CHAPTER II

A NEW PARSON RIDES THE CIRCUIT

Bishop Joshua Soule sent young Brownlow to one of the roughest and most inaccessible parts of all Southern Appalachia. The Holston Conference, in which Brownlow was to carry on his circuit-riding for the next ten years, was laid out with no regard at all for state lines; it embraced parts of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, and the Parson on horseback carried his message into every one of these states before he was finally allowed to locate. The Conference was composed of five districts, Abingdon, French Broad, Knoxville, Hiwassee and Asheville, and the districts were made up of varying numbers of circuits. In that part of the Conference where the long ridges prevailed, the circuit was more likely than not to be made up of a single valley, as the Clinch Circuit, which at one time was simply the Powell River Valley, 150 miles long and 25 miles wide. But the Black Mountain Circuit, in the Asheville District, where Brownlow was sent, lay far over in North Carolina on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge where the mountains were jumbled and piled so high that they formed the roof of eastern North America.

According to the custom, he was taken on trial, and indeed if he should succeed in cultivating the Lord's vineyard in such a region as this, he should soon well deserve the full connection that each circuit-rider expected after two years. Into this region in the fall of 1826 came the twenty-one-year-old Parson, stretching upwards to the extent of about six feet, with sharp features, glaring eyes, and a determination written in his countenance that might mean defiance, fright, or fanaticism. If Joshua Soule had hoped to scare him out of the Methodist ministry by starting him off in such a place as the Black Mountain Circuit, the Bishop was much mistaken. The look in his face that some might have
interpreted as fright was in fact the quintessence of defiance and fanaticism. He seems never to have developed fear of anything throughout his long life. Yet there was hidden in his being a romantic love for nature in her most heroic moods. Instead of running from these rough mountains and swift torrents, he thought they were exquisitely beautiful. He signalized the day following his first Christmas as a circuit-rider by nearly freezing to death on Cane River. As for his vineyard, "There are few places in the world which can vie with the counties of Buncombe and Burke, in beauty and novelty of scenery—the extended hill-side fields, rich ridges, beautiful springs, mountain coves, high conical peaks, and astonishing verdure covering the soil, set off to the best advantage, the lofty Black Mountain." He was also greatly attracted by Table Rock, a great jumping-off place into the Piedmont region, which extended through Burke County to the eastward.¹

If there was romanticism in the Parson which his countenance did not show, there was a vast amount of fanatical zeal that showed in every lineament. The Baptists soon brought this characteristic into play. He had never come into contact with this sect before entering the Black Mountain region, but here he soon ran afoul of them, for they resented his activities and opposed him with much bitterness. He found them exceedingly bigoted and narrow and possessed of the certain feeling that they were the only ones who held a claim on "the bounty of the skies." He ran into one of their meetings where they were engaged in the religious observance of foot-washing and he observed, "never did I, before or since, see as many big dirty feet, washed in one large pewter basin full of water!"²

The next year he was moved back toward Tennessee to the French Broad Circuit, still in the Asheville District, but before the year was out he was sent to the Maryville Circuit in East Tennessee for three months, and then transferred again back into Buncombe County. While out in the Maryville region he had his first skirmish with the Presbyterians, who were very

² Brownlow, _Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism_, p. 244.
strong in that vicinity. He complained of being continuously pursued by a little Calvinistic upstart who made no end of pester­ering him about such subjects as moral inability and the im­possibility of falling from grace. He attended a meeting, where a Presbyterian was trying to describe the comical dress of a Methodist preacher. With a great bluster Brownlow stood up and asked the audience to look for themselves. This unexpected move threw the meeting into an uproar. By such acts Brownlow was becoming known and getting talked about far and wide. While in Knoxville one day he ran up on a Presbyterian min­ister enjoying much fun in a movement he had launched to raise money for having Brownlow’s picture painted. This promoter asked Brownlow for a subscription, whereupon the Parson quickly replied that he would contribute if it were set up “as a pattern for minister-making.” By this time Brownlow had dis­covered that his ugliness, which he never denied, served only to spread his name and reputation farther. This year he also had his brushes with the Baptists again, and when he heard them ridiculing and reviling the Methodists he rose up in their meet­ings and denounced and confused them. He declared the Bap­tist ministers were very quarrelsome even among themselves, that they often fought over a division of the money in the collec­tion plate.

