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## The History of the Baptists of Tennessee

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Lawrence Edwards entitled "The History of the Baptists of Tennessee." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Stanley Folmsbee, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

J. B. Sanders, J. Healey Hoffmann

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

August 2, 1940

To the Committee on Graduate Study:

I am submitting to you a thesis written by Lawrence Edwards entitled "The History of the Baptists of Tennessee with Particular Attention to the Primitive Baptists of East Tennessee." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

S. J. Folmsbee  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis  
and recommend its acceptance:

J. B. Sanders  
J. Wesley Huffman

Accepted for the Committee

V. C. Smith  
Dean of the Graduate School

HISTORY  
OF  
THE BAPTISTS OF TENNESSEE  
WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO  
THE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS  
OF  
EAST TENNESSEE

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A THESIS

Submitted to  
the Committee on Graduate Study  
of  
The University of Tennessee  
in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Lawrence Edwards

June, 1941

## FOREWORD

The Baptists of East Tennessee, especially those today known as Primitive Baptists, have been poor record keepers. Perhaps a number of reasons could be enumerated for this, but two present themselves as of outstanding note: 1. The churches are purely democratic bodies, forming and dissolving themselves at the will of their members, and keeping records only of the activities of their own membership. Therefore, once a church ceased to function likely as not the meagre records kept found their way into the private papers of the last pastor or the last clerk of the church, and eventually, no doubt in a great many instances, into the family fireplace or onto the spring cleaning rubbish heap.

From the records kept only meagre knowledge of the activities of each individual church can be obtained, for the Primitive Baptists seem to have been better worshipers than historians. Typical of the minutes of a monthly meeting of Primitive Baptists is this record from the church book of Pleasant Point Primitive Baptist Church, Goin, Tennessee.

July 2 Sat 1920

The Church met and after worship proceeded to  
Business as follows

1st Ordained Bro. J. E. Keck to the full work  
of the Gospel Ministry

2nd Ordained Bros T. C. Keck, M. C. Keck and  
J. M. Cox Deacons.

3rd Deferred the electing of our pastor till  
our next meeting.

4th Closed in regular order.

176957

M. B. Weaver, Mod.  
J. D. Keck, Clerk

5 Sept 41 5:13:30

2. The Primitive Baptists have been a controversial people. They have divided and subdivided time and again. Often after a division the records were carried off by some disgruntled clerk or pastor, and thus succeeding generations are deprived of the church records of the time up to the controversy. At the time of the schism caused by the mission question, in the 1830's, many church records were misplaced or destroyed. And later, at the time of the split that occurred over secret orders, one church had its records carried off to Texas by an offended member, who later removed to Oregon carrying the records with him.

Of the meagre records that are still in existence most of them are in the hands of individuals who are loath to part with them even for examination by a student or otherwise interested person. And often those records that are accessible are in such a jumbled and disorganized condition that it is hard to trace a well-defined sequence of events in the history they afford.

But without access to these tangled bits of historical data it is practically impossible to gain sufficient information about the Primitive Baptists to do even a semblance of justice to them and the stern creed they propound so rigorously. The writer acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Elder W. C. McMillon of Sevierville, Tennessee, who has been generous enough to lend records and writings of one kind or another which have been quite valuable in preparing this thesis. Elder C. H. Cayce, Editor of the Primitive Baptist, Thornton, Arkansas, has furnished editorial

and historical items that have gone into the writing.<sup>1</sup> There were others, however, to whom the writer has appealed for data relative to some of the church divisions, who persisted in maintaining a silence that spelled No in big letters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elder D. M. Raulston of the Sequatchie Valley Association and Elder V. H. Graves of the Powell Valley Association assisted in gathering material. Old minutes were obtained from several lay members of the various associations.

<sup>2</sup> But sufficient material has been gathered, it is believed, from the records of the various groups to give a fair if not a complete survey of the subject.

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## CHAPTER I

### BAPTISTS IN THE COLONIES

Roger Williams, who was accused of anabaptist tendencies by people of Plymouth from whom he withdrew, established the first Baptist church in the new world.<sup>1</sup> Williams believed that the church should receive as members only people who had been baptized on the profession of their faith. Anyone, therefore, who had been baptized in childhood, or at least in infancy, could not be received into the church until or unless he was re-baptized upon confession of faith. Thus Williams was an anabaptist to the extent that he, as do all Baptists today, rejected infant baptism.

In Mr. John Winthrop's Journal under date of March 16, 1639, is an entry which accuses Williams and others of being "infected" with anabaptistry. The entry follows:

At Providence things grew still worse; for a sister of Mrs. Hutchinson, the wife of one Scott, being infected with anabaptistry, and going last year to live at Providence, Mr. Williams was taken (or rather emboldened) by her, to make open profession thereof, and accordingly was re-baptized by one Holyman, a poor man of Salem. Then Mr. Williams rebaptized him and some ten more. They also denied the baptizing of infants.<sup>2</sup>

Williams' church at Providence was probably the most democratic ecclesiastical organization ever formed up to that time, barring of course the organization that was set up by Christ himself. In fact Williams and his followers seem to have followed

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<sup>1</sup> Baptist Chronicle, July, 1938, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop's Journal, Vol. I, p. 297.

very closely the writings of the New Testament, says Armitage, in declaring the principles of their church. Those principles were substantially as follows:

1. The church shall be independent of the state.
2. The church shall be made up of "true believers," not of a vast number of converts brought wholesale into the church and not knowing anything about true conversion.
3. There should be complete liberty of conscience in religious matters.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Williams charged that false ministries had made among the heathen "monstrous and inhuman conversions, yea, ten thousands of the poor natives, sometimes by wiles and subtle devices, sometimes by force, compelling them to submit to that which they understood not, neither after nor before such their monstrous christening of them." This he considered not a Christian but an anti-Christian conversion.<sup>4</sup>

But Williams seems to have been truly a dissenter, a schismatic, and in this particular a typical Baptist perhaps. For surely no group of peoples, all claiming to belong to one denomination, could be divided into more sects and organizations holding to their own peculiar views, and strangely, all convinced that their authority is Holy Writ, than the Baptists. But this is "soul-liberty," this is the freedom-of-worship stone in the foundation of our great country. This is democracy in religion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Armitage, History of the Baptists, p. 281.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of Roger Williams' religious views see the Baptist Chronicle, July, 1938, pp. 99-109.

Though the church at Providence was obviously Baptist, little influence seems to have reached out from it to other colonies. It was left to the Baptists of Pennsylvania and Virginia to furnish the vanguard of the spread of Baptist principles throughout the southern and mid-western states. These Pennsylvania Baptists came both from England and Wales; the Virginia Baptists principally from England, for from the beginning of the colony non-conformists were persecuted for religious convictions, especially for their sentiments regarding infant baptism.<sup>6</sup> This would seem to indicate that as soon as a haven was opened in America people fled England and took refuge in the colony to escape the persecutions of the established church. From the descriptions of the taunts and persecutions they underwent in Virginia it would seem, too, that they jumped "out of the frying pan into the fire."

But before going further with the Baptists in Pennsylvania and Virginia, let us review briefly the bodies from which they came in Europe.

In the counties of Kent, Norfolk and Lincoln about the opening of the 17th century was a little band of Separates who held Baptist beliefs. They held that the church should be composed only of the regenerate, those who had accepted Christ on confession of faith.<sup>7</sup> When they became outspoken persecution ensued and a part of them, under leadership of their pastor John Smyth, moved to Holland in 1606. These were later joined by another small band. Believing their former baptism null, Smyth baptized himself

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<sup>6</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 345.

<sup>7</sup> H. C. Vedder, Story of the Churches, "The Baptists," p. 67.

and then baptized the others.<sup>8</sup> Here was plainly an act of anabaptistry. Here was repudiation of infant and unregenerate baptism.

