "Oh he is willing, he is willing--he is come, he is come--what a sweet Christ he is--O what a precious Christ he is--O what a fulness I see in him--O what a beauty I see in him--O why was it that I never could believe! that I never could come to Christ before, when Christ was so willing to save?" Then turning around she addressed sinners, and told them of the glory, willingness and preciousness of Christ, and plead with them to repent; and all this in language so heavenly, and at the same time, so rational and scriptural, that I was filled with astonishment.[19]

Lorenzo Dow answered charges made concerning the propriety of camp meetings and their "mixed multitudes in the woods." The opponents of the meetings felt that it was "indecent for ladies of distinction" to participate in such religious services. Like his colleague, Peter Cartwright, Dow defended the rights of females from those who would deny them. Referring to the charges concerning the indecency of female participation in the camp meeting, Dow declared that women had every right to attend the meetings. If one wanted to exclude women from the camp meeting, Dow asserted, then he

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[18] Lee, Life of Rev. Jesse Lee, 421; Jacob Young, Autobiography of a Pioneer (New York, 1858), 168; Extract of a letter from Colonel Robert Patterson to the Rev. Doctor John King, September 25, 1801, in New York Missionary Magazine, III (1802), 121.

[19] McGready, Posthumous Works, x.

should probably desire their exclusion from any social function.[20]

James Finley described an interesting incident involving women at the camp meeting. A young woman who had been converted at a service conducted by Finley underwent the "falling exercise" on her way home.[21] Those who were traveling with the young lady decided to carry her back to the meeting. Upon hearing of her "falling" numerous people began to reassemble, and exhorting, preaching and singing once again commenced. As the religious action continued, the young woman, Eliza Hankins, remained in the unconscious state characteristic of those under the falling exercise. Thirty-two hours after she had been stricken, Eliza jumped to her feet and began to sing and shout. She spoke of Jesus and heaven in, as Finley described it, "strains of the most inimitable eloquence and sweetness." The young lady's sermon was so convincing to those who had gathered that "the whole congregation was overwhelmed." Interestingly, in light of the prevailing attitudes toward women and especially women speakers, Finley claimed that everyone, including himself, felt that they were in the presence of a "superior being,

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[20]Dow, History of Cosmopolite, 592-94.

[21]For description of "falling exercise" see Chapter II, footnote 27.

rather than that of an artless, unsophisticated country girl."[22]

On countless similar occasions women engaged in expressions which, in any other circumstance, would have ruined their reputations and placed them in a social category with "fallen women."[23] The German visitor, Ficker, described the actions of the various women he observed at a Methodist camp meeting. As he looked around the campground he saw one lady clutching her bosom and gazing "heavenward" saying "come, my Jesus, come my dear Jesus, my dear lover." Another lady was screaming to the preacher "a little more, a little more, Mr. Preacher, yet a little more!" Other women were dancing around fallen men singing and exhorting them to come to Christ.[24] Francis Trollope described similar scenes in her observations of camp meetings. Some women rolled in the dirt, others lay on their backs while they screamed to the preachers and Jesus. Trollope was amazed by one lady who for two uninterrupted hours screamed such phrases as "I will hold fast to Jesus . . . if they take me to hell, I will still hold him fast, fast, fast!"[25]

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[22]Finley, Autobiography, 230-31.

[23]Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, November 2, 1822, Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (eds.), The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, XV (Washington, 1903), 403.

[24]Ficker, Friendly Adviser as found in WMH, 464-65.

[25]Trollope, Domestic Manners, 173-74.

Emotional expressions of this type were accepted fully by those within the camp meeting community. R. N. Price, a historian of Methodism in East Tennessee, alluded to the emotionalism of women at the camp meeting, finding it to be an "expression of joy." Speaking of one emotional outlet in particular, Price stated that he had seen "saintly women happy in the love of God" dance very gracefully. Even though the women were extremely excited, the historian saw nothing in their actions which could be construed as unnatural, unreasonable or "offensive to good taste."[26]

The women found at the political rally played also a very active role in the proceedings. When referring to the nature of their campaign, Whigs rarely failed to mention the contributions women had made. In the following a partisan Whig noted women's presence in the campaign and examined its implications:

> Our wives and daughters, we are proud to say, have the blood of their revolutionary mothers and grandmothers coursing through their veins. There is no man among us whose heart is more filled and animated than theirs, by the spirit of seventy-six. Look at the three hundred and fifty at Nashville, who invited Henry Clay . . . to be with them . . . on the 15th of August. Look at the four hundred at St. Louis, the nine hundred at the Tippecanoe battle-ground, the five thousand at Dayton! What now, but the spirit of seventy-six, does all this manifest? Ay, and what tale does it all tell? Does it not say, that the wicked charlatanry, and the mad ambition, and selfish schemings, of the

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[26]Price, Holston Methodism, I, 387.

> leading members of this administration of the general government, have made themselves felt in the very sanctum sanctorum of domestic life? . . . The truth is--and it should be told--the women are the life and soul of these movements of the people.[27]

Throughout the country at such meetings women made speeches and in isolated cases published pamphlets to promote the Whig cause.[28] Lucy Kenney, a partisan Whig, proclaimed in one of the first political tracts written by an American woman:

> Harrison's march is onward, and his success cannot be arrested. He is one of the people--identified in feeling with them, and they with him, he is their friend, because he loves them, and they him; because he has fought with them the battles of his country--they know that his heart, his hand, his purse and his house have always been open to them--and on the fourth of March, eighteen hundred and forty-one, they will in return open with grateful hearts their white house at Washington, and invite him to take possession of it. . . .[29]

In Nashville a young lady, referred to only as Miss Young, spoke to a group of Whigs assembled for the great Southwestern convention. Parson Brownlow reported that the lady delivered a "quite handsome address" which excited the feelings of all present.[30] In Springfield, Illinois, Miss

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[27]Benton, Thirty Years View, II, 206.

[28]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 136.

[29]Lucy Kenney, The Strongest Of All Government Is That Which Is Most Free, An Address to the People of the United States, n.p., n.d., 304.

[30]The Whig (Jonesborough), August 26, 1840.

Jane Field addressed the Fayette County delegation proclaiming:

> When the war whoop on our prairies was the infant's lullaby, our mothers reposed in security for Harrison was their protector . . . We would indeed be traitors to our sex if our bosoms did not thrill at his name.[31]

In Jefferson County, Tennessee, Mary Ann Inman made a short speech to a crowd of at least 5,000 in which she presented a mug filled with hard cider to Colonel Ephraim Foster, the principal speaker of the day. The ladies at this rally were very active, not only making speeches, but also leading a procession to the meeting ground. In addition they had prepared the speaker's stand which, according to the following description, must have been an interesting sight:

> It was elevated about twelve feet, beneath the shade of a large oak; the front railing, which was broad and about 20 feet long, was covered with cloth richly ornamented. The columns and the arch in front, forming a wreath above the stand, were entirely covered with evergreens, spruce pine and cedar, intermingled with roses, honeysuckle, and various other flowers. The seats behind were cushioned.[32]

The ladies of Nashville, who were extremely fond of Henry Clay, were instrumental in persuading him to address the Great Southwestern Convention. When "Harry of the West" took the stand and began his speech, many of the women

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[31]Springfield Sangamo Journal, June 19, 1840, as quoted in Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 136.