Amidst all his contentions with the Calvinists, he found time to admire the beauty of nature and to try his powers of description upon it. How beautiful it was in the summer! “But O, the huge, enormous mountains! the steep and dizzy precipices; the pendent horrors of the craggy promontories—how wild and awful they look of a rainy evening.”

At length another year rolled by and Brownlow prepared to attend the Annual Conference, which met this year at Jones­boro, across the line in East Tennessee; and Bishop Joshua Soule was to preside again. In his mind he revolved this leave­taking of his beloved mountains, “Adieu to those scenes, till the last loud trump of God shall sound; and until eruptions, earth­quakes, comets, and lightnings, disgorge their blazing maga-

zines!” Soule seems to have approved of his underling’s contest with the Presbyterians and the Baptists, for the Parson noted with much pleasure that the Bishop in a sermon at the Conference “certainly tore the very hindsite off of Calvinism!” This year the Parson was sent on his way into southeast Tennessee to the Washington Circuit in the Washington District. In this region he let his zeal for disputing run riot to such an extent that he soon found himself in the midst of a slander suit, which he, however, succeeded in getting dismissed. Here he also made another discovery. For the first time he now ran into a sect called the Cumberland Presbyterians, a group who had broken away from the regular Presbyterian Church out in Kentucky in 1810 because they believed the latter required too much education for those seeking to enter the ministry.4 He found their chief activities to be proselyting from the other churches and preaching long sermons. He declared, “I do not recollect to have ever heard more than one who closed till he was completely out of strength, words, and ideas!” He also observed that he did not believe in long sermons and that no sermon should be longer than an hour, for “of all the deaths that ever any people died, there is none so distressing as that of being preached to death!”5 This observation he soon forgot.

The Parson seems to have had a great deal of curiosity in his make-up. Down in southeastern Tennessee he was in the former home of the Cherokee Indians, and not far removed from their abode at that time. He decided to make them a visit to see how they looked, how they lived, and what their religion was like. At this time Georgia was having trouble with her unwelcome red-men, so Brownlow decided to carry out his visiting in Alabama. Since he had an uncle living near Muscle Shoals, on the Tennessee River, he first went there and then traveled through the Cherokee nation. He found those Indians who were not savages to be good Methodists, and he heard an excellent prayer delivered by Turtlefields, one of their preachers.6

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4 For an account of the rise of this sect see Lewis and R. H. Collins, History of Kentucky, I, 433-36.
5 Ibid., pp. 251-52.
6 Brownlow, Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism, pp. 249-51.
In 1829 the Holston Conference met in Abingdon, Virginia. Though he remained in the same district as formerly, Brownlow was transferred to the Athens Circuit. While on this circuit, the Parson succeeded so well in his work that his enemies named a dog for him. He also got himself involved in a newspaper controversy.\textsuperscript{7}

Brownlow as a crusader seemed to suit the Methodists, for in 1829 he was admitted into full connection, and the next year he was given elder’s orders. This year the Annual Conference met at Ebenezer in Greene County, Tennessee, attended by the two bishops, William M’Kendree and Joshua Soule. The latter presided, and sent Brownlow this year to the Tellico Circuit in the Hiwassee region of Tennessee. Here the Parson ran into an eddy of that disturbance which was sweeping over the country under the name of Anti-Masonic movement. He heard a great deal of talk about Masonry, but since he was not quite able to gain from the outside a knowledge of just what it was, he decided to exercise a bit of self-restraint and not preach a sermon against it. But here and elsewhere he was to run into a species of quacks, which he felt quite sure he did understand, and he thundered out against them with all his vehemence. They were the so-called steam doctors, who carried around a concoction which they gave for all ailments.\textsuperscript{8}