The baptists who remained in England soon had their differences. At first, immediately after coming out from the Established Church and declaring their stand on baptism, they were called simply Separatists. But in 1633 they were divided among themselves into General Baptists and Particular Baptists. Under the leadership of Henry Jacob the Particulars denied the efficacy of infant baptism and received "new" baptism, believing they who had been baptized in infancy had not been truly baptized.<sup>9</sup> Others followed Jacob in the new movement, including John Spilsbury, Henry Jessey and Peter Barebone. In 1644 the Particulars entered into a confession of faith known as the London Confession of Faith. This confession was an elaborate statement of the views of the Baptists concerning what they believed the Scriptures to teach and what they considered to be proper church discipline and decorum. It is worthy of note here that almost a century later, in 1743, the Baptists meeting in Philadelphia adopted a confession of faith, known since as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, which was practically a restatement of the London Confession of 1644.<sup>10</sup>

The London Confession affirmed the Baptists' belief in the doctrine of particular election and the baptism of believers only,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>10</sup> See copy of the Philadelphia Confession in the appendix of the work by Wm. Cathcart, Baptist Encyclopedia.

stating that baptism should be by immersion.<sup>11</sup>

While the Particulars were agreed as to the form of baptism, the Generals were divided. Some of them held baptism should be by immersion (these were called immersi or "new men") while others said the form of baptism did not matter (called aspersi or "old men"). The Generals seem to have been strict in church polity but lax in doctrine. On the other hand the Particulars cared little about polity but were very strong and stern in doctrine. They were more Calvinistic than their General brethren. Their doctrine of particular election would not allow them to invite the penitent to believe. That office, they said, was not man's but belonged altogether to the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

These then were the type of men who furnished Virginia with men to put in stocks, to flail publicly, to hound out of the colony, and to jail without pretense of trial.<sup>13</sup>

The Welsh Baptists, unlike the English, were of the same mind concerning the Scriptures. They were all Calvinistic.<sup>14</sup> Under their able leader Vavasour Powell they grew and spread rapidly from about 1649. In 1701 a group of Welsh Baptists came to Pennsylvania. Before sailing from Pembrokeshire they had organized themselves into a church body. When they arrived in the new country they settled first in the region of Pennypack (sometimes spelled Pennypek), near Philadelphia, where a Baptist church was already

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<sup>11</sup> Vedder, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 345 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Vedder, op. cit., p. 118.



in existence. But not agreeing in all points with the Pennypack church, the Welsh maintained their separate existence with the intention of setting up their own church eventually. The time came in 1703 when they obtained a tract of land in Delaware, known as the Welsh Tract. Here they set up the church which to this day is known as the Welsh Tract Church, which still stands on the principles it was founded upon.<sup>15</sup>

According to Morgan Edwards, able Baptist preacher and extensive writer, the Welsh Tract Church "was the principal if not the sole means of introducing singing, the imposition of hands, and the church covenant among Baptists of the middle states."<sup>16</sup>

In 1738 they sent a company under the leadership of James James to South Carolina, where they organized the Welsh Neck Church on the Pedee River.<sup>17</sup> The churches of the Philadelphia area held wide sway from New York to South Carolina.<sup>18</sup> They were Calvinistic in creed, both the Welsh and the English, as is seen by an examination of the Philadelphia Confession of 1742.

From the beginning of the colony in Virginia non-conformists were persecuted, jailed, put in stocks, and fined for expression of their religious sentiments, especially their views concerning infant baptism. Some were even driven from the colony. It is recorded that in 1640 Stevenson Reek stood in the pillory two hours

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<sup>15</sup> The present clerk of the Welsh Tract Church is J. B. Miller, Newark, Del.

<sup>16</sup> A. H. Newman, American Church Series, Vol. I. "Baptists," p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>18</sup> Vedder, op. cit., p. 154.



with a label on his back, paid a fine of 50 pounds, and was imprisoned at the pleasure of the Governor for saying in a jocular manner that 'his majesty was at confession with my lord of Canterbury.'<sup>19</sup>

James Madison, writing to a friend in Philadelphia in 1774 said:

That diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution rages among some, and to their eternal infamy the clergy can furnish their quota of imps for such purposes. There are at the present time, in the adjacent county, not less than five or six well-meaning men in close jail for proclaiming their religious sentiments, which are in the main orthodox.<sup>20</sup>

Dr. Hawks, writing of religious persecution in Virginia, says:

No dissenters in Virginia experienced for a time harsher treatment than did the Baptists. They were beaten and imprisoned; and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance. The usual consequences followed. Persecution made friends for its victims; and the men who were not permitted to speak in public found willing auditors in the sympathizing crowds who gathered around the prisons to hear them preach from the grated windows. It is not improbable that this very opposition imparted strength in another mode, inasmuch as it at last furnished the Baptists with a common ground on which to make resistance.<sup>21</sup>

But the Baptists were dissenters on more scores than one. True, they spoke boldly against infant baptism. This, however, was only one thing practiced by the established church with which they disagreed. They did not approve of a paid ministry, and particularly did they balk at paying taxes themselves for the

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<sup>19</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 345.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

support of a ministry with which they were at such great odds.

Sweet expresses their attitude very clearly when he says:

The experience of early Virginia Baptists in being taxed for the support of irreligious and vicious clergymen, whose only recommendation was that they had received a university education, led them to look with suspicion upon the highly educated and to prefer a ministry from the ranks of the people, earning a living by following secular pursuits.<sup>22</sup>

Continuing, the same writer says in another place: "They would have gazed with astonishment at a man, hat in hand, passing through their congregation, begging money for their preachers."<sup>23</sup>

What kind of ministers, then, did the Baptists have? They were "raised up" preachers. When a brother felt impressed to preach, he made it known to some of his brethren in the church. The church then allowed him to preach a trial sermon. If after hearing the trial sermon they approved of his "gifts," he was given a license to preach in a small territory, as, for instance, within the bounds of a single church community. After further trial, if his "gifts" proved real and he gave further evidence of usefulness as a preacher, he was then permitted to preach within the bounds of the association. If, however, he did not seem to improve, he was advised to make no further attempts.

If the preaching brother proved to have a good "gift," he was then ordained. The question would be put to the church whether they considered the brother worthy to be ordained. In a purely

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<sup>22</sup> W. W. Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, "The Baptists," Vol. I, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

democratic fashion they all had their yea and nay in the matter. If a majority approved, then a day was set for the ordination. If the people did not approve of his "gift" then he could not be ordained, but would not be denied the right to continue exercising his "gift" in the pulpit.<sup>24</sup>

The early Baptists were Calvinists, strongly opposed to the doctrine of general atonement. If one of their preachers was suspected of being unsound in the faith or Arminian in his tendencies, they turned away from him and his usefulness among them was at an end.

Practically all the churches held business meetings once a month. At these meetings the pastor usually acted as moderator.<sup>25</sup> Year by year at their associational meetings they issued circular letters to all the churches in the associations with which they corresponded. These letters usually discussed some current problem, frequently warning against heresy and imposters. Great care was always taken as to doctrinal standing, and any church or association which did not stand solidly on the doctrinal sentiments deemed essential by the association would be dropped from correspondence.<sup>26</sup>

These were the people who were so sorely persecuted by Virginia's royalty. Even up to the time of the Revolution such severe restrictions were put on dissenters that only one meeting house in each county was allowed them. On February 24, 1772, a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

petition was presented to the Royal Governor asking why because of sparse settlement more than one Baptist place of worship should not be permitted in one county. Indeed it was shown by William Fristoe, in his History of the Ketookton Association,<sup>27</sup> that the Baptists were refused a meeting place in Richmond County because, it was said, there was already one meeting place for dissenters in the county. This meeting place for dissenters was a Presbyterian meeting house.<sup>28</sup>

Although the strangle hold of the Anglican church was broken by the passage of a bill in 1779 permitting freedom of worship and releasing dissenters from payment of taxes for support of the established church, it was not until 1803 that complete separation of church and state in Virginia was effected.<sup>29</sup>

The writings of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson of that period are full of a generous feeling toward the Baptist and Presbyterian dissenters and show a fervent desire to see liberty of worship extended in Virginia. But they were fearful that the state legislature would be too much influenced by the hierarchy of established religion and that, therefore, it would be unfriendly toward a move to extend religious freedom.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Ketookton is to this day one of the strongest of the Primitive Baptists Associations in Virginia. For details as to its churches, membership, and articles of faith write Elder R. H. Pittman, Luray, Va.

<sup>28</sup> A. C. McLaughlin, Source Problems in U. S. History, p. 232.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 233-235.

It is altogether reasonable to assume that dissenters who were forced to leave Virginia and those who left because they were anxious to escape impending persecution sought refuge in the neighboring colony of North Carolina.