[32]The Hiwassee Patriot (Athens, Tennessee), June 16, 1840.

became so emotional that they actually fainted.[33] Those who retained consciousness engaged in what was described as "the most enthusiastic cheers, we ever witnessed."[34] Various banners made by the ladies bore slogans which the women themselves had written. At a convention in Loudoun County, Virginia, the ladies of Leesburg presented a banner which read "The ladies of Leesburg to the Whigs of Loudoun--one thousand majority, you can and you must." A banner created by the ladies of Clarksville, Tennessee, was presented to the Whigs at a convention held in that town in May. On one side was pictured General Harrison's farm surrounded by thirteen stars; on the other side, the American eagle was encompassed by the same number of stars. In almost every locality in America Whig women were making valuable contributions to the progress of the campaign.[35]

When compared to the role of the typical American female in the early nineteenth century, the women at the political and religious meetings occupied an unusually important position. The meetings gave women an opportunity to assert themselves in a manner never before allowed by conventional

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[33]The Whig (Jonesborough), September 2, 1840; Phelan, History of Tennessee, 391.

[34]The Whig (Jonesborough), August 26, 1840.

[35]Daily National Intelligencer, September 21, October 27, 1840; Spirit of '76 (Nashville), June 3, 1840.

society. The taste of responsibility obtained at these gatherings may have aroused women's appetite for a more important and autonomous role in the society. The fact that women had neither the right to vote nor the privilege to enter the ministry makes their contributions to the camp meeting and political rally even more significant. The crusading force behind the meetings undoubtedly appealed to the women of the era and was a precursor to the humanitarian reform movements of the 1840's and early 1850's.

Alice Felt Tyler points out that camp meeting revivalism served to raise the consciousness of American women concerning not only their own status but the deprivations and afflictions of other human beings as well.[36] An equal case could be made for the political rally's contribution to this awakening. Aided by the labors of feminist leaders such as Fanny Wright and Lydia Maria Child, American women within a period of only a few years developed sophisticated organizations which they used to fight the diverse evils of alcohol, war, slavery, and poverty. In the process of eradicating these human misfortunes women could prove their own worth, dispelling the myth of male superiority and demolishing the social restrictions of the masculine dominion.[37] As well as being powerful enough to alter temporarily traditional role conceptions, the

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[36]Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment (New York, 1944), 428.

[37]Ibid., 428-29.

religious and political assemblages also were sufficiently potent to elicit vocal and sometimes violent opposition. From the early "camp meetings" of Wesley to the Whig rallies at Cumberland Gap and Jonesborough certain segments of the community consistently worked to disrupt the gatherings and to castigate those individuals who attended them. The next chapter seeks to examine the reasons for and the nature of that opposition.

CHAPTER V

THE OTHER SIDE

Both political and religious crusaders felt that they faced a powerful enemy bent on the destruction of their respective causes. The leaders of the meetings agreed that before their movements could succeed their opponents must be silenced. As evidenced by many of their songs, the zealots fancied themselves like the Christian crusaders of medieval times fighting for the "good cause." The following pages will examine first, the attitudes of the religious and political reformers which tended to alienate various segments of the population, and second, the manner in which these estranged groups reacted to the camp meeting and political rally.

The enemies of the religious and political enthusiasts were, of course, sinners and Democrats respectively. Interestingly, the adversaries shared common characteristics in the eyes of the reformers. Both the Democrats in 1840 and the sinners in general were perceived as living formal, ostentatious lives with little concern or respect for the needs and rights of the common man. Religious leaders continuously reminded their parishoners of the worth of that common man and of the worthlessness of those who failed to

honor him. Camp meeting leaders were also the first to recognize the enthusiasm that a fight for the rights of the common man could produce. The Arminian doctrines of free will and individual responsibility for salvation could not have blended better with the emerging American ideal of antebellum individualism and all that it implied.

As the camp meeting community fought the sinner, they were secure in the knowledge that God was on their side. The "Onward Christian Soldiers" spirit made for dogmatism and fanaticism in the minds of the true believers, as well as the feeling that their position had no need for rational justification. It also served to unite and intensity the nonbelievers' opposition to this dogmatic group. Lorenzo Dow, reflecting the belief in providential guidance, told of how rain often drenched the area surrounding his meetings while leaving the campground and the congregation completely dry. According to Dow, this was obviously God's way of displaying his approval of the work of the camp meetings.[1]

Confident of their divine blessing the religious reformers set out to change the evil ways of those who failed to abide by the values of the common man. Those in this category could be identified by their sins which included ostentatious dress, card playing, theater attendance, horse

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[1]Flint, Letters, 263.

racing, dancing and many others. Of course, many of the "common men" of the era participated in one or more of these vices, but, even so, a line was drawn between the pretentious social elite and the simplicity of the lives of the "people."[2] When the Kentucky conference of the Methodist Church held its annual meeting in 1833 a resolution was passed to return to the "old Methodism" concerning rules and regulations of the ministers' attire. By returning to the "old Methodism" all of the conference preachers were instructed to dress alike in a more simple manner.[3] When a group of men and women in Virginia began to hold dances on Sunday, a local preacher reacted in the following manner:

> How terrible the thought that men and women should spend the holy Sabbath in dancing their souls to hell! I am no friend to dancing. It is attended with evil, and only evil. . . . But many apologize for it on the ground that it is conducive to health. Exercise is good; but if the young ladies would get up the big spinning-wheel, and exercise upon that, as their mothers used to do; or if they would engage in other useful employments, which they might do, without sacrificing their dignity, they would never die for want of exercise. . . .[4]

Peter Cartwright often preached against the sins of formality and ostentation at his camp meetings. Whenever

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[2]T. P. Abernethy, From Frontier to Planation in Tennessee (Chapel Hill, 1932), 219; David Lewis, Recollections of a Superannuate (Cincinnati, 1857), 227.

[3]A. H. Redford, Western Cavaliers (Nashville, 1876), 85.

[4]Lewis, Recollections, 227.

Cartwright saw a member of his congregation dressed in a "fashionable" way, he knew that man's days as a sincere Christian were numbered. One of the first actions urged upon a newly converted, well-dressed member of the congregation was the destruction of his "fancy" wardrobe. One wealthy gentleman who "got religion" at a camp meeting in West Tennessee stood before the congregation and tore the ruffles from his expensive shirt. A fashionable lady obtaining religion at another gathering conducted by Cartwright discovered that she did not own a "plain" dress. She found her most easily altered dress and immediately "trimmed it and fixed it tolerably plain." Only then did she feel "presentable" at the campground. Before one could enter into the community of the saved, he or she was required to shed all outward appearances which could be perceived as formal or pretentious. As Cartwright phrased it, "fashionable frivolities are contrary to the humble spirit of our Saviour."[5]

God was not only on the side of the religious crusaders. Throughout the nation in 1840 various Whigs claimed that the Creator had chosen their side in the struggle. As it did with the religious zealots, this presumption of providential sanction served to alienate many of those with whom the Whigs came in contact. Parson Brownlow, assessing the progress of

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[5]Cartwright, Autobiography, 49, 74-78.

the campaign in Tennessee, maintained that his fellow Whigs could rest assured for "we have every reason to believe" that Providence "is on our side."[6] With such confidence in the virtue and probity of their movement, the Whigs were understandably inspired by appeals to the "good fight" for the "great cause."[7] As General Harrison spoke to the vast multitude assembled at the great Miami Valley Convention at Dayton, he reminded his audience that it was not their love of a mere individual which drew them together. "A much deeper and keener feeling, a much more important consideration" was responsible for the great numbers present. According to the Hero of Tippecanoe the people had left their homes and jobs for "the cause--the Great and Good Cause."[8] Whigs were asked repeatedly to fight for their troubled nation. Although he believed that God backed the Whig cause, Brownlow urged the Whigs not to become complacent in the promise of a November victory. Apparently believing that the Lord helps only those who help themselves, the fiery editor-preacher addressed his fellows like a general inspiring his troops. "Let us then" he wrote

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[6]The Whig (Jonesborough), July 22, 1840.