The Parson traveled over Southern Appalachia more or less according to the laws of a cyclone. He had a daily motion inside the circuit and a great circular forward movement, on which he advanced each year by the aid of Bishop Soule. He began in the eastern confines of the Holston Conference in North Carolina and receded westward down the French Broad River into East Tennessee and then southwest into the southeast corner of Tennessee, only to be pushed back eastward toward the place of his beginning. At the 1831 Conference he was sent to the Franklin Circuit, which lay around about the three-state corner, where North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia touched one another. This year he made three tours through the southeastern ramparts of the Southern Highlands,

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., pp. 252-54.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., pp. 256, 281-82.
the "Taxaway Mountains" as he chose to denominate them, and he later marvelled that he did not lose his life.

He found this region infested with Baptists and he adjudged them as pestiferous as ever. They were always shouting "water! . . . as if the Saviour of mankind were a pennywinkle, and could only be found hanging to a sand-stone, in the bottom of some water course!" One of them, named Humphrey Posey, he endured as long as he could, and he finally took the offensive and accused Posey of selling Bibles which he was being paid to give away free. Parson Posey denied the charges and indicted Brownlow for libel. Brownlow had been rather bold to act as he did in this Baptist community, and he should have expected the decision which the court handed down. The case was tried at Franklin, in Macon County, North Carolina. According to Brownlow the judge was "corrupt and drunken," and even worse, a Baptist, so he fined Brownlow $5 and the costs. The Parson felt able to pay the $5 and he reckoned the costs to be negligible, so he went about his business of preaching, worrying none about the court's decision. But one Sunday morning while he was in the midst of a meeting, "a corrupt and inexperienced deputy sheriff," with a bill of exorbitant costs, run up by a great horde of Baptist witnesses who had been summoned without Brownlow's knowledge, levied upon all the Parson's available worldly possessions and seized them—"an elegant dun mare, saddle, bridle, saddle-bags, and umbrella." This trick rankled deep in Brownlow's soul, and he never forgot it. He declared this trial and the subsequent proceedings to be an outrageous travesty on justice, the like of which had never disgraced the annals of mankind since the trial of William Penn at Old Bailey, excepting possibly the persecutions of John Wesley at Savannah, and of Lorenzo Dow at Charleston.  

Twenty years later the Parson took an inventory of the "wicked crew" who had done this deed to him, and to his great delight he found just what he expected: The judge had died "in a drunken fit of debauch"; Parson Posey had before his

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earthly departure, turned into "a wretched and raving maniac"; one of the jurors "died, drunk in the woods"; another was serving a sentence in the penitentiary for store-breaking; another had fled the country to escape prosecution for forgery; and still another guilty of perjury was in hiding to escape just punishment. As for the remainder of these corrupt jurors, he had not heard from them for a time, "but the probability is, the Devil has those of them, who have departed this life, while the living ones are likely in some state prison!" Thus, had the Lord finally vindicated the name of one of His chief circuit-riding parsons.  

But unjust trials and court decisions could never stop Parson Brownlow or dampen his ardor for carrying Methodism to the people. The year 1833 became historic on account of a strange manifestation of nature so unusual that the tradition concerning it has lasted down to the present generation, even among the unlettered in the most out-of-the-way places. This was "the year the stars fell." This beautiful display of comets produced great excitement in the Southern Highlands and led the more curious to seek explanations. Some of the Baptists soon guessed that this had been a sign placed in the heavens to indicate the downfall of the Methodists, but one Hopkinsian lady had what she considered a more plausible explanation. She had heard that Parson Brownlow had died, and in some way had squeezed into heaven, and on his entry he had created such a disturbance that he was put out. But this ejection in being accomplished had jarred loose from their moorings all the stars which came tumbling headlong to earth.  