As early as 1696, says one writer, there were Baptists in North Carolina, perhaps driven there by persecutions in Virginia.<sup>31</sup> The itinerant preacher Shubal Stearns in later years often went into North Carolina from Virginia on extensive preaching tours, which took him into the wildest frontier communities. He it was who took a group of Virginia Baptists into North Carolina to establish the little church on Sandy Creek, tributary of Deep River, in the present county of Randolph.<sup>32</sup> From this little church sprang the Sandy Creek Association, organized in 1758. By 1766 there were in North Carolina no less than forty-two churches which were offshoots from or were organized through the efforts of the Sandy Creek body.<sup>33</sup> Thus Sandy Creek Church earned the name of Mother of Churches. It might even have been called Mother of Associations, for, as we shall see later, it was the germ from which sprang the early Baptist churches and associations in Tennessee.<sup>34</sup>

The two outstanding preachers of the Sandy Creek Association were Shubal Stearns, founder and first pastor of Sandy Creek Church, and John Gano, considered by one writer at least "the

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<sup>31</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>32</sup> S. W. Tindell, The Baptists of Tennessee, Vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>34</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 10 ff.

most illustrious preacher" of the Sandy Creek Association in its early years.<sup>35</sup> Gano's eloquence was not that of superlative learning. He was a powerful and influential preacher, not because of his learning but in spite of his educational deficiencies. Speaking of Gano as, along with Stearns, one of the most outstanding Baptist preachers of all time, one writer says: "To the refinement of learning he did not aspire; his chief object was such a competent acquaintance with its principles as would enable him to apply them with advantage to purposes of general usefulness in religion."<sup>36</sup>

Many Baptist historians seem to delight in describing, or relating descriptions of, Shubal Stearns. From all accounts he must have been a very remarkable preacher. Morgan Edwards, historian and preacher, who visited the North Carolina Baptists in 1772, describes Stearns as a "marvelous preacher for moving the emotions and melting his audiences in tears." And speaking of his person and manners Edwards continued by taking note of his "piercing glance," the "melting tone of his voice," and his "patriarchal appearance."<sup>37</sup>

It was in North Carolina on the Yadkin river that Tennessee's "first pastor," Tidence Lane, fell under the power of Stearns' preaching and his personality.<sup>38</sup> Following is an account of Lane's

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<sup>35</sup> Armitage, op. cit., p. 379.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> For a complete story of Elder Lane and his pastorate of Tennessee's First Baptist Church see S. W. Tindell, The Baptists of Tennessee, Vol. I.

meeting with Stearns, in the words of Elder Lane as recorded in the writings of Morgan Edwards:

When the fame of Stearns' preaching reached the Yadkin, where I lived, I felt a curiosity to go and hear him. Upon my arrival I saw a venerable man sitting under a peach-tree with a book in his hand and people gathered about him. He fixed his eyes upon me immediately, which made me feel in such a manner as I had never felt before. I turned to quit the place, but could not proceed far. I walked about, sometimes catching his eye as I walked. My uneasiness increased, and became intolerable. I went up to him thinking that a salutation and shaking of hands would relieve me; but it happened otherwise. I began to think he had an evil eye, and ought to be shunned, shunning him I could no more effect than a bird can shun a rattlesnake when it fixes its eyes upon it. When he began to preach my perturbations increased, so that nature could no longer support me and I sank to the ground.<sup>39</sup>

Soon after this time, probably because of the Battle of Alamance Creek, which occurred in the region of the Sandy Creek churches, many of the people of North Carolina began pouring through the mountain passes into western Virginia and eastern Tennessee. According to one account Elder Lane was in the New River Settlement in Virginia about 1776,<sup>40</sup> where it is believed he may have founded the Baptist church at St. Clair Bottom in 1777 or 1778.<sup>41</sup>

From here Elder Lane moved on into Tennessee, where he founded the Buffalo Ridge church and became its first pastor

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> St. Clair Bottom church, near the headwaters of the Clinch river in western Virginia, still belongs to the Washington Association of Primitive Baptists. For details of the activities, doctrinal principles, etc., of this church write to Elder W. O. McMillon, Star Route, Sevierville, Tenn.



about 1779, or as one highly reputable writer puts it, probably a year or two earlier.<sup>42</sup>

In the chapters immediately following we shall turn our attention to the activities of the Baptists in Tennessee and shall tell of the formation of their earlier church associations.

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<sup>42</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 11.



## CHAPTER II

### EARLY BAPTISTS IN TENNESSEE

In 1763 King George III of England proclaimed the crest of the Alleghenies as the westernmost limit of the territory in America open to colonization. Beyond this the lands should be the unmolested possession of the savage tribes then occupying them.

But there were those among the restless, freedom-loving pioneers of Virginia and North Carolina who, through ignorance of the King's Proclamation or utter disregard of his authority, but more likely because of their insatiate desire for adventure and their wish to build new homes and secure larger fortunes for themselves in the little valleys of the virginal region beyond the mountains, fled the 'civilization' of the more settled regions of the older colonies to begin the building of settlements in the West. These pioneers, of the ilk of Sevier, Boone, the Campbells and the Shelbys, were destined to prove the vanguard of a vast westward movement which was eventually to claim the whole Southwest for the young nation and more immediately to help materially in saving the entire union of the seaboard colonies from the English yoke. The story of the part played by the over-mountain men at King's Mountain, which has been called the turning point of the Revolution, is too well known to be related here. The frontiersmen played an important part also, under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, in the War of 1812.

It is a matter of general history that long before the King set forth his decree of 1763 men had been dispatched to view out

the western country and appraise it for future settlement.

Dr. Thomas Walker, who kept a journal of his explorations, was commissioned by a Virginia land company to go through Cumberland Gap, take notes on the nature of the new lands, and report in detail to his company of the advisability of securing boundaries of the land explored for purposes of speculation when and if the move to the west got under way.

Already, too, many 'long hunters' had returned to the trading posts of the colonies east of the mountains, their pack horses laden with furs and their tongues eager with tales of the fabulous land beyond the mountains, where game was plentiful, virgin forests abounded, and the little mountain rivers dropped down from their sources through fertile little valleys that only awaited the plow and spade of the frontier farmer to bloom into a truly wondrous region. Men no doubt went to bed to dream of rich fields, fresh new homesteads, bounteous crops and, above all, freedom from too much government and too much interference with their individual lives. Beyond the mountains life would be truly free, except for the Redskins of course, but what pioneer group desisted from the westward march because of them! There they could establish their own little churches and would be free from taxes to support the established church, which had been imposed upon them especially in Virginia.

Before the Revolutionary war started, the upper tributaries of the Tennessee river were already lined with little settlements of these sturdy pioneers who had ignored the Proclamation of 1763, braved the threat of Indian massacre, with their bare hands and

crude tools carved little homesteads for themselves in this new region, and were of a mind not only to declare their freedom but to defend it against whatever opposition presented.

Such was the ilk of the pioneers who, under Campbell, Sevier and Shelby, and with the blessing of their frontier minister, Samuel Doak, went on their way in grim patriotic and religious fervor, with the 'sword of the Lord and of Gideon,' to fight the British at King's Mountain. After this daring and successful encounter with the King's forces, whose leader had threatened to chastise them by burning their homes, the American forces went on to a succession of victories which culminated in the surrender of Cornwallis to Washington at Yorktown in 1781.

Among the soldiers who helped to chase the Tories out of the country were two sons of Elder Tidence Lane, Tennessee's first Baptist preacher. Isaac and Aquila Lane were members of William Bean's company of militia.<sup>1</sup> William Bean, it will be recalled by students of Tennessee history, was the first permanent settler of the state. Mr. Tindell suggests that Elder Lane's mother may have been a sister of William Bean.<sup>2</sup> Whether this is true or not, it is a fact that the Beans and Lanes were neighbors on Boone's Creek. It seems reasonable to believe, therefore, that the first settler of Tennessee, William Bean, was a Baptist.

Although it is generally conceded that the church at Buffalo Ridge, organized in 1778 with Tidence Lane as pastor, was the first permanent Baptist church in the state, one writer says

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<sup>1</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

there were Baptists in Tennessee as early as 1765. It seems that a church may have been in existence in Powell Valley about 1765, but Indian ravages forced the people to abandon the settlement.<sup>3</sup> This Baptist settlement of which Newman speaks could have been in that portion of Powell Valley which lies in what is now the state of Virginia. Whether it was in Virginia or Tennessee, however, could not have been known by the people of that time, for the line separating Virginia and what is now Tennessee was not clearly drawn at that time.

The Baptists on Boone's Creek were more fortunate than those reported to have been in Powell Valley. They were more closely settled, had neighbors in the Carter's Valley Settlement and in other communities, and so were able to withstand Indian assaults. To them then goes the credit of organizing Tennessee's first permanent Baptist church, at Buffalo Ridge in 1778 or 1779.

Elder Lane seems to have been one of the outstanding preachers among the early Baptists. Some years after organizing the Buffalo Ridge church he assisted Elder William Murphy in organizing the Bent Creek church. In fact Lane and Murphy were the leaders in the organization of Tennessee's first association of Baptist churches. Elder Lane was a preacher "of reputation and success" and "was much sought in counsel by the churches. He was not so hard in doctrine as some of his brethren, his doctrinal belief being a modified Calvinism."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Newman, op. cit., p. 336.

<sup>4</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 13.