[7]The Tennessee Whig (Elizabethton), March 12, 1840.

[8]Daily National Intelligencer, September 18, 1840.

> rally to the rescue, as though this were the last great battle we ever expect to fight. Let no dreams of certain success, no hypocritical exhortation to peace, not withstanding our prospects are bright and brightening every day, lull us to apathy, till the victory is complete, and the spoils are ours. . . . Let every Whig, therefore, in all this extensive, bleeding, suffering country, act with his party from this till November next, and the day is ours.[9]

Like their religious counterparts the leaders of the political movement projected their campaign as a struggle between the common man and his natural enemy, the forces of wealth, formality, and pretentiousness. Many of the leaders, while not actually believing this interpretation of the situation themselves, paid the viewpoint lip service in deference to its obvious appeal to the masses. As John W. Bear, the Buckeye Blacksmith, viewed it, the campaign was simply a fight between two ways of life: "the log cabin versus the palace; linsey-woolsey versus broad cloth; hard cider versus champagne, and the people versus the office holders."[10]

One of the main issues of the Whig campaign was the attack on Martin Van Buren. Seen as the leader of the Democratic scoundrels, the forces of darkness, the Whig party's conception of Van Buren paralleled the camp meeting community's image of the Devil. As a part of their effort

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[9] The Tennessee Whig (Jonesborough), July 8, 1840.

[10] Gunderson, "John W. Bear," OA and HQ, 269.

to court the common man, the Whigs showed the incumbent president no mercy. Van was painted as the "Dandy from Albany" who enjoyed ruffled shirts, silver and gold ornaments, and the absence of physical labor. In his speech entitled "The Regal Splendor of the Presidential Palace," Pennsylvania Congressman Charles Ogle exaggerated and ridiculed the aristocratic lifestyle of the president. The author of the satire, which was published in most of the nation's Whig newspapers, claimed that Van Buren had transformed the White House into "a palace as splendid as that of the Caesars, and as richly adorned as the proudest Asiatic Mansion" at the expense of the citizens. The public, Ogle claimed, would no longer tolerate the Magician's "vanities" and would express their disgust at the polls.[11]

Before his death Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett had written a biography of Van Buren for use in the campaign of 1836. The book was filled with "facts" concerning Van Buren and his aristocratic excesses. In 1840 Whig speakers and editors used the book as an unimpeachable source for derogatory material about the president. The following excerpt from the biography portrays Van Buren as the enemy of the common man--the image of the president which the Whigs worked so hard to present to the public in 1840:

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[11] Daily National Intelligencer, June 30, July 23, 1840.

> Now, he travels about the country and through the cities in an English coach; has English servants dressed in uniform . . . they look as big as most of our members of Congress, and fully as fine as the higher officers in the army: No longer mixes with the sons of little tavern-keepers; forgets all his old companions and friends in the humbler walks of life . . . ; eats in a room by himself; and so stiff in his gait, and prim in his dress, that he is what the English call a dandy. When he enters the Senate-Chamber in the morning, he struts and swaggers like a crow in the gutter. He is laced up on corsets, such as women in a town wear, and, if possible, tighter than the best of them. It would be difficult to say, from his personal appearance, whether he was man or woman, but for his large red and gray whiskers.[12]

Obviously, the religious and political crusaders showed little mercy for those who disagreed with their assumptions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the opponents often took offense, accusing the reformers of various improprieties. The accusations were especially frequent and severe when directed at the camp meeting or political rally.

The nature of the charges made against the religious and political assemblages were very similar. Both groups of reformers were criticized for their emphasis on emotionalism. The leaders of antiexperimental or nonrevivalistic churches were opposed, of course, to the work undertaken at the woodland gatherings. The camp meeting, these more rational theologians insisted, with its emotional base did not contribute to lasting Christian behavior on the part of the

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[12]David Crockett, Life of Martin Van Buren (Philadelphia, 1835), 80-81.

converts. Presbyterian minister Bayard Rush Hall, a strict Calvinist, declared his opposition to the meetings in the following:

> Under the direction of wise and talented men, a campmeeting may possibly be a means of a little permanent good; but, with the best management, it is a doubtful means of much moral and spiritual good. . . . Nay, if a religious meeting be protracted beyond one or two days, novelties must be introduced; and such are invariably exciting and entertaining, but never spiritual and instructive. . . .[13]

Continuing his indictment of the institution, Hall credited its popularity to its consistent ability to create emotional excitement, needed by the American people as an escape from their commonplace, day-by-day pursuits. The emotional abuses of the camp meeting, the Calvinist argued, were essential to its continued existence.[14]

John Nevin, a German Reformed minister, contended that those individuals who found religion in the emotional atmosphere of the camp meeting were deceived. Bodily excitement and physical expression were not characteristic of "true religion."[15] "True religion," Nevin maintained, involved the rational discussion of theological issues and

> a ministry apt to teach; sermons full of unction and light; zeal for the interests of holiness; catechetical training; due attention to order and discipline; and patient perseverance in the details of the ministerial work.[16]

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[13]Carlton [Hall], The New Purchase, 368. [14]Ibid.

[15]Theodore Appel, The Life and Work of John Williamson Nevin (Philadelphia, 1889), 157-74.

[16]Nevin, The Anxious Bench as quoted in Ibid., 173.

The political rally was also censured for its emotional foundation. The Whigs, opponents charged, were conducting a sham campaign which ignored important issues as it catered to the emotions of the public. General Harrison with his constant evasion of the controversial topics of the day soon became the main target of this attack. In reference to Harrison's reticence Francis Blair wrote President Jackson that Old Tip was playing "hide and go seek with the public."[17]

Democrats, however, were not the only observers to criticize the campaign's emphasis on emotionalism, as many of Harrison's fellow Whigs expressed their opposition to such tactics. Massachusetts Governor Levi Lincoln was a consistent opponent of emotional campaign techniques. Although he was an outspoken enemy of Van Buren, Lincoln could never condone the Whig strategy in 1840. Basing his opposition to the Democrats on intellectual criteria, the governor sought to elevate the nature of the campaign. When Congressman Ogle presented his speech on the aristocratic excesses of the Van Buren administration, Lincoln, who had recently been elected to Congress, rose to contradict most of the young congressman's assumptions and assertions. The Whigs, he argued, could defeat Van Buren without resorting

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[17] The Nashville Union, May 12, 1840; Francis P. Blair to Andrew Jackson, June 17, 1840, John Spencer Bassett (ed.), The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, VI (Washington, 1933), 65.

to such emotional and often dishonest methods.[18] Lincoln did not stand alone, for various Whigs were admonishing their fellows to avoid emotional techniques. As early as May of 1837 the Whig Committee of Merchants asked the party leaders to "[o]mit all those appeals to popular prejudice in which demogogues have found their strength."[19]

Another criticism directed at both the religious and political encampments involved the type of people who attended the gatherings. The enemies of the camp meeting claimed that its irrational appeal attracted "the dregs of society." Most gatherings, they insisted, were peopled with "criminals, prostitutes, scapegallows," and other undesirables. When the passions of these immoral drifters were fanned by the characteristic emotional excitement of the woodland meetings, opponents maintained that all types of evil could be expected.[20]

Like those of the camp meeting the critics of the Whig meetings charged that only the dregs of society could be found in the political congregations. According to the

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[18] The Nashville Union, July 27, 1840; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston, 1945), 293-94; Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 109.