The Annual Conference in 1832 was held in Evensham, Virginia, presided over by Bishop John Emory. The Bishop shifted Brownlow slightly to the southeast to the Tugaloo Circuit, which lay mostly in Pickens District, South Carolina, but partly in Georgia. The Parson was soon convinced that he could do very little good here since the whole region was "overrun with Baptists." Nevertheless he was determined to try. He swam the

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10 Knoxville Whig and Independent Journal, July 5, 1851.
11 Brownlow, Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism, pp. 276-77.
THE BROWNLLOW COUNTRY

Scale of Miles

0 25 50 75
Tugaloo River four times in "the dead of winter" and preached more than once with his wet clothes frozen stiff about him. Once he was nearly swept over the shoals and "was in a squirrel's jump of the good world." But over in the Georgia part of his kingdom he saw something which delighted his nature-loving soul; it was the "Telulee Falls." Never had he "witnessed a scene which struck my mind with such profound awe, and so completely filled me with admiration of the infinite skill of the great Architect of nature." It was the general report that they were more grand than Niagara. He could scarcely describe the effect they had upon him, but it seemed to him after looking at them for a while that he felt a desire to reach the eternal world to see the Maker of such a wonderful work of nature.

While on the Tugaloo Circuit in Pickens and Anderson districts, Brownlow came as near the lowlands of the slaveholding planters as he had ever before approached; he was on the verge of running out of his beloved mountains. He would naturally look with misgiving upon these aristocrats, but the time of his arrival was most unpropitious for the planters. They were in the midst of their Nullification Movement, and Brownlow immediately turned away with loathing detestation. He was a Unionist; he had ridden the circuit in five states and had not got out of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church in doing it. He loved all these states equally well, scarcely knowing or caring when he passed from one into another. If South Carolina should successfully defy the United States Government she might break up the Union and the Holston Conference with it. He bitterly opposed this heresy, and years later declared that the movement had been engineered by the descendants of the Tories of the Revolution. He charged that more Tories had lived in South Carolina "than in all the other States put together." The Parson was not surprised to find that all the Presbyterians and Baptists were Nullifiers and that they were boldly announcing that Christ was a Nullifier. The insignia

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12 Nature was, indeed, in a grand mood at Tallulah Falls; but twentieth century Georgians, having more shriveled souls than the Parson, destroyed this beautiful cataract, turning its wasted power into electricity.
of the Nullifiers was a blue cockade. To help along the cause the Parson aided some Unionists in pinning these cockades on the tails of the worthless curs of the neighborhood that they might carry high Nullification. Starved out by the Nullifiers, Brownlow was glad to retreat back into the Union-loving mountain region, but before going, according to his word, he took a parting shot at them in a pamphlet, for which, he claimed, they tried to hang him.14

The government of the Methodist Church provided for the governmental meetings known as "conferences"—(1) a quarterly conference in each district, (2) an annual conference in each regional division, which embraces a number of districts and which as a region is called a conference, and (3) a quadrennial conference embracing all the regional divisions, or conferences, in the whole United States. These meetings gave the ministers a chance to show themselves to their fellows, they gave more tone and respectability to the backwoods circuit riders, and they afforded a chance for the play of ambition for future preferment. It fell within Brownlow's easy reach to attend the quarterly and annual conferences, and through the very nature of his irrepressible self he became well-known at these meetings within the annual Holston Conference, and succeeded in getting this group to appoint him a delegate to the General Conference to meet in Philadelphia in 1832. Here was a glorious opportunity to see what the big world outside of Southern Appalachia looked like. The Conference no doubt thought that if Brownlow should ever become properly tamed he might develop into a mighty man in Methodism, whose influence would extend far beyond the Holston Conference. In doing this elongated mountaineer of only twenty-seven years so high an honor they sought indirectly to tame him, but at the same time they were direct and frank with him. They mildly condemned him for his caustic style of writing in the newspaper controversies he got into and for his wild and unbridled manner of opposing

14 Ibid., pp. 265-66; Parson Brownlow's Book, pp. 21-23. I have never been able to discover a copy of this pamphlet or to see a reference to it except in Brownlow's claim. According to the Parson his pamphlet contained 70 pages and was entitled, Suffering of Union Men. See Portrait and Biography, p. 44.
the other denominations. This condemnation was not made greater than the Parson could bear, for his very condemners were guilty more or less of the same offenses.\textsuperscript{15}