William Murphy, who was pastor of the Cherokee Baptist church in Washington county, was the pastor of the family of Governor John Sevier.<sup>5</sup>

Although the early churches were formed by people who came from the Sandy Creek Association, "mother of churches," in North Carolina, and kept up correspondence with the mother association as well as the times and circumstances would permit, they early considered the advisability of meeting in their own association. In 1781, five or six churches having been formed in the Tennessee country, it was decided to bring representatives of the various churches into a temporary association. When this body met, it was decided that they should continue as a part of the Sandy Creek Association, that they should report annually to that association, but that they should meet in an associational capacity among themselves.<sup>6</sup>

The times were so perilous, however, and the danger of travel so imminent, that it was only a matter of a few years until the Tennessee Baptists decided the ties with the Sandy Creek Association, strong as they were from a doctrinal standpoint, must be modified. They decided to form a new association, Tennessee's first association of Baptist churches. Under the leadership of Elders Tidence Lane and William Murphy a meeting was called for the purpose of organizing the new association. At Cherokee Meeting House on October 30, 1786, they met and organized the Holston Association.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Buffalo Ridge was not among the number constituting the Holston Association at its founding in 1786, but came in the following year, 1787.<sup>8</sup> The original churches constituting the association were Bent Creek, Kindrick's Creek, Beaver Creek, Greasy Cove, Cherokee Creek, North Fork of Holston, and Lower French Broad. Why Buffalo Ridge was not represented when the association was formed seems to be a mystery. Elder Lane was probably no longer the pastor of Buffalo Ridge in 1786, when the Holston Association was formed. He had moved to Bent Creek in August, 1784, and assisted William Murphy in organizing the Bent Creek church in 1785. Although no records are available to show who was pastor of Buffalo Ridge at the time the association was formed, according to the best authority on the history of Buffalo Ridge church the pastor was most probably Jonathan Mulkey.<sup>9</sup> At the meeting when the association was formed Elder Mulkey and Anthony Epperson represented Kindrick's Creek, so it is altogether likely Mulkey was at that time pastor of Kindrick's Creek.<sup>10</sup> But his name is first on the list of delegates to the association from Buffalo Ridge in 1789. Whether Buffalo Ridge actually had a pastor in 1786 is not known. If they had no pastor at that time, that may explain why they did not send delegates to the Cherokee Meeting House in 1786 to help organize the Holston Association. Perhaps Buffalo Ridge still considered itself a part of the Sandy Creek Association, but if such a sentiment existed there are no records

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<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Holston Association, 1937, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> Tindell, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

to substantiate the fact.<sup>11</sup>

In the two decades following the organization of Tennessee's first Baptist church, churches of the Baptist faith sprang up thick and fast over the whole area of East Tennessee. Many churches were organized several years before they entered any association. Often churches which did belong to an association found it too much trouble to send delegates long distances to report in person to the association. They started the practice of writing letters to the association, telling of the work of their church--listing additions, dismissals, deaths, etc.--and often declaring the doctrinal principles which they were adhering to. The association then, after receiving delegates from some churches and letters from those too far away to attend, appointed one of their most gifted elders to write a "circular letter" which was usually appended to the minutes of the meeting of the association. This letter usually began somewhat in this manner:

To the churches of our association and to the associations of our faith and order with whom we correspond, greetings:

Very dear Brethren:-

We of the churches of the \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Association meeting with the church at \_\_\_\_\_ this third Friday and Saturday and Sunday following of month of August 18\_\_, send greetings and, so on.

Here followed expressions of good will and earnest hope that peace and good fellowship abounded and that all were standing firm on the doctrinal principles whereon they were founded, which principles were usually expounded to considerable extent in the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 31.



circular letter.

Then the letter was signed by the moderator and clerk of the association and appended to the minutes of the association meeting.<sup>12</sup>

These minutes and circular letters found their way into the hands of the members of the little churches scattered far and wide and helped to keep them aware of the fact that they belonged with a great body of people who held to the same principles. This served to strengthen them and give them a feeling of solidarity, even though they were constituted as purely democratic bodies owing allegiance or submission to no organization or governing power. Again and again the minutes of their associational meetings express the sentiment that the association is no governing power but acts only in an advisory capacity to the churches that comprise it.<sup>13</sup>

Seeing then that the churches forming an association were often so far apart and found difficulty in those times of slow and dangerous travel in sending their delegates to the annual associational meetings of the churches, it was only natural that new associations would be formed by churches dismissed from an

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<sup>12</sup> McMillon Papers. (Elder W. O. McMillon, Star Route, Sevierville, Tenn., has a great collection of letters, minutes, copies of minutes, and bits of historical data which, if edited and published in pamphlet or book form, would be of great interest and value to people interested in the history of the Baptists of East Tennessee. Referred to hereafter as McMillon Papers.)

<sup>13</sup> McMillon Papers, copies of the minutes of the Powell Valley Association, 1827-30.



association already formed. Thus in 1802, sixteen years after its organization, the Holston Association dismissed nineteen churches for the purpose of forming a new association. The delegates of these nineteen churches met at Beaver Creek Meeting House in 1802 and formed the Tennessee Association of Baptist Churches. Elder William Johnson was moderator at this meeting and Francis Hamilton was clerk.<sup>14</sup>

This Tennessee Association within about a decade after its organization had gathered in churches as far west as Roane and Sequatchie counties. The churches in what today are the counties of Scott, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger and Jefferson belonged to the Tennessee Association at that time.<sup>15</sup>

This old copy of minutes of the 1813 meeting of the Tennessee Association is so unusual that I set it down here in part:

#### MINUTES

of the

Tennessee Association

of

Babtists

Holden at Bullock's Pen Meeting House,  
Tennessee Valley, Roane County, the  
second Saturday in October, 1813.<sup>16</sup>

At this meeting of the association thirty churches were represented, with a total membership of 2047, of which number 296

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<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Holston Association, copy in McMillon Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Tennessee Association, 1813, original copy in McMillon Papers.

<sup>16</sup> When excerpts or quotations from minutes and other church records have been used, the writer has not changed the spelling or punctuation of the original.

were members received since the last meeting of the association, 146 by experience and 150 by letter. One hundred and twenty-four had been dismissed, which seems to indicate that a reshaping of church ties was in progress. Here we have the picture: within a year's time 150 come to churches of the association by letter and 134 leave the churches by letter. It would be interesting to know if the westward migration caused this interchange of membership, some moving into the settlements and some moving out, or if the letters were simply taken from other churches whose doctrinal principles were undergoing change and put in at churches which were deemed more solid in their principles of doctrine. That the mission movement had already had some effect in East Tennessee is shown by these 1813 minutes of the Tennessee Association, item eighteen of which reads:

Query from Richland church, as stated in their letter: Suppose a church of a hundred members, constituted on certain principles which were approbated, and the church incorporated into the union of the association should ninety of her members depart from the principles, either in faith or practice, on which they were constituted; which would be considered the church, the ninety or the ten, or so as to apply to any member? Answer: the ten, if essence be found.

It is noted the Richland queried by letter. As before stated, many of the churches were represented only by letter. Therefore, item sixteen of the minutes is significant. It says:

The petition from County Line Church, to divide the bounds of the Association referred.

It seems natural that churches scattered over frontier area two hundred miles long should wish some more convenient arrangement as to their association, should wish, that is, to be divided

into smaller associations so that delegates from every church could attend the annual meetings. But some one or more reasons kept the Tennessee Association from dismissing churches to form a new association until 1818, five years after County Line sent its petition to the association. Perhaps they feared that division might lead to doctrinal differences, or that the little association might be the more easily led into the camp of the missionaries, or perhaps they simply did not like to leave off meeting with all their brethren in the annual meetings. Later requests no doubt were made for a division for, as was stated, in 1818 the Tennessee Association dismissed some of her westernmost churches for the purpose of forming a new association. This was the Powell Valley Association of Baptist Churches, composed of twelve churches in what are today Roane, Scott, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger and Jefferson counties. This association was destined to be the one East Tennessee association most troubled by strife and doctrinal schisms. More particular attention to these differences will be given in a later chapter. Today the Powell Valley Association, called the Powell Valley Association of Primitive Baptist Churches, is divided into two groups of churches, each group claiming to be the Powell Valley Association and having identical articles of faith.<sup>17</sup> One, composed principally of the older churches of the association, some of which were in the original twelve which withdrew from the Tennessee to form the Powell Valley in

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<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Powell Valley Association (hereafter referred to as P. V. Assn.), 1939.

1818, holds no fellowship with members of secret orders, refusing to accept as members of their churches any who belong to secret orders. The other accepts members of secret orders and, in some of their churches at least, resemble the missionary churches to the extent that they conduct Sunday Schools.<sup>18</sup> The latter is sometimes called the Secret Order side.

But to get back to the early associations. In 1828 some of the churches, feeling that the Tennessee Association had again grown too large, received permission to withdraw from the association to form still another new association. This was the Nolachucky Association, composed, as the name indicates, of churches in the region of the Nolachucky River and its tributaries, the churches originally forming the association being principally in Jefferson, Sevier and Cooke counties. At Bent Creek Meeting House in Jefferson (now Hamblen) county in 1828 delegates from fourteen churches met and formed the Nolachucky Association. Elder Thomas Hill was moderator of the meeting and Thomas L. Hale was clerk. The churches represented and their delegates were as follows:

1. Robertson's Creek--Jacob Coffman, William White, and David Manson
2. Slate Creek--Thomas Smith and Simon Smith
3. Prospect--John Cockerham and George Johnson
4. Concord--William Senter, Henry Senter and Nicolas Dunagan
5. Bent Creek--Andrew Coffman, Pleasant A. Witt, Wilkins Kirkpatrick, John Walker, Jacob Taylor, and John Donaldson
6. Warrensburg--Joseph White and Thomas L. Hale

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<sup>18</sup> See obituary of Mr. Davis in Minutes of the Secret Order side, 1939.