[19] Plaindealer, May 18, 1837 as quoted in Schlesinger, The Age of Jackson, 287.

[20] Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 93, 235; Posey, The Development of Methodism, 29.

Tennessee Sentinel, published at Jonesborough, the Whig "festival" at Cumberland Gap was attended by 500 women, all of them prostitutes![21] The Democrats continued their attacks in the following descriptions of the rally at Cumberland Gap:

> . . . the question is daily asked, what was the design of the Convention? Why, it was the meeting of a great squad of British Federal Whig loafers--the very rakings and scrapings of every gutter and sewer in the three states, to devise and concoct ways and means to bamboozle the people out of their liberties.[22]

Critics often alluded to rampant immorality and drunkenness at the religious and political meetings. Frederick Marryat, the English novelist, maintained that any good work conducted by the camp meeting was negated by "the licentiousness which . . . too often follows, when night has thrown her veil over the scene."[23] "How can we wonder," asked Frederick Von Raumer, a German visitor to America,

> that the preacher, carried away by the grandeur of his mission and of surrounding objects, should be roused to a pitch of excitement which the equable flow of common life would never produce? And who can doubt but that they content with all their strength against the irregularities which creep into those meetings, held by night as well as day?[24]

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[21] The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840.

[22] Tennessee Sentinel (Jonesborough), n.d. as quoted in Ibid.

[23] Frederick Marryat, Diary in America, ed. Jules Zanger (Bloomington, Indiana, 1960), 279.

[24] Frederick Von Raumer, America and the American People (New York, 1846), 342-43.

In many circles the religious assemblages conjured images of depravity and loose interpretations of the Seventh Commandment.[25] Social theorist John Humphrey Noyes, while not an enemy of the camp meeting, viewed the sexual aspect of the gatherings from a perspective similar to many of the opponents. The difference between the radical philosopher and more orthodox critics was that Noyes approved of promiscuous sexual expression:

> Religious love is the very near neighbor to sexual love and they always get mixed up in the intimacies and social excitements of Revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve and his Paradise.[26]

The frequent use of whiskey by those who attended the camp meeting induced many critics to charge that drunkenness was a common characteristic of the institution. Tavern owners reportedly set up their merchandise just outside of the campground for the use of both the religious and the irreligious. Bodily excitement was often attributed as much to inebriation as to religious enthusiasm.[27]

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[25]Thomas Hamilton, Men and Manners in America (New York, 1833), 405-06; Daniel Drake, Pioneer Life in Kentucky (New York, 1948), 194; Friedrich Gerstacker, Wild Sports in the Far West (London, 1854), 142, 145; Richardson Wright, Hawkers and Walkers in Early America (Philadelphia, 1927), 155.

[26]Letter of John Humphrey Noyes to William Hepworth Dixon, March, 1867 as quoted in William Hepworth Dixon, Spiritual Wives, II (New York, 1971), 171.

[27]Robert E. Riegel, America Moves West (New York, 1930), 95; Robert M. Coates, The Outlaw Years: The History of the Land Pirates of the Natchez Trace (New York, 1930), 221; Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 224-28; James G. Leyburn, Frontier Folkways (New Haven, 1935), 199.

The Democratic opponents of the Whigs feigned shocked indignation concerning the low moral tone of the rallies. Every time the Whigs assemble, proclaimed the editors of The Nashville Union, they increase "the amount of crime and wickedness in the land."[28] The Democrats were eager to plant suspicions of sexual irregularities at the meetings in the mind of the public. Democratic descriptions of Whig assemblages invariably made use of phrases such as "midnight orgies," "bacchanalian revelries," "obscenity," "lewdness," and "every species of abomination."[29] Referring to General Harrison, the Van Burenites claimed that the Whigs chose as their leader a man who had enjoyed illicit sexual relations with Winnebago Indians during his frontier days.[30]

The hard cider portion of the Whig campaign came under, as could be expected, vicious attacks from various segments of society.[31] The Democrats charged that the log cabin and hard cider enthusiasm was little more than "riot and drunkenness, fit only to amuse, if they did not disgust, a London

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[28]The Nashville Union, September 28, 1840.

[29]Tennessee Sentinel (Jonesborough), n.d. as quoted in The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, 1840; The Nashville Union, August 27, 1840.

[30]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 226.

[31]The Nashville Union, August 27, September 28, 1840.

populace or a Parisian mob."[32] Temperance societies also rebuked the Whigs for their use of the beverage. A minister from South Carolina warned of "the certain destruction that avails the friends of temperance," because "one of the great political parties of the day is rallying under the banner of hard cider."[33]

Hard cider, according to the Democratic "temperance forces," was directly responsible for much of the Whigs' outrageous behavior. While church bells in Nashville were beckoning "our quiet citizens to religious worship, to enjoy their meditations and renew and strengthen their hopes of a happy immortality," hard cider guzzling Whigs at the Great Southwestern Convention were marching through the streets with drums beating, cannons firing, and young boys and Negroes yelling.[34] The self-righteous Democrats concluded that the

> conduct of these blustering gangs which rout the air with the fulsome cries of "log cabin" and "hard cider" on the holy Sabbath, will not soon be forgotten by those who have any sincere regard for the common decencies of Christian communities.[35]

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[32] Ibid., August 19, June 8, 1840.

[33] The Whig (Jonesborough), June 8, 1840.

[34] The Nashville Union, August 19, 1840; The Whig (Jonesborough), August 26, September 9, 1840; Spirit of '76 (Nashville), September 9, 1840.

[35] The Nashville Union, August 19, 1840.

Another result of Whig drunkenness and moral debauchery in the eyes of their opponents was the singing of Tippecanoe songs at the rallies. The Democratic defenders of the public morality were much disturbed by the temporal singing which they considered a direct affront to religious sensibilities. Brownlow was infuriated by this charge and contended that the "righteous souls" who made the allegations were hypocrites well known for their own drinking, swearing, cheating, lying, betting, and chasing of "strange women."[36]

A final outgrowth of the hard cider dissipation involved charges of profane imitation of the camp meeting. At one rally according to the Democrats, a leader asked if there was any enemy of the administration who would like to participate in a "Sacrament in honor of Old Tip." Three persons came forward and kneeled at a previously prepared altar. At this time another man exclaimed, "if there are any more let them come forward." While a choir sang one of the log cabin songs, the "preacher" commanded the three mourners to "take this in rememberance of Old Tip!" As they ate five grains of corn and swallowed a mouthful of hard cider, a "loud groan went up from among the crowd, in exultation of the new converts."[37]

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[36] The Whig (Jonesborough), September 30, 1840.

[37] Argus and Commercial Herald (Knoxville), August 5, 1840.