In the spring of 1832 the Parson quit for a time his riding around in circles and set out on a bee line for Philadelphia, more than six hundred miles away. He started early enough to stop on the way, to see the sights. His first great objective was Washington. He spent a week at his country's capital, viewing the sprawling muddy town, and listening to the oratory of congressmen. Being quite an important man himself, he decided to pay a visit to Andrew Jackson, in the White House. Two Tennesseans so far away from home ought to be mutually glad to see each other. Brownlow seemed to be duly impressed with the height of Jackson, and he thought perhaps for that reason that he was "a very fine looking old man"—but he left with the feeling that he could not quite approve of the President. The Parson, being a Whig in the making, had never voted for Jackson, so perforce he could never approve of such a person. Having turned his thumbs down on the first citizen of the land, Brownlow continued his journey on to Baltimore where he again busied himself looking at the sights. He was attracted by the penitentiary, and on seeing so many people who could not run away, he immediately asked permission to preach to them. He slyly contrived to get the report carried back to his enemies in Tennessee that he was in the penitentiary in Baltimore—a fate they had long been predicting and hoping for.

At last he arrived in Philadelphia where he spent the whole month of May. He likely found more sights here than at any other place he had visited, and without a doubt he himself was a sight for many of his more urbane brothers in Methodism. When not sitting with his own Conference or viewing other objects of interest, he slipped over to the Presbyterian Assembly, which happened to be meeting in the same city. Of course, nothing good could come from Presbyterians nor would looking at them and listening to them afford anything more than amuse-

\textsuperscript{15} Price, \textit{op. cit.}, III, 316, 318; \textit{Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church}, I, 362.
ment. He heard wrangles among them "which would, for intemperance of language and wholesale abuse of private character, absolutely disgrace the lowest porter house, or ale cellar, in the lowest place in the lowest town or city in the lowest country in the world." The Parson took an extremely inconspicuous part in his own Conference. There is no record in the minutes of his having introduced a motion or seconded one or even spoken a word. He was appointed on no committees. Perhaps Bishop Soule, who presided much of the time, had suppressed Brownlow—or could he possibly have been awed by this august body? His only accomplishment in the Conference, which he ever mentioned, and later regretted, was his aid in getting James O. Andrew elected bishop.¹⁶

After the Parson had seen Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, it might well be guessed that his circuit-riding days would soon come to an end; and, indeed, he was destined to ride only three more circuits—the Dandridge, around the confluence of the Holston and French Broad rivers; the Scott, in Southwest Virginia; and the Elizabethton, in the extreme northeastern tip of Tennessee.¹⁷

Brownlow was coming to believe that he was important enough to be written about; his name had been heralded all over Southern Appalachia and even to far-away Philadelphia. He imagined that people must want to know more about himself, so in the absence of any biographers, he decided that he would write his own biography, though his scope of life had yet been less than thirty years. He entitled his work, *A Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Circumstances Incident Thereto, of William G. Brownlow.*¹⁸ True enough this autobiography was an appendix to a larger work which he called *Helps to the Study of Presby-


¹⁷ For the record of Brownlow’s itineracy see Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1829-1839, I, 518, 519, 550; ibid., II, 12, 13, 52, 90, 133, 181, 234, 300, 366, 430. See also Brownlow, *Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism,* pp. 275-89.

¹⁸ This work embraced 53 pages.
terianism or, an Unsophisticated Exposition of Calvinism, with Hopkinsian Modifications and Policy, with a View to a More Easy Interpretation of the Same. To Which is Added a Brief Account of the Author, Interspersed with Anecdotes. This work was printed for him by Frederick S. Heiskell, at Knoxville in 1884. The Parson was very frank with himself in his Life. Never having heard of psychoanalysis, he made no attempt to put himself through that process, but he was willing to state his case in the best manner of which he was capable. He listed the principal objections that had been urged against him as: his inconsistency of character, a quarrelsome nature, his style as a writer, talents as a preacher, and manners as a man, and a dislike by great numbers of people. He vigorously defended himself against every charge. As to his quarrelsome disposition, "I pretend not to be a candidate for the honors of martyrdom, yet, I should feel that I had gone down to my grave disgraced, did I not incur the censure and abuse of bloated bigotry, and priestly corruption." And, whether people liked him or not, he cared little: "I never professed to have a great deal of polish about me, nor do I desire to be polite." With a sort of a wounded feeling, he added, "I never thought I was a great man—I never desire to be what the world calls a great man." The Parson may have misread himself a slight bit here; his whole subsequent career was proof that he had a craving for power over people but perhaps, not so much for adulation as for vengeance.\(^{19}\)