7. Gap Creek--William Jones and John Couch
8. Clay Creek--Joseph Manning
9. County Line--William Evans, Mark Hale and James Johnson
10. Big Pigeon--Thomas Hale and Benjamin O'dell
11. Bethel South--Isaac Barton and Hughes O. Taylor
12. Blackwell's Branch--James Kennon and Edward Daniels
13. Mill Spring--James Bruce and Joseph Orr
14. Barton--Joseph Hale and Richard Hale.<sup>19</sup>

Two other small associations were formed in the eastern part of the state, but for years they corresponded so infrequently with the three large ones--the Tennessee, Nolachucky and Powell Valley--that they seem to have belonged outside East Tennessee. The little Sequatchie Valley Association was formed in 1833<sup>20</sup> by six churches which were dismissed for that purpose from the Mud Creek Association, which was composed of churches in South Tennessee and North Alabama. The Hiwassee was formed in 1822 of churches in the region of the Hiwassee and Little Tennessee Rivers. Before the Civil War it was in correspondence with the Powell Valley and the Nolachucky, but after the war only very infrequently with these associations. Today it is not in correspondence with the Original Powell Valley, nor the Tennessee-Nolachucky, but corresponds rather with that side of the Powell Valley which holds in fellowship members of secret orders.<sup>21</sup> The

<sup>19</sup> McMillon Papers (copy of the proceedings of the association at Bent Creek, 1828.)

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of Sequatchie Valley Primitive Baptist Association, 1833; Minutes of Mud Creek Primitive Baptist Association, 1833. (Copies supplied by D. M. Raulston, Chattanooga, Tenn.)

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Hiwassee Primitive Baptist Association, 1939. See also Appendix C.

Sequatchie Valley still corresponds with the Tennessee-Nolachucky, the Original Powell Valley, the Mud Creek, and other associations which deny fellowship to members of secret orders.<sup>22</sup>

Having given a brief survey of the organization of the early churches and their associations, we shall now turn our attention to the one great controversy which rent the Baptist ranks in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The mission movement, which has been so ably treated from the standpoint of the Methodists and Presbyterians, with their itinerants and their great educators respectively, caused just as much controversy, dissension and division among the Baptists. But, as has been suggested before, the Baptists are such poor record keepers and care so little about writing about themselves that little has been recorded of the schism over missions and missionary organizations in the Baptist churches. And though the mission movement totally disregarded state lines and we shall be writing necessarily of Kentucky, Virginia and Carolina Baptists as well as of Tennessee Baptists, enough has been gathered, I believe, to furnish a clear picture of the mission controversy in the Baptist associations of East Tennessee.

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<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Sequatchie Valley Primitive Baptist Association,  
1939.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BAPTIST SCHISM OF THE 1820's AND 1830's IN TENNESSEE

#### I

#### The Great Revival

Two things, the isolated nature of the life of the frontiersmen and the changing views as to Scriptural interpretation that were common both in England and New England at the end of the eighteenth century, account largely for the eventual dissolution and reorganization of church bodies on the frontier in the early decades of the nineteenth century. And we must bear in mind that the Baptists were not the only group that suffered from the effects of religious controversy and the changes in the mode of attack of the church militant. The Presbyterians saw division creep into their ranks and come out bearing a Presbyterian church of a new title and holding to a new creed, a creed considerably different from that formulated by Knox and Calvin, and one that would have been very odious to these stern gentlemen beyond a doubt. This new church was the Cumberland Presbyterian. The creed of the Cumberland Presbyterian church dropped the fatalistic clause. It would not have election or special atonement. Christ died to save every one that diligently sought him, they said. This idea was so in keeping with the modern trend of Scriptural interpretation that it was readily accepted as the more reasonable and liberal view by many hundreds of the once



severely dogmatic Presbyterians.<sup>1</sup>

The Methodists, fired by the reforming zeal of a new church organization and believing presumably that the salvation of souls in this wilderness region was incumbent upon them, set about the work with a will if not always with a strong faith.<sup>2</sup> Back of them was the life of the Wesleys and the doctrine that righteous living was a prime element of any religion. When closely considered there is something about the Methodist religion of the Revival period which seems anomalous. They preached righteous living, stressing it probably more than did either the Baptists or Presbyterians. On the other hand they used the emotional appeal to fill their churches with a vast number of people who had never practiced righteous living and often paid little attention to ordering their lives differently after joining the church.

The Methodists, probably more than any other denomination, capitalized the wave of enthusiasm that was sweeping the country, and more especially the Old Southwest, at the opening of the nineteenth century. The Presbyterians succumbed to the revival influence reluctantly and the Baptists only temporarily, as will be shown later. The Methodist organization with its new institution, the circuit rider, who went from settlement to settlement over the frontier country seeking the salvation of a lost and

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Beard, Why I Am a Cumberland Presbyterian, chs. I and II.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Asbury's Journal is often very pessimistic about the frontiersman's way of living and his carelessness about religion.



wayward generation, found the camp-meeting and the emotional fervor attendant thereto much to its liking and very helpful in expanding its borders. There was an expression among the frontiersmen on a bitterly cold day that "there is nothing out today but Methodist preachers and crows." This statement is expressive of the earnestness with which the Methodist itinerant executed his charge.<sup>3</sup>

There was a need for a religious reawakening in the period which followed the Revolution. In the last years of the eighteenth century in the United States the churches experienced a decline in membership, apathy and coldness toward things spiritual, and in general a trend toward carelessness in religious matters.<sup>4</sup> A spiritual dearth seems to have pervaded the whole country. There was a need for spiritual enthusiasm, and probably the best way to bring it about was the way resorted to by the revivalists—emotional exuberance. Bishop Asbury, speaking of the recklessness with which these uncouth frontiersmen faced life and eternity, made the following entry in his Journal in March, 1797.

I am of the opinion that it is as hard or harder for the people of the West to gain religion as any others when I consider where they came from, where they are, and how they are, and how they are called to go farther, their being unsettled with so many objects to take their attention, with the health and good air they enjoy, and when I reflect that not one in a hundred came here to get religion; but rather to get plenty of good land, I think it will be well if some or many do not eventually lose their souls.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> O. O. Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> W. B. Posey, Methodism in the Old Southwest, p. 11.

The life on the frontier was hard, crude, primitive. The houses were poor and poorly furnished. Rev. Asbury caught the itch and thought it a wonder that he had not caught it several times.<sup>6</sup> The small log cabins often housed a family of ten or twelve, who lived in a tumbled filthy atmosphere. The Sabbath was set apart, but not for worship. It was observed by fishing, hunting, horse-racing, card-playing, dancing and all kinds of mirth and jollity.<sup>7</sup> "Scenes of bloodshed and partisan animosity steel the heart against the commands of God" was the way one writer spoke of the usual frontier life.<sup>8</sup>

The Methodist itinerant system, standing out boldly against the worldly character of the frontier life and offering salvation and a more perfect way to the frontiersmen, probably did more than any other organization in bringing on the revival in the West. But the camp-meeting was not first used by the Methodists.<sup>9</sup> (It was, however, widely used and elaborated upon by them.) In Revolutionary days the Baptists of Virginia had held camp-meetings. This practice was copied in 1794 by the Methodists of North Carolina, who held a meeting in Lincoln County, N. C., of several days duration in that year. William McKendree of the Cumberland region in Tennessee was present at this great camp-meeting in Lincoln county, and it was he probably who brought the idea to Tennessee.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Cleveland, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

It has been stated by many writers that the Baptists stood aloof from the revival activities and did not take part in the camp-meetings, but one writer calls attention to the fact that the Baptists were affected considerably by the revival movement. He points out that whereas the Baptist church membership suffered a severe decline in the last decade of the eighteenth century, it experienced a decided gain in the first ten years of the succeeding century.<sup>11</sup> Some of the Baptist preachers outstanding in the work of the revival were Louis and Elijah Craig, John Taylor, Ambrose Dudley, Moses Bledsoe, and William Hickman.