Similar charges were made at the conclusion of the Great Southwestern Convention in Nashville. According to some very biased Democratic observers, several Whigs called for mourners after the completion of a campaign speech. As the blasphemers came forward a "Methodist or camp meeting hymn" was sung. Whigs were greatly disturbed by such accusations and made special efforts to refute them. In their attempt to dismiss this specific allegation the Tippecanoe enthusiasts claimed that a "crazy man, known to the community as such" had sung a religious song on the occasion, but he was immediately stopped by the Whigs surrounding him.[38]

Opponents of the gatherings often questioned the sincerity of the religious and political leaders. Camp meeting evangelists were accused of being more concerned with personal success than with the salvation of souls. Interdenominational conflicts and rivalries tended to portray the preachers as "soul grabbers," concerned only with swelling their particular denomination's membership. Francis Trollope maintained that the religious leaders were motivated by more carnal considerations. According to the unpopular traveler, the revivalist quickly learned that tender young

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[38] Spirit of '76 (Nashville), September 9, 23, 1840.

females were much more receptive to his advances while in a state of emotional excitement.[39]

The Democrats claimed that the Whigs used the political rally and all of their other campaign devices for the sole purpose of obtaining power. Whiggery was totally unconcerned with principles and issues, as evidenced by the party's deliberate policy of silence.[40] The cynical Whigs, exclaimed their opponents, make mockery of the sacred log cabins built by the labors of the "noble-hearted pioneers" who have contributed so much to America. The same Whigs "who are using the log cabin as a political tool . . . themselves live in splendid palaces, and fare sumptuously everyday."[41] The editors of The Nashville Union basically summarized the opposition's estimation of Whig motivations in the following:

> The Federal leaders profess no principle, save a desire to get into power. They pant for office. Their doctrines are so obnoxious that they dare not anow them. In past times they have avowed them again and again--and the people have repeatedly rendered them a verdict of condemnation. . . . Whiggery has even gone so far as to place a guard around its candidate for the Presidency to prevent him from avowing a single principle. Its votaries believe, poor creatures, that the sovereign people of this proud Republic have no principles of their own, and are to be managed.[42]

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[39]Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 143; Coulter, Brownlow, 13-16; Trollope, Domestic Manners, 173.

[40]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 223-26.

[41]The Nashville Union, July 27, 1840.

[42]Ibid., May 21, 1840.

Of course, any partisan political movement will make enemies and elicit criticism, and the Whig campaign of 1840 was obviously no exception. The difference, however, between regular political attacks and the assaults of the Tippecanoe and Tyler campaign was the 1840 concentration on the political rally. The same is true of the religious meetings. All dogmatic religious movements prompt spirited criticism from opponents, but the camp meeting was special in relation to the frequency and severity of the assaults. Whether the meetings revolved around political or religious causes, their criticisms were amazingly similar from the time of the early outdoor services of Wesley to the campaign of 1840.

Almost from the beginning the controversial nature of the meetings invited trouble from area ruffians. The congregations at both the religious and political meetings were plagued by seemingly constant disruptions. Various steps, including legal enactments, retaliatory physical action, and verbal harangues, were taken to combat the disturbances, but nothing served to eliminate the problem entirely.[43]

Most disruptions followed a recognizable pattern. Usually a group of young men from the area would ride into the campground and begin to imitate the behavior of the

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[43]Sullins, Recollections, 37; Cossitt, Ewing, 66; Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 268; Young, Autobiography, 294-96.

congregation in a very boisterous manner. Before departing, the "rowdies," as they were referred to, would insult the women and children and many times fight with the men. If their goal was to destroy the continuity and spirit of the gatherings, they were usually successful.

The "rowdies" who disrupted both the camp meeting and political rally tended to display the same general characteristics. Neither group was a mere collection of "village toughs." Although "village toughs" often could be found among the disruptors, a special characteristic distinguished the two groups. While the village ruffian never had been ideologically motivated, those who disrupted the camp meeting and political rally usually harbored either anti-religious or in 1840 anti-Whig sentiments. Those who terrorized the religious meetings often attempted to refute the doctrines presented by the leaders of the assemblages, while those who harassed the political gatherings often expressed Democratic convictions. These "opposers," as they were often referred to by the religious and political communities, did not fit into any social or economic category. Sometimes they were described as "well-dressed young men" and other times as paupers. They did, however, possess a propensity for the excessive use of liquor. Countless references were made to "opposers" entering the campground armed with a whiskey bottle. In all probability these disruptors needed a few

"shots of courage" before they could enter an area where they were so overwhelmingly outnumbered.[44]

Peter Cartwright witnessed more than his share of disruptions. Actually, the majority of meetings which he conducted were disturbed in some way or another by the "non-professors." While leading a woodland service in Ohio the preacher declared that he had never seen a "greater collection of rabble and rowdies." They had entered the campground drunk and armed with guns, knives, clubs, and horsewhips. During the Sunday morning service two members of the group marched into the ladies' section with whips and began to make loud noises. Cartwright called upon the magistrates who had been posted to protect the meeting to arrest the men. The lawmen, obviously frightened, refused his request. The fearless preacher, very disturbed by the cowardly guards, declared that he would take the men into custody himself. As he rushed toward them, thirty or more of their fellows entered the campground. Within moments fighting erupted throughout the encampment. Vastly outnumbering the rowdies, the men of the congregation had little trouble defeating them. A

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[44]Lee, The Life of Rev. Jesse Lee, 485; Young, Autobiography, 294-95; A. H. Redford, The History of Methodism in Kentucky, II (Nashville, 1870), 188; Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 268-69; Sullins, Recollections, 37; Cartwright, Autobiography, 90-93, 184-85; Finley, Autobiography, 327-29, 364; Johnson, "The Camp Meeting in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," NCHR, 108-09; Daily National Intelligencer, October 9, 1840; The Whig (Jonesborough), July 15, September 2, October 7, 1840.

large number was captured and turned over to local law enforcement personnel. Cartwright resumed the preaching late that evening; and, according to the confident minister, when the meeting ended on Tuesday over 200 individuals had been saved.[45]

James Finley described an attempted disruption at a camp meeting held in Alton, Illinois, on the Mississippi River. A group of desperadoes led by the notorious Mike Fink entered the campground and to the chagrin of the men in the congregation began to hurl insults at the women. Fink's reputation as a fighter so frightened the campers that no one offered any resistance to him or his men. Finally one of the preachers decided to take action and told the congregation to "wait for a few minutes . . . while I go and make the devil pray." The preacher, unidentified by Finley, told Fink that he would force him to offer a prayer to the Lord. After a few minutes of fighting, the minister grasped Fink around the throat. Unable to free himself and realizing that the clergyman would not let go until he prayed, Fink spoke to the Lord in a voice audible to all present. After the scuffle Fink and his party conducted themselves with "extreme decorum," and the preacher resumed his worship service.[46]

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[45]Cartwright, Autobiography, 90-93.

[46]Finley, Autobiography, 327-29.

As noted, many of the disruptions at the religious assemblages involved the use of liquor. Ambitious individuals often set up stands outside the campground from which they sold their whiskey. This caused such chaos during the services that preachers sought legal restrictions on such activity.[47] Besides passing legislation to forbid peddling in or near a campground, most state legislatures enacted statutes designed to protect camp meetings from would-be disruptors. According to the laws anyone who disturbed a "religious service" could be arrested. To insure that all portions of an assemblage would be legally defined as a "religious service," ministers never pronounced benediction until the very last service of a meeting.[48]

The political rally had similar troubles. As Parson Brownlow reported on the various Tennessee Whig rallies held during the summer of 1840, he often referred to the disorders which marred the gatherings. Often a group of men, usually referred to as Locofocos or Democrats by Brownlow, would heckle the Whig orator during his speech. When the offended Whigs tried to quiet the dissenters fighting usually

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[47]Cartwright, Autobiography, 184-85; Finley, Autobiography, 364; Johnson, "The Camp Meeting in Ante-Bellum N. C.," NCHR, 109.