For a long time his wrath had been piling up against the Presbyterians. He had been dealing with the other wing of the Calvinistic forces, the Baptists, in a rough and tumble method; but the Presbyterians had been writing things against his religion, and he would now show them that there was at least one Methodist who could also write, and who would write without restraint if need be. One activity which he especially disliked was a publication called the Calvinistic Magazine, edited by James Gallaher, Frederick A. Ross, and David Nelson, who hurled this missile at the Methodist Church from their stronghold

\(^{19}\) Brownlow, *Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism*, pp. 290-94.
in Rogersville, East Tennessee, in the midst of the Brownlow country. As they entered upon this undertaking the very first year the Parson began riding the circuit, doubtless he considered it a direct thrust at him and his work. They began their first number with the prayer of a crusader and closed it with a declaration of war against all who denied the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. Warfare it would be, between truth and falsehood.

We are commanded to hold a controversy with the sinfulness of our hearts, and it is equally obligatory to contend against error wherever we find it. Written discussions, upon religious subjects, are never to be deprecated, for error has never progressed so rapidly, as when the watchmen upon the walls of Zion, remain silent and inactive. It will be said, controversy produces unchristian feelings, and that it brings before the public, the differences of those who worship the same Lord and follow the same Saviour. The first objection is strong, only, against those who attempt to find truth without asking for the holy aid of the Spirit of truth. The second objection is plausible, but deceitful, because, falsehood, in moral opinion, is sin, whether it is seen in the belief of an infidel or a christian. No man can reject the doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles and be guiltless.

They quoted with approval the dictum of a contemporary, "The fact is, whatever progress the cause of truth and holiness has made in the world, has been made by controversy."

This magazine carried on an offensive against the Methodists by ridicule and by all the other weapons it could command. In a skit entitled, "A Dialogue Between a Methodist and a Calvinist," the follower of John Wesley was demolished with ridicule and contempt. Through four numbers in 1828 this magazine reviled and mocked the Methodists in "Dialogues on Church Government Between a Citizen and a Methodist Circuit-Rider." The trinity of Presbyterian divines who edited this

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20 P. 31. The *Calvinistic Magazine* came out monthly.  
21 *Calvinistic Magazine*, vol. II, no. 10 (October, 1928), p. 298.  
23 Vol. II, nos. 4-7 (April-July, 1828).
magazine published the following as a typical verse in a Methodist songbook:

"The Devil, Calvin, and Tom Paine,
May hate the Methodists in vain;
Their doctrines shall be downward hurl'd—
The Methodists shall take the world."²⁴

The wonder is that the Fighting Parson, as he was later to be called,²⁵ showed so much self-restraint and desisted so long from entering the fray. The Presbyterians had long been pestering him, and just to prove how contentious they were, he wrote for the Newmarket Telegraph, a Tennessee newspaper, an article proving there was a God; and according to the Parson, a Presbyterian immediately denied that eternal truth.²⁶ But now, in the year 1834, he resolved to buckle on the armor of the Lord and go out to do battle with the infidel Presbyterians and all other Calvinists. He had written his book, and in a style that many people might not like. As for his "exuberance and redundancy of language," he gladly admitted that they might "be justly considered one, among the many other winning ways I have to make folks hate me." He, too, believed in religious controversy—"had it not been for controversy, Romish Priests would now be feeding us with Latin masses and a wafer god!"²⁷

Brownlow selected some of the principal Calvinistic doctrines and savagely attacked them. The ones to which he gave his particular attention were: that God decrees whatever comes to pass, that there is unconditional election and reprobation, that Christ died only for the elect, that there is irresistible grace to bring in the elect, and that it is impossible to fall from grace. To show how absurd and even sacrilegious these doctrines were, the Parson called attention to these two facts: that if God decrees all things, then he produces murders, lying, and sins of all kinds; and that if people are already saved or damned from the beginning, what good is there in preaching or carrying on missionary