No group or denomination seems to have been immune to the effects produced by the revival influences. Small children, boys and girls of ten or twelve, yielding to strong emotions, exhorted for hours, often falling exhausted.<sup>12</sup>

It should be borne in mind that not all the people in one of the great gatherings came to worship or to "get religion" as the expression was. Many came for excitement, many came to see and be seen, to satisfy the social instinct, and many came to scoff and to rail against those who sincerely took part in the exercises. An instance is recorded of an old man above fifty carrying a stick having a nail in the end of it along with him to the revival. He used this stick to furnish amusement for himself and others about him. When one fell near him, he would goad him back to uprightness with the mean end of the stick. But the old gentleman was not permitted to carry his fun very far. He

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<sup>11</sup> W. D. Nowlin, Kentucky Baptist History, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

was stricken and lay prostrate about an hour. When he arose he made a confession of his sins and told how he had brought the stick along with which to punch people who had fallen.<sup>13</sup>

It was in Kentucky that the falling exercises started and seem to have had their greatest use. Being first exhibited at a Presbyterian meeting at Gaspor River in 1799, these falling exercises spread widely, reaching even to Tennessee in a lesser degree.<sup>14</sup> There was one section of Tennessee where the extravagances were sternly opposed and as a result were negligible in that particular section. This was among the Baptists of West (now Middle) Tennessee, where, however, the revival was very extensive.<sup>15</sup>

But to the revivalists of East Tennessee goes the credit for instituting one of the chief features of the bodily exercises--the "jerks." And it may be stated here that the East Tennesseans, unlike their brethren of the western part of the state, made great use of the bodily exercises generally.

This strange phenomenon, appropriately called the "jerks," can probably be best described by a contemporary of the revival period, Rev. Jacob Young, who says:

In 1804 I first witnessed that strange exercise, the jerks, although I had heard much of it before. It took subjects from all denominations and all classes of society, even the wicked; but it prevailed chiefly among the Presbyterians. I will give some instances. A Mr. Doak, a Presbyterian minister of high standing, having charge of a congregation in Jonesborough, was the first man of eminence in this region that came under its influence. Often it would seize him in the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

pulpit with so much severity that a spectator might fear it would dislocate his neck and joints. He would laugh, halloo at the top of his voice, finally leap from the pulpit and run into the woods screaming like a mad-man. When the exercises were over he would return to the church calm and rational as ever.<sup>16</sup>

Self-control was almost the "unknown quantity" in the revival movement. Those who could shout the loudest, pray the longest and hold out longest without exhaustion were the ones who seemed most blessed.<sup>17</sup> Disrespect for the outward forms of religion was general. Sometimes three or four exhorters would occupy the floor at once, so that it was impossible to say that any one preacher had the floor. At the same time several might be praying or shouting in the congregation. All in all the revival makes very interesting study for the psychologist, who explains the exercises prevalent in the revival movement by saying it was all emotional and that emotion depends upon two factors: first, the organic element (the nervous structure itself) and second, external stimulus.<sup>18</sup> The imitative faculty, says the psychologist, had much to do with the activities practiced by the revivalists, and then they say also that the style of preaching used stirred up the emotions to such a high pitch that outward expression as relief from the emotional strain was almost demanded.<sup>19</sup>

This great exhibition of emotional enthusiasm of course could not last always, but it held out pretty generally until about 1804, when it seemed that even the Methodists were growing

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<sup>16</sup> R. N. Price, Holston Methodism, p. 337.

<sup>17</sup> Cleveland, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

tired of the revival demonstrations. Probably they thought that enough of a good thing even was enough. Since the Methodists, who had so capitalized the revival spirit, were now feeling that they had enough, we could expect no less from the Presbyterians and still less from the Calvinistic Baptists.

Jacob Young, a Methodist, preaching at Carter's station in East Tennessee, tried to account for the jerks as a judgment sent on a wicked people, enlarging on the spirit of bigotry and intolerance that prevailed among the Christians at that place. In his discourse he exclaimed at the top of his voice: "Do you leave off jerking if you can!" It was thought that, almost immediately, at least "five hundred began shouting, jumping, and jerking."<sup>20</sup>

On another occasion a Baptist preacher was disturbed by a man who began jerking in the congregation. The preacher paused and said in a solemn tone: "In the name of the Lord I command all unclean spirits to leave this place." The jerker immediately became still and the preacher proceeded with the services.<sup>21</sup> One eminent Baptist historian says that those who encouraged the bodily exercises had enough of them to attend to.<sup>22</sup>

"Undoubtedly the extravagances which characterize the Great Revival in the West did much to degrade in the minds of the more thoughtful the very ideals so vehemently insisted upon by its most earnest promoters."<sup>23</sup> The other side of the picture is

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

shown, however, by a letter written at Dixons Springs, Tennessee, May 13, 1843, in which the writer made the statement that "notwithstanding all the fanaticism, much good seems to have been done" by the revival. The letter continues: "The first movement was under the ministry of James McGready, a Presbyterian preacher. The Methodists fell in line and, with the others, joined in the Communion, which has been kept up, though rather nominally, ever since. The Baptists stood aloof. It (the revival) gave rise to a division among the Presbyterians."<sup>24</sup> As we have already pointed out, however, the Baptists did enter into the work of the revival and saw their ranks swell considerably as a result of its influence.

An eye witness wrote that the revival had "confounded infidelity, awed vice into silence and brought numbers under serious impression."<sup>25</sup> "It led the long despairing Baptists to thank God and take courage."<sup>26</sup> The Regular and Separate Baptists were brought together as the United Baptists as a result of the revival. But these two bodies did not comprise all the Baptists. There were still those who held on doggedly to the Calvinistic precepts, later called Primitive Baptists. We shall see later how these Primitive Baptists spread havoc and dissension in the Baptist ranks in the three decades following the revival.

We have observed something of the nature of the Great Revival and noted that despite all its short-comings, it did much good on

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 129. (The letter was signed by Wm. Martin.)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 147.



the frontier. Besides the Scriptural value derived from the camp-meeting, it is generally conceded that the part it played as a social institution was of very marked value to this socially hungry frontier population. The camp-meeting afforded this vast stay-at-home population somewhere to go. It allowed them to see their friends and neighbors all together, and more important perhaps, it allowed them to make new acquaintances. New social concepts were in the making. People saw their distant neighbors from over the ridge whom they had probably never known before. Mr. Posey calls the camp-meeting the chief social interest in a barren existence for several years on the frontier.<sup>27</sup>

In another chapter it will be pointed out that even though the revival seems to have been a great success, it contained the seeds of reaction in its very method of action. This reaction can be explained partly by the fact that the sudden bringing together of a great mass of socially uneducated people would naturally produce undesirable effects. Besides throwing away spiritual restraint many were the victims of a moral laxity which began to show its effects very soon, turning many from their support of the revival and the things it proposed to accomplish.

The notion that the frontiersman of the West lived in a religious Eden, says one writer, forbearing to eat of the forbidden fruit, is very misleading.<sup>28</sup> These people were normal, healthy, vigorous specimens of mankind and no more immune than

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Posey, op. cit., p. 11.



the average human being to the distractions that present themselves to human beings in general. Hence the net result of much of the revival work was disappointing even to the most ardent supporters of the institution. Many converts lapsed back into their old habits and walks of life. Some scarcely lasted through the meeting in which they were converted. Some would fall from the effects of spiritual fire one night and fall from the effects of liquid spirits the next night.<sup>29</sup> But the reaction that followed the revival will be taken up more at length in the next part, and more especially the reaction among the Baptists of Tennessee.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

## II

### Reaction Following the Revival

In an earlier chapter it was shown that although the Baptists of Tennessee were carried along in the press of the revival, they were opposed to an over-exhibition of the emotional fervor which was a part of the revival movement. One writer calls attention to the fact that the Baptists of Middle Tennessee were practically free from the bodily exercises. When we add to this that the Baptists were almost wholly Calvinistic in their views, we do not wonder that a reaction manifested itself among them when the psychological stimuli furnished by the revival had been removed and the emotional ardor produced by the camp-meetings had cooled.

With the Baptists we find a different situation from that existing in the Presbyterian church. The Presbyterians had experienced an actual division, a restatement of creed, and a new doctrinal interpretation. From their body had sprung a new church, the Cumberland Presbyterian. All those who held to the new interpretation among the Presbyterians could join the new church. Nevertheless considerable controversy prevailed among the Presbyterians, and it was not uncommon for outstanding ministers to be barred from the ministry and church fellowship because of their tendency toward the "new lights" or because they failed to advocate the stern old Presbyterian creed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> R. E. Thompson, "Presbyterians" (American Church Series, Vol. VI) p. 42.

There was no division, bodily speaking, among the Baptists of Tennessee during or immediately after the revival. That there still existed the strong Calvinistic view of the Scriptures among the Baptists after the revival is clearly evident from what we shall presently observe. It would be too much to expect a wholesale revision of creed and conviction to come about as a result of a movement into which the Baptists entered only reluctantly. To see Calvinists turn Arminian without a whimper of doctrinal disputation was too much to be expected, especially from a people so deeply intrenched in Calvinism as the Baptists were. That they were strongly Calvinistic before the time of the revival is generally conceded. "All Baptists of this section at the beginning of the nineteenth century were Calvinists," says one author, writing on the Baptists of Middle Tennessee.