[48]Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 268; Sullins, Recollections, 37.

resulted.[49] At the Great Southwestern rally held at Nashville in August numerous disturbances occurred. When a group of Democrats stoned the giant Whig ball, a famous campaign device rolled to Nashville from Zanesville, Ohio, the men who came with the ball attempted to stop them. In the following struggle a Whig was stabbed, but the great ball was saved. During the speaking on the night of August 17 the Whigs were plagued with disruptions. A gang of the Democratic "vermine," Brownlow claimed,

> were passing to and fro, and yelling like savages, to attract attention, while another set, supposed to be their partners, were stealing pocket-books by the dozen, as they clandestinly [sic] passed the crowd. Several pocket-books were stolen, though no positive proof is had, as to who got them--further than it is known that they were Locofocos, and are suspected for having come from the direction of the Union office![50]

Brownlow was sure that the large attendance and wild enthusiasm achieved by the Nashville meeting greatly disturbed the Democrats. In an attempt to counteract the influence, the Van Burenites resorted to underhanded action. Besides the previously described interuptions, the Democrats, the preacher-editor claimed, were paying Negro women to don

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[49] The Tennessee Whig (Jonesborough), June 24, 1840; The Whig (Jonesborough), July 15, September 2, October 7, 1840.

[50] The Whig (Jonesborough), September 2, 1840. In his reference to the Union, Brownlow was alluding to The Nashville Union, the Democratic newspaper of the city.

Van Buren badges and bully through the streets "huzzaying for Democracy."[51]

Whig gatherings throughout the nation were also subjected to disruptions. During a procession through the streets of Cincinnati a group of ruffians attacked some of the marchers, severely wounding many of them. During the evening speechmaking the hoodlums renewed their attacks, this time burning General Harrison in effigy.[52] At the Baltimore Young Whig Convention in May of 1840 a young man was killed by a group of Democrats attempting to break up a procession.[53] Reflecting on the fights and conflicts he had seen or heard about during the campaign, John Quincy Adams concluded that the "manifest tendency" of such events was "to civil war."[54]

In August of 1842 an incident that occurred in Sullivan County, Tennessee, displayed the inseparable nature of the camp meeting and political rally and the disturbances which tormented them both. While attending a religious meeting at the Reedy Creek Campground near Blountville, Parson Brownlow was attacked by a group of men led by Fayette McMullin, a

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Daily National Intelligencer, October 9, 1840.

[53] Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, X, entries for May 6 and September 24, 1840, 282, 353.

[54] Ibid., entry for August 29, 1840, 352.

Democratic state senator from Abingdon, Virginia. As the Sunday morning service was beginning, Brownlow and a couple of his friends entered the gate which led toward the speaker's stand. The Parson noticed that a group of thirty men, which he recognized as Locofocos, had gathered around the gate. Looking behind the men, he spotted McMullin and his two brothers.

Brownlow and the senator were long-time political enemies, and in the latest issue of his newspaper the Parson had referred to McMullin as a thief. Suddenly, the three McMullin brothers rushed toward Brownlow striking him repeatedly with clubs. The Parson fell onto his face as the blows continued to fall upon his head and back. Recovering his footing, Brownlow pulled a pistol from his coat and fired it directly into Senator McMullin's chest. The fact that the preacher-editor carried a gun with him to the camp meeting is quite a revealing commentary even without the knowledge of his uninhibited willingness to use it. Luckily for McMullin the cap of the gun exploded without sending the bullet to its target, saving the senator from certain death. Realizing that the weapon had misfired, the brothers again knocked the Parson to the ground. Before the fight could continue, various individuals pulled the Democrats away from Brownlow thus ending the disturbance. On Tuesday night, after the last service of the meeting, the "Locofoco

gang," as Brownlow referred to McMullin and his friends, returned to the campground with pistols and clubs for another "engagement." When they were informed that many of the people present were armed and prepared for "war," the group chose to postpone further action.[55]

Whatever their other similarities, both the political and religious meetings were plagued by the attacks of those who were not enamored by the great enthusiasm of their movements. Neither, however, should have been surprised by such assaults, for both offended countless members of society with their dogmatic and uncompromising attitudes. Both groups suffered from a self-righteousness which made it impossible for them to coexist peacefully with their perceived enemies. The religious crusaders could no more live with the "forces of sin" than the Whigs could share a home with Van Buren and his friends. With such restricted perspectives, it is surprising that John Quincy Adams was not more correct in his assessment of the "manifest tendency" of such attitudes.

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[55]Taylor, Historic Sullivan, 190; The Jonesborough Whig, August 24, 31, 1842. Brownlow had changed the name of his paper from The Whig to The Jonesborough Whig after the election of 1840.

CHAPTER VI

EFFECTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Sharing a common base of technique and manner, the religious and political gatherings faced similar problems and enjoyed comparable successes. The countless similarities between the camp meeting and the political rally, however, were not merely accidental. With the liberalization of the franchise and the resulting political changes in the 1820's and 1830's, it seems logical to assume that political leaders, familiar with the techniques of the virtually ubiquitous camp meeting, consciously catalogued and then applied those methods to the new political realities. Emerging as an influential force in America during the first years of the nineteenth century, the camp meeting retained a degree of vitality and power for three or four decades. During this period perceptive political leaders, often men with camp meeting backgrounds, recognized the possibilities of a political adaptation of evangelical methodology. When confronted with an expanded electorate permeated with self-conscious "common men," even the more traditional politicians abandoned their old political habits for the new and more effective techniques which they had witnessed for years in the religious sphere of American society.

The appeal of both the religious and political groups was based on an emotionalism which seemed to attract widespread support from Americans. The leaders of the movements understood that a rational, objective campaign would not fill the mourners' benches with converts or the polling places with Tippecanoe voters. Instilling a sense of urgency through the meeting ground, the leaders of the gatherings warned their audiences that the fate of the world rested in their hands. The religious community was convinced that without the help of the word of God, as they interpreted it, the rest of humanity was destined to eternal suffering. Without a Whig victory at the polls in November the American nation to which the world turned for spiritual guidance was doomed. Any group of individuals who interpreted their mission to be so important could understandingly become very excited and emotional when confronted with the implications of their situation by an adept speaker. Undoubtedly this apocalyptic outlook facilitated the creation of the "crowd" atmosphere at the assemblages. Leaders of both the religious and political meetings recognized the existence of the "crowd" and its importance to their success. Placing their congregations together for days at a time, constantly haranguing them with appeals which bypassed their reasonable nature, the leaders received a response which far exceeded their greatest expectations. When a touch of music was added, the emotional appeal often became irresistible.

To facilitate the formation of enthusiasm and group solidarity the leaders constantly flattered their crowds. The common man was repeatedly reminded that he was the most important member of society, and one of the main purposes of the religious and political gatherings was to convince the rest of society of this often neglected fact. The Arminian doctrine of free will, which most camp meeting leaders accepted as fact, squared well with the emerging cult of the common man. With the expansion of voting rights in the 1820's and 1830's the common man assumed a new importance in political affairs, and politicians at the political rally were quick to emphasize his value and dignity. The leaders of the religious and political assemblages consistently struck a responsive chord by assuring their audiences that the individual in America possessed the intelligence to control and decide his own destiny.