²⁵ George D. Prentice is said to have given Brownlow this title. Putnam's Magazine, vol. III, no. 16 (April, 1869), p. 528.
²⁶ Brownlow, Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism, p. 279.
²⁷ Ibid., pp. xii, viii.
work? If it be foreordained that certain people are to be saved, why baptize them; “they will be saved if they never see water, and die drunk in the bargain!” In order to escape these hard and irresistible conclusions, many of the Presbyterians had run off into what came to be called Hopkinsianism, a name given to the doctrines promulgated by Samuel Hopkins, of Newport, Rhode Island, in order to soften and side-step some of the more severe tenets of Calvinism.

But Brownlow was particularly interested in showing what a terrible threat the Presbyterian Church organization carried against the liberties and political institutions of the United States. He called attention to the fact that the Presbyterians and the New England Congregationalists were all of a feather in their general doctrines and ambitions, that during the War of 1812 New England had been pro-British and her ministers had preached disloyal sermons, and what was most ominous of all, that at one time New England had had a virtual union of church and state which bond the Presbyterians were now secretly praying to be restored throughout the nation. He greatly feared this Presbyterian plot, for if it succeeded they would soon be burning people as heretics. They were already referring to the regions where the Methodists were strongest as “great moral wastes.” In his opinion, “There is indeed no bigotry so intolerable as religious bigotry, nor any hatred so unrelenting as religious hatred.” He sounded the warning: “Let the Presbyterians once enslave us, as they are aiming to do, and we may whine, and scold, and murmur, and wince, and threaten, and beseech them to condescend, graciously to have mercy on us, but it will all be to no purpose.”

The Parson had not allied himself with the Jeffersonian school in politics and he had generally not looked to Thomas Jefferson for his ideas but he was in perfect agreement with the

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28 Ibid., pp. 208-9.
29 W. G. Brownlow, The Great Iron Wheel Examined; or, Its False Spokes Extracted, and An Exhibition of Elder Graves, its Builder, in a Series of Chapters, p. 173.
30 Ibid., p. 216. For the nature of this doctrine, see Nathan Bangs, A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, III, 11-29.
31 Brownlow, Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism, pp. vii, 94, 113-65, 167-76.
Sage of Monticello on the subject of Presbyterianism. He was delighted to find this paragraph in a letter Jefferson had written to William Short in 1820, and he quoted it with approval: "The Presbyterian clergy are the loudest; the most intolerant of all sects, the most tyrannical and ambitious; ready at the word of the lawgiver, if such a word could be now obtained, to put the torch to the pile, and to rekindle in this virgin hemisphere the flames in which their oracle Calvin consumed the poor Servetus...."

But Brownlow was not depending on Thomas Jefferson or on any other person for his proof of how wicked the Presbyterians were or of their insidious attempt to unite church and state, with themselves at the helm. A great many societies and organizations had been springing up with ostensible religious uplift programs, but the wary Parson knew too well that if one should dig deep enough it would soon be evident that Presbyterians were in charge of all of them, and that these organizations were gigantic tentacles to draw the people unaware into one great Presbyterian consolidation. There was the American Sunday School Union, generally referred to by Brownlow as the A. S. S. Union, which, according to reports, was non-denominational, but which Brownlow knew was controlled by the Presbyterians for the sneaking purpose of entering politics and winning elections. The American Tract Society was got up and controlled by the Presbyterians, though it claimed to have all the principal denominations represented in it. Brownlow knew this claim to be a subterfuge, for did not the Methodists have a tract society of their own? The American Bible Society was controlled by the Presbyterians. It claimed to be giving away Bibles, but Brownlow knew that the Presbyterians and their Calvinistic co-conspirators, the Baptists, were actually selling these Bibles and growing rich from plundering the poverty-stricken seekers after religion. He had charged as much against Parson Posey at Franklin, North Carolina, and the only reason he had not proved his charges was because a Baptist was the

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32 Ibid., p. 179. This letter may be found in T. J. Randolph, ed., Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, IV, 322.
judge. No true Christian could object to the American Temperance Society, but Parson Brownlow predicted that the Presbyterians would soon control it, for they were “a set of infatuated fanatics.” As for the Baptists, they were actually against temperance, but he explained that situation on the ground that they were “about a century behind the march of mind.”