It must not be understood that the Tennessee Baptists were opposed to charitable institutions, foreign and home missions, or even education, at the opening of the nineteenth century; although it is reasonable to assume that the Tennessee Baptists of this period were unfavorable to theological education as a means of preaching the gospel. After the Revolutionary War there developed among the Baptists of Virginia a strong aversion to an educated ministry. They feared the effect of a system of mission work based on a well-organized and educated ecclesiastical organization. As Patrick Henry expressed it: "Down with anything that will make us like our persecutors."<sup>31</sup> Here he has reference to the

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<sup>31</sup> J. H. Grime, Baptists of Middle Tennessee, p. 548.

Episcopalians and Presbyterians, whom the Baptists considered to be persecuting them. Some prejudice naturally arose among the Baptists, who said that a strong system of clerical education and mission work tended to rid the church of its simplicity.

This sentiment seems to have found its way to Tennessee, but it was buried, no doubt, in the enthusiasm of the revival to remain dormant until several years after the revival influence had subsided. The Triennial Convention met in 1814, and for several years thereafter, says one authority, the Baptists contributed freely to home and foreign missions. Underneath this surface appearance of conformity to the mission spirit, however, must have lurked this strong spirit of anti-mission. What it needed was an aggressive, assertive leadership to bring it into vigorous antagonism with the mission cause. This leadership was destined to show up in the persons of three men to whom may justly be attributed the success of the anti-mission movement among the Baptists of Tennessee. These three men are Alexander Campbell, John Taylor and Daniel Parker.<sup>32</sup> Campbell finally formed his own denomination. Parker was a proponent of the Two-seed doctrine,<sup>33</sup> which he was the first to advocate. Taylor, though at first favorable to missions, soon made an about-face and became strongly opposed to them, especially to foreign missions.<sup>34</sup>

The promulgation of the views of Campbell was parallel in time to the anti-mission rage in Tennessee. The Campbellian

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<sup>32</sup> Sweet, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

doctrine coincided with anti-missionism in two important particulars, the fight against missions and the fight against pastoral support. But outside of these two identities there is no other parallel to be drawn between the Campbellites and the anti-mission Baptists. Although Campbell came into Tennessee denouncing missions, Bible societies, education societies, Boards, and evangelical agencies, his chief aim was to proselyte the already confused Baptists. The principles he advocated were so strangely foreign to Calvinism that but for the immersion ordinance they could not be compared to the Baptist creed.<sup>35</sup> One thing especially that we find in Mr. Campbell's creed would have been anathema to all Calvinistic Baptists: He preached a general atonement, declaring that Christ died for all men, "for every individual of the human race, for Pharoah and Judas as much as for Paul and Abraham." He stated that the doctrine of personal particular and unconditional salvation was the doctrine of men and devils.<sup>36</sup> Of course there could be but one ultimate effect produced by such preaching as this by a man who called himself a Baptist--he would be forced to get out though he draw "the third part of the stars" after him. That happened in what is known as the "Campbellism split" in 1830. Mr. Campbell having gathered a great host of followers from the Baptist ranks set up a church of his own in 1830 based on the theory of "be dipped or be damned."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> B. F. Riley, Baptists of South in States East of the Mississipp, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> Grime, op. cit., p. 539.

<sup>37</sup> Nowlin, op. cit., p. 91.

Daniel Parker, to whom the birth of anti-missionism is most generally charged, was until 1817 a resident of Tennessee. In that year he moved to Kentucky and soon thereafter to Illinois. About 1816 Parker had begun a great protest against missions, societies for temperance, etc., in Tennessee. But he did not originate the anti-mission doctrine. After the Revolutionary War there developed in Virginia and others of the colonies the fear among the Baptists that an educated ministry might be conducive to the building up of strong aggressive church organization. Such was not to be desired. They wished that the church might retain the simplicity vouchsafed to it by Jesus Christ and for which they felt they had long contended.<sup>38</sup> Any strong educational organizations collateral to the church would tend to build up a hierarchy or at least a delegation of powers not at all in accord with the democratic principles of the Baptist church. These sentiments, which found expression through many influential leaders, notably Patrick Henry,<sup>39</sup> had a tendency to touch the tender strains of many overzealous hearts among the Baptists. This feeling did not die with the great flood of enthusiasm that accompanied the revival, for, as late as 1845 twelve of the thirty-two Baptists associations in Virginia were anti-mission in feeling.<sup>40</sup> The anti-mission sentiment found its way from Virginia into Tennessee probably immediately after the Revolution, but if

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<sup>38</sup> Grime, op. cit., p. 548.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Newman, op. cit., p. 438.

that is so it was not in evidence there until several years after the revival had subsided.

The views of anti-missionism were first set forth in Tennessee by Elder Miles West, a man of sincere religious conviction and unquestioned piety. It is very probable that West came out strongly with his doctrine about 1814, when the first Baptist Triennial convention was held. Soon he was joined by some energetic allies eager to help champion the anti-mission cause. Among these allies were Elders Sion Bass and Daniel Parker. They were both considered earnest, pious men, charged with being unlearned, misled, and misleading.<sup>41</sup> Of these three Parker was the one destined to play the greatest role in the anti-mission controversy that occupied the attention of the Baptists for the next quarter of a century.

The following description of Parker is given by an eminent Baptist historian:

Raised on the frontier of Georgia, without education, uncouth in manners, slovenly in dress, diminutive in person, unprepossessing in appearance, with shriveled features and a small, piercing eye, few men, for a series of years, have exerted wider influence on the lower and less educated class of frontier people. With a zeal that bordered on insanity, firmness that amounted to obstinacy, and perseverance that would have done honor to a good cause, Daniel Parker exerted himself to the utmost to induce the churches within his range to declare non-fellowship with all Baptists who united with any missionary or benevolent societies. He possessed a mind of singular and original cast. He fully believed, and produced the impression on others, that he spoke from inspiration. Repeatedly we heard him when his mind seemed to rise above his own powers, and he would discourse for a few minutes on the divine attributes, or some doctrinal subject,

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<sup>41</sup> Grime, op. cit., p. 548.



with such brilliancy of thought and correctness of language as would astonish men of education and talents.<sup>42</sup>

This is the man who prepared the way and made it possible for Alexander Campbell to succeed in his wholesale proselyting of the Baptists in the 20's of the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

Although Tennessee Baptists had been favorable to charitable institutions and foreign missions in the years immediately following the revival, after the Triennial Convention in 1814 sentiment seemed to grow in Tennessee against all forms of mission work and against all the societies connected with missions. Most of the charitable societies were dissolved. Anything that favored missions was fought vigorously. There were various reasons for this state of affairs, not the least of which was the influence exerted by Daniel Parker and his associates.

John Taylor, the last of the three anti-mission leaders we have to consider, was a self-sacrificing, earnest, consecrated and conscientious minister of the gospel. He was early in his career a missionary in spirit. In fact he was one of the founders of the first Baptist church in Middle Tennessee.<sup>44</sup> But evidently Elder Taylor was favorable only to home missions, for the foreign mission movement had hardly got under way before it fell under the lash of this old veteran's ire in a pamphlet published in 1819 called Thoughts on Missions. Taylor makes two general charges against organized missions: first, that the primary object of the

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<sup>42</sup> Newman, op. cit., p. 439.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 440.

<sup>44</sup> Grime, op. cit., p. 547.



missionaries and their societies was to get money; and second, that the missionary system is contrary to the Baptist scheme of government. He compares the missionaries to Judas, "who was a lover of money," and to the horse leech, which with its forked tongue "sucks blood with great vigor."<sup>45</sup> He pointed out that the missionary organization was really an aristocracy and hence dangerous to a church founded on democratic principles.<sup>46</sup>

It seems that generally writers of church history have laid the charge of the Baptist dissension at the door of Parker, Taylor, and Campbell. Campbell they admit was intelligent, but his doctrine was altogether unlike the Baptist doctrine except in the particular case of immersion. Parker and Taylor are charged with being unlearned, slovenly, fanatical, and unreasonable. It seems strange that two such men could exert such a mighty influence as they are said to have had. Evidently the people among whom they worked must have been highly receptive to their doctrine. Perhaps the feeling existed against missions in the minds of many, as we have suggested, and all that was needed was a bold spokesman. Why the Baptists of Tennessee and surrounding regions turned so eagerly to these reactionaries is a question worthy of wide research. In the next few pages I believe it will be shown that the feeling against missions was a general condition not engendered by any one man or small group of men but growing up out of a strong general aversion to what the people considered the aristocracy of mission boards.