Undoubtedly both gatherings possessed tremendous energy. The camp meeting was so powerful that thousands of people dedicated their lives to the religious precepts associated with the assemblage. The political rally contributed to the salvation of a weak political party, as it helped produce a smashing electoral victory. Evangelical methodology was permanently affected, as was the political vote-getting technique. The meetings were so emotionally upsetting that many of society's traditional roles were overpowered by their

influence. Often women and occasionally blacks assumed new responsibilities and positions at gatherings which were at variance with the values and mores of the time. Opponents, finding the meetings dangerously persuasive, undertook various means, not excluding violence, to counteract the influence. Whatever their other failings, the meetings certainly possessed the energy and power to make things happen--both positively and negatively.

Although opponents of the meetings charged the political and religious crusaders with countless offenses, in general neither gathering was as bad as sometimes pictured. Total exoneration, however, is not possible because both assemblages witnessed behavior deserving condemnation.

Occasionally rampant immorality and drunkenness afflicted both groups. At the great camp meeting at Cane Ridge in 1801 numerous improprieties took place and some were recorded. Drunken men outraged many of the more pious attendants by their behavior. Preachers found numerous couples participating in sexual acts, and under one altar six men were found lying with one lady.[1] As the camp meeting evolved, however, irregularities of this nature did become more and more infrequent. Leaders began to take measures that would insure respectability for the woodland gatherings and reduce the

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[1]Finley, Autobiography, 364; Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 65-66; Posey, The Development of Methodism, 30.

possibility of moral violations. By 1810 Bishop Asbury proposed to make the campgrounds permanent, thus granting the meetings a degree of stability and convention:

> If our encampments could be paid in every circuit and the bottom part of a meeting house built about 100 feet long and equal width, fences up about 5 feet height, a good floor, strong back benches, partition in the middle, passages on the sides, strong gates that would be the holy place, as much as much as one seat space left before the pulpit for mourners. In the front seats let all the officials sit.[2]

As early as 1804 Asbury gave major concern to the camp meeting's problem with immorality. In an attempt to discourage improper actions, the bishop suggested that sixteen to twenty watchmen be appointed to guard the campground during the course of the meetings. In order to maintain the respect of all persons in attendance, Asbury urged the guards to carry "long, white, peeled rods." Extremely concerned with the appearance of impropriety, Asbury and other Methodist leaders argued that the camp meeting could be effective as an evangelical tool only after its moral "credit" was established in the small communities in America.[3]

Thus in only a few years after their introduction, camp meetings came to be regulated by a relatively standardized

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[2]Asbury to Jacob Gruber, August 25, 1810 in Journal of Asbury, III, 436.

[3]Asbury to Daniel Hitt, August 22, 1804, Ibid., III, 300.

set of rules. In order to prevent the occurrence of immoral conduct during the night, a "sufficient number" of lamps were placed throughout the grounds "to illuminate the entire encampment." Each camper was also required to keep a light burning in his tent until daylight. During the preaching various individuals were appointed to keep watch on the tents. Between the religious services leaders tried to provide sufficient activities, including prayer meetings and group singing, to keep everyone busy and free from mischief.[4] In order to prevent drunkenness, church leaders exerted pressure upon state legislators to pass laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages near a campground.[5] The emphasis of the leaders of the camp meeting, therefore, was upon the prevention of embarrassing behavior. While irregularities did occur, such conduct was so infrequent that it must be deemed the exception and not the rule at the gatherings.

Like the camp meeting, the political rally sometimes saw unbecoming and immoral behavior. Passionate Whigs, with inhibitions reduced by the combination of emotionalism and hard cider, undoubtedly committed acts which would be classified by many as "immoral." On occasions the results of too much hard cider enthusiasm were apparent. Tippecanoe

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[4]Bangs, History of the M. E. Church, 267.

[5]Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 224.

boys, feeling the effects of the symbolic beverage, took to the streets terrorizing and fighting with those not caught up in the Whig enthusiasm. Even some of the Whigs themselves felt that hard cider was being used much too often.[6] The rallies offered a splendid opportunity for enterprising prostitutes, who very rarely could find such a large number of potential clients. Although immorality was present, the political rally was by no means a scene, as the Democrats referred to it, of "riot and drunkenness,"[7] Like their religious counterparts, Whig leaders made special efforts to assure the public that the assemblages were honorable affairs. In his accounts of the various rallies in Tennessee, Parson Brownlow naturally emphasized the orderly and pious conduct of the Whigs in attendance. When the purity of the rallies was questioned by the opposition, Whigs were quick to supply the public with vehement denials of improper conduct. As with the camp meeting, "moral looseness" plagued but did not characterize the political rally.[8]

Another criticism leveled at both groups involved the insincerity of those who planned and directed the religious

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[6]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 144, 110; Julian, Political Recollections, 16.

[7]The Nashville Union, June 8, 1840.

[8]The Whig (Jonesborough), September 2, October 7, 1840; Spirit of '76 (Nashville), September 9, 1840.

and political services. In the religious sphere different ministers were motivated by different concerns--some noble and some not. Who can question, for example, the sincerity of Francis Asbury whose travels to spread the gospel were equivalent to nine trips around the earth?[9] Asbury did not stand alone, as scores of circuit riders devoted their lives to the good cause with little, if any, secular reward for their phenomenal labors.[10] Still, there were camp meeting leaders who were more concerned with personal success than with the triumph of Christianity. There were those who held that success revolved around the number of converts a preacher could show for his efforts at each meeting. During the emotional excitement of the gatherings ministers often appointed men to count converts. The counters, probably confusing emotional expression with conversion, frequently produced a highly inaccurate list which the minister presented to his clerical superior at the first opportunity.[11]

Denominational pride and rivalries also served as motivating factors. Fights and shooting matches often broke out between denominations at religious services producing bitterness and hatred. As one denomination strove to best

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[9]Posey, The Development of Methodism, 37.

[10]Ibid. It was estimated that the average itinerant preacher-camp meeting leader received salary of approximately $9.50.

[11]Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting, 143.

the other in terms of total membership, the original religious purpose of the work was forgotten.[12] A good example of this denominational rivalry involved Peter Cartwright and a Baptist meeting in Tennessee during the fall of 1813. Learning that a Baptist minister was conducting an outdoor service nearby, Cartwright decided to attend. As he listened to the preacher repeatedly slander Methodist ministers and the Methodist Church, the tempestuous clergyman arose to refute the allegations. Apparently offering very conclusive evidence, Cartwright convinced the congregation that the Baptist minister was a liar. The campers, enraged by the circumstance, demanded that the minister explain his reasons for misleading them. Refusing to stay and face the angry crowd, the discredited preacher started to leave the campground. When he refused Cartwright's orders to come back, the quick-tempered Methodist pulled out a gun and began shooting at him. Undoubtedly, the incident further worsened the already sensitive association between the Baptists and Methodists in Tennessee.[13]

Like many leaders of the camp meeting, numerous political leaders honestly believed in the work of the cause and worked diligently for its triumph with the hope of improving the lot

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[12]Coulter, Brownlow, 13-16.

[13]Cartwright, Autobiography, 133-34.

of their fellow citizens. Parson Brownlow, for example, was a devoted Whig and Methodist and sincerely believed that Whiggery combined with a generous helping of Methodism would make the world a better place in which to live. Even during the campaign of 1840 when cynicism reached epidemic proportions, Brownlow never presented any indication that he did not believe in the moral superiority of the Whig party.[14]

Yet in the political arena the insincerity of those who organized and led the gatherings is often more obvious than in the religious circles. The Tippecanoe and Tyler campaign with its emphasis on the irrational seemed to breed cynicism in the ranks of Whig leadership. Thomas Elder, a Whig leader from Pennsylvania, remarked early in the campaign that "passion and prejudice, properly aroused and directed, would do about as well as principle and reason in a party contest."[15] Elder's advice was strictly followed by the national leaders of the Whig campaign. Using Crockett's and Ogle's portrait of Van Buren and the Baltimore newspaper editor's log cabin and hard cider as the foundation of their campaign, the Whigs, not totally unlike the Democrats remained silent on the important issues of the day.[16] To the Weeds and Sewards

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[14]The Whig (Jonesborough and Elizabethton), January-November, 1840.