The American Education Society was also under the domination of these self-seeking Presbyterians. Brownlow was not opposed to education, if it were not of the Calvinistic variety. “Ignorance,” he declared, “never produced one item of felicity to any man; the opinions of the Roman Catholics and Baptists to the contrary notwithstanding.” He believed the American Home Missionary Society was, perhaps, the most reprehensible and insidious of all these Presbyterian-controlled organizations. “And who are home missionaries?” queried the Parson. “Why, every one of these little college-bred chaps and theological scavengers, who are without regular salaries, or other means of support.” He declared they went “prowling and skulking about through our country, . . . making proselytes and begging money. . . . And is not the bulk of their time spent,” he asked, “in trying to invent new, and improved patent triggers, for their national gull-traps?”

And as for the poor heathens in foreign lands, what person could think without a shudder of the millions worshiping stones and reptiles, of mothers casting their infants to alligators or sacrificing them on altars, of widows being burned upon the funeral pyres of their husbands, of fanatics being crushed under the wheels of vehicles bearing their idol gods? Yet the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, dominated by the Presbyterians, had made the business of saving souls so expensive that there was not enough money in all the world to finish the job. The Parson had demonstrated this truth by simple arithmetic. Under the caption, “The History and Mystery of a Certain Forty-one Dollars and Forty-four Cents,” he ex-

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33 Brownlow, *Helps to the Study of Presbyterianism*, pp. 16-78, 86-95, 103-7.
34 Ibid., pp. 78-86, 95-98.
posed the secret of how the Presbyterians had raised this amount of money from a congregation with the promise that it should go to missions but with the result that the Calvinists kept it.\textsuperscript{35}

By 1836, Parson Brownlow had served an even decade in the Methodist itineracy, and had worked harder and been more zealous and vociferous in promoting Methodism than any other circuit-rider in the Holston Conference. He had fought the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the devil in the fastnesses of the mountains, in the courts of law, and in newspapers, pamphlets, and the printed book. He was now thirty-one, and might well begin to think about marrying. But if he should marry he must quit the circuit, for no circuit-rider could support a family from his earnings. Moreover the Church frowned on the itinerant marrying, and it had no objection to all of its ministers remaining single. But on that day when the Parson looked into the eyes of Eliza O'Brien, he knew he had met the first and only girl he was ever to love. He immediately laid siege to her with all the powers he could command, and according to Eliza, herself, "he was so earnest, persistent, and eloquent in his wooing, there was no resisting him." She also considered him a great man, for he had talent, he was more talked about than other preachers in the conference, and he always drew the largest crowds when he preached. The wedding took place on September 11, 1836, and what could be more appropriate for celebrating such an event than a camp-meeting. So it happened at the Turkeytown camp-grounds, in Carter County, in the heart of the mountains of East Tennessee. He now "located"\textsuperscript{36} and in the course of time the Parson's family grew to the number of seven children—two boys, and five girls.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 98-103, 194-201.

\textsuperscript{36} "The difference between travelling and local preachers and ministers, consists chiefly in the fact that the former give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, while the latter pursue some secular calling in connection with the sacred office—the former might properly be called regular ministers, and the latter secular ministers." P. D. Gorrie, Episcopal Methodism, as It was, and is, p. 294.

\textsuperscript{37} Price, op. cit., III, 315, 346; Temple, op. cit., p. 318; Parson Brownlow's Book, p. 18. Eliza O'Brien was born at Kingsport, Tennessee, September 25, 1819. When Brownlow retired from the circuit, the Holston Conference numbered about 18,000 white communicants and about 2,000 colored. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1829-1839, II, 13.