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<sup>45</sup> Sweet, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

### III

#### Controversy Between Mission and Anti-mission Baptists

The Baptist division known as the Anti-mission Split occurred, roughly speaking, between the years 1825 and 1845, but the most eventful years were probably 1837 and 1838. Several of the churches had divided before that time and perhaps a considerable number divided after that time, but the division seems to have reached the zenith in 1838. In the 1837 issue of the Baptist, periodical of the Baptist church published at Nashville, will be found considerable debate and controversy, tongue-lashing evidences of white-hot feeling, and in general proof enough that a division was in the making.<sup>47</sup> The two greatest controversialists of that period who wrote in the Baptist are the Rev. John M. Watson, who upheld the order of the old Baptists as the Anti-missionaries began to call themselves, and R. B. C. Howell, who was at that time editor of the Baptist.

Mr. Watson was one of the few of the Old Baptists who had enough education to enter into a learned discussion of the situation then confronting the church. Mr. Alldredge of the Baptist Sunday School Board gives him the credit of being probably the best educated and best informed of the anti-mission preachers of

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<sup>47</sup> Copies of the Baptist for the years 1835, 36, and 37 are in the office of Dr. Alldredge of the Baptist Sunday School Board at Nashville.

that period. Besides being a preacher of considerable note he was a writer of some distinction and a good physician. He divided his time, as has always been the custom with Old Baptist preachers, between his vocation and preaching the gospel.<sup>48</sup>

It was about the time the subject of Missions was causing the Baptists so much trouble, in the year 1835, that Rev. Watson settled at Murfreesboro and started preaching and practicing medicine. Here his views of the Scriptures soon drew fire from Mr. Howell of the Baptist, and a heated controversy ensued.<sup>49</sup> Mr. Watson seems to have given the editor considerable trouble about 1836 and 1837, for much mention is made of the debates carried on by letters between these two opposing brethren. A fuller discussion of the material found in the Baptist will be given later but now, since Rev. Watson has been mentioned, a little space will be given to the views he held and which were the views of the Old Baptists, or Primitive Baptists as they came to be called later.

In 1867 Dr. Watson published a book entitled The Old Baptist Test in which he set forth in detail the views of his sect, giving a detailed discussion of these views as based on the Scriptures. This book is probably one of the very few volumes giving in detail the doctrine of the Primitive Baptists since it was their lot to have few well-educated preachers and theirs by choice not to make any considerable effort toward spreading their views

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<sup>48</sup> John M. Watson, Old Baptist Test. (See autobiography in this work.)

<sup>49</sup> For some reason Mr. Watson's views were not given in full by the Baptist, but the 1837 number contains Mr. Howell's letters to Mr. Watson.

through publications.

The Old Baptist Test strongly defends the Calvinistic view of salvation. The writer declares against missions as efforts to help God save souls, which help, he says, God does not need. The missionaries are called money lovers and seekers of position and prominence in the world. In short, mission advocates, Dr. Watson declares, have taken upon themselves a task which they are powerless to perform for that task, the saving of souls has been reserved for the Most High and He will perform it perfectly. In the work of saving souls God does not require theological education or classical attainments, Dr. Watson avers.

"Our doctrine," continues Dr. Watson, "includes no moral ladder reaching from earth to heaven, nor human power by means of which to ascend the one ordained by the Lord." But we are told "whom he justified he also glorified.... Our doctrine embraces Christ as the way to heaven. In Christ there are no uncertainties, but the will of man is as changeable as the times."<sup>50</sup>

The question of pastoral support was another point on which the missionaries attacked the Old Baptists. The payment of a fixed salary to a preacher was offensive to the anti-mission Baptists. They could find no Scriptural basis for it, and they were prone to try everything by the Scriptures. "Thus saith the Lord" was a powerful phrase with them. And this Scriptural integrity forced them to deny fixed salaries. But as Dr. Watson points out, the Old Baptists were not against support of their ministers.

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<sup>50</sup> Watson, op. cit., p. 550.

Ministers were to be supported by their congregations in accordance with their needs. However, they might be paid more, the Reverend thought, so that they would not be forced to work five days a week for the support of their families and preach two days. In that way little time was left for reading and study. The Bible says, "study to show thyself approved." But a preacher who would not work to support his family would be considered "worse than an infidel." It is therefore incumbent upon the people to give their pastors reasonable support so that they might have time for study of the Scriptures. "Let none suppose," continues the writer, "that I am contending for my own advantage--far from it; I have never received anything of the kind from any church or people, nor will I do so while blessed temporally as I am at present. When a church receives of her own free will a pastor, she brings herself under Scriptural obligation to him."<sup>51</sup> A preacher does not become a beggar until his demands transcend the Scriptural rights, nor a hireling until his wages exceed Bible rights.<sup>52</sup> The New Testament offers no fixed rates, but gospel charity, which is love, will assess the rates.<sup>53</sup>

Now for some aspects of the controversy that was carried on by the Baptist, organ of the Mission Baptists, at Nashville for the years 1835, '36, and '37. The editor of this paper entered into rather heated debate with Elder Watson by letter in 1837, so we may expect some rather strong expressions from the little

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 511.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 510.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

paper.

Beginning in 1835 we shall take up events in chronological order as much as possible. In the March issue for 1835 is found an editorial which, summarized, gives the situation existing in the Baptist church rather clearly:

These are eventful times. Elements of discord are in active commotion----The standard of religion is very low throughout the state----There is pleasant attention to religion in two or three churches in Middle Tennessee but other sections are in a lamentable condition. The causes for disunion are to be found in the church. Ministers are numerous but unheard of doctrines have arisen. I refer to the "Two-Seed" doctrine, which has corrupted and laid waste many a pious heart in Tennessee. The Forked Deer Association was dissolved by mutual consent. The dissolution originated from a dissension of the "two-seed" doctrine of D. Parker. There is less union in this country than in all the states.<sup>54</sup>

To show the extent of disunion of the Baptists in Tennessee this statement may be used:

We have been informed that in Tennessee we have Baptists of the following orders. United, Separate, Regular, Particular, and General. The dying prayer of our Savior was for unity of His church: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name them thou hast given me, that they may be one."<sup>55</sup>

But Unity seemed to be unattainable. The Cumberland Association had this record in its 1835 minutes:

At our meeting of the association in 1834 the association gave advice to churches respecting the Tennessee Baptist Convention in which were set forth objections to the Convention and advised the churches of the Association to have nothing to do with it and deal with

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<sup>54</sup> Copies of the Baptist for 1835, 36, and 37 are to be found at the office of the Dept. of Information and Statistics of the B. S. S. B. in Nashville.

<sup>55</sup> Baptist, April 1835.

members who supported those or similar errors.<sup>56</sup>

In the March issue of 1836 is a long editorial relative to the coming division which seemed to most people to be inevitable.

The separation brought about in the Duck River Association in 1826, from which came the Separate Baptist Church, has been mentioned. The United Baptists have since often tried to effect a return of the Separate brethren but it seems that it cannot be done. In the May, 1836, number of the Baptist is a long article deploring the separation and expressing the hope that the Separates would return.<sup>57</sup> It seems that a proposition for reunion had been offered in an informal way, and the writer of the article in the Baptist cannot see why the "Separates will not meet us half way." They seem to have wanted a set of formal resolutions inviting them to return, which probably would have been rejected.

As evidence that organized missions in Tennessee had practically died out by the time of the late 1830's but that some were still strongly contending for them is this excerpt:

Now we ask will not our brethren come forward and  
revive the Tennessee Societies for foreign Missions?  
The foreign Missions cause needs our prayers and our  
contributions----Come, brethren, wake up.

The reason for this non-support of foreign Missions might have been largely due to the unsettled state of mind into which the Baptists generally had fallen as a result of so much division and dissension. This excerpt taken from a letter written to the

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<sup>56</sup> Baptist, Feb. 1836.

<sup>57</sup> Baptist, May 1836.



Baptist is self-explanatory:

The effort brethren think they have Scripture to sustain them in all they undertake: to wit, Bible, tract, and temperance societies. The anti-effort brethren think not and that it will result in the usurpation of liberty of the churches----I will not pretend to censure the effort brethren nor will I condemn the anti-effort brethren for their opposition, believing they are as sincere as the effort brethren.

The writer of the letter then goes on to plead for unity among the churches.<sup>58</sup>

The ill feeling of preachers toward one another often developed to a stage of bitterness almost equal to hatred as is shown by these lines taken from a letter written by a preacher from near Rutledge to Elder Lyon of the Baptist and which was reprinted by the Baptist.

I have no wish, sir, to cut a flourish but to communicate facts, having a general acquaintance with Baptist churches and ministers in East Tennessee and knowing that a great moral revolution is now in progress. I deem it my duty to tell it. The cause of education has too long been neglected----I would much rather become pastor of a new and untrained people, than be the successor of a bigot. What can be expected of a church which has been led by a man of a certain stamp, one that is opposed to ministerial improvement, who ordinarily prays three hours for a text while at the same time he has it marked: who prays for the conversion of