[15]Richard S. Elliott, Notes Taken in Sixty Years as quoted in Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 76.

[16]Crockett, Van Buren, 80-81; Daily National Intelligencer, June 30, July 23, 1840.

the people were little more than pawns to be maneuvered in whatever manner they deemed conducive to electoral victory.

Those critics who claimed that the leaders of the gatherings appealed only to the emotions of the masses were, with very few exceptions, correct. As previously discussed, the camp meeting leader utilized all available tools in his attempt to work an audience into a highly emotional state. Emphasizing the uncertainty of death and the horror of an eternity in hell, the preacher found that conversions were relatively easy to obtain.[17] Hilary T. Hudson, highlighting a consistent theme of Methodism throughout the nineteenth century, stated in his handbook for preachers that the most important aspect of preaching was the "delicate task of warming the heart and kindling the emotions." Logic, he asserted, must take a secondary role when compared to this emotional stimulation.[18]

Like the camp meeting preacher, the leader of the political rally appealed to the emotions of his audience. Depreciating the importance of contemporary political issues, the Whig leaders emphasized the log cabin and hard cider

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[17]Dow, History of the Cosmopolite, 224-25; Sellers, Dow, 131-32; Finley, Autobiography, 269; Cartwright, Autobiography, 180-182.

[18]Hilary T. Hudson, The Methodist Armor (Nashville, 1888), 237-38.

aspects of their crusade. Judging their campaign techniques by the same criteria employed by the religious leaders, the Whig orators sought new and better ways to excite a congregation. In his characterizations of the various Whig "missionaries," Parson Brownlow always presumed that oratorical prowess hinged upon the speaker's ability to alter the emotional state of the assembled multitude. The preacher-editor used phrases such as "the finest effect imaginable," "a proud and exciting effect," and "a thrilling effect" to describe the impact of a successful oration upon a congregation.[19]

Both the camp meeting and the political rally produced permanent effects upon various segments of American society. Although many of those who professed conversion at the religious gatherings were only temporarily affected by the emotional atmosphere, the camp meeting proved to be a very successful means of increasing permanent church membership. The effects of the meetings were felt almost immediately after the introduction of the institution. Baptists in Kentucky who made use of the encampments found that from 1800 to 1803 their membership had increased by 10,000 members.[20] Between the years 1792 and 1800 the Holston

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[19]The Whig (Jonesborough), October 7, September 2, 23, 1840.

[20]Cleveland, The Great Revival, 131.

Conference of the Methodist Church increased its membership by a mere 228, but, eight years after the introduction of the camp meeting into the area membership had jumped by 2,058.[21] Asbury was elated by the good work produced in the forest encampments. The meetings were converting so many people that the bishop proclaimed that the millennium had "certainly begun."[22]

Following the debut of the camp meeting in East Tennessee an observer remarked that the moral enthusiasm produced by the institution had closed many of the "ballrooms, tippling shops, and taverns," and converted them into places of public worship.[23] The Methodists' use of the camp meeting and the appeal to the individual pushed them into a leading position among religious denominations of America. Revival movements which followed the era of the camp meeting employed the techniques outlined by the leaders of the gatherings. American revivalists of the present era deviate very little from the methodology of the early meeting leaders. Affecting not only the religious community, the camp meeting left its mark on American society as well. Besides exhibiting various

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[21]Price, Holston Methodism, I, 364-65.

[22]Asbury to Thorton Fleming, November 7, 1806 and Asbury to Thomas Coke, May 7, 1806 in Journal of Asbury, III, 356, 343.

[23]Letter of Rev. Gideon Blackburn to a friend in Philadelphia, January 20, 1804 as quoted in Price, Holston Methodism, I, 353.

means of provoking and inspiring the masses, the evangelical religion of the camp meeting, claims Robert Gray Gunderson, "accustomed Americans to public emotionalism."[24] The encampments provided a religious sanction and precedent for mass meetings motivated by concerns of a more temporal nature.

Significantly influenced by the religious meetings, the political rally as used by the Whigs in 1840 produced its own lasting effects upon American society. Impressing all political leaders with their sizable electoral victory, the Whigs institutionalized evangelical and egalitarian campaign methods in the American political system.[25] So powerful was the effect of the political rally and the surrounding campaign hoopla that voter turnout in 1840 exceeded every previous record. Almost four out of every five eligible voters participated in the election--a contest never known for its important issues. In Tennessee, for example, from 1824 to 1836 an average of only 40 percent of the eligible electorate bothered to vote in the presidential elections. In 1840, however, 89.6 percent of the qualified voters cast a vote for either Harrison or Van Buren.[26]

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[24]Gunderson, The Log-Cabin Campaign, 10.

[25]Daily National Intelligencer, November 9, 1840. The Whigs carried nineteen out of twenty-six states, winning a 234 to 60 electoral victory.

[26]Richard P. McCormick, "New Perspectives on Jacksonian Politics," American Historical Review, LXV (January, 1960), 296, 292.

After 1840 the common man was the central personality of political rhetoric, as each candidate strove to convince an electorate of common men that he was more of a common man than his opponent. Almost a century after the Whigs portrayed their common man candidate as the "Farmer of North Bend," Calvin Coolidge posed for a group of photographs which depicted him pitching hay on a farm in Vermont. If one closely examined the photographs, he would notice that the President's shoes were highly polished and his overalls were fresh--neither soiled nor wrinkled by such serious work. The point is clear that the Republicans of the 1920's had not forgotten the lessons in American politics going back to the Whigs in 1840 and beyond. Silent Cal, the Republican strategists insisted, was not too high and mightly to engage in the mundane pursuits of the common man.[27]

This virtual revolution of political tactics and manners engendered some strange sights for the public. Men who had led a rather aristocratic, cultured existence began to turn up at the Whig gatherings in linsey-woolsey and homespun.[28] Apparently they had experienced a Cartwright form of conversion to the Whig principles, as they donned a new and more humble wardrobe symbolic of their change of heart.[29]

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[27]Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York, 1955), 31.

[28]John William Ward, Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age (New York, 1955), 94.

[29]Cartwright, Autobiography, 49, 74-78.

Stately Daniel Webster speaking of his family's log cabin and dignified Nicholas Biddle camping out, eating from shingles, and defying anyone to call him an aristocrat at the risk of a fist fight were spectacles only possible on the American political stage. These men, who in the past had neither engaged in nor endorsed such plebeian political expression, now not only attended the great rallies but were among the most active figures present.[30] The rallies themselves became a standard segment of American politics. Apparently learning from the Whigs' example, the Democrats came to depend on the political rally and with it found great success in elections subsequent to 1840. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the political rally has been exploited by Whigs, Democrats, Republicans, Populists and other political organizations in virtually every campaign.[31] Whether the rallying cry was religious or political, the formula for a successful meeting remained unchanged.

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[30]Ward, Jackson, 94.

[31]The Jonesborough Whig, April-November, 1842; Goebel, Harrison, 347-48.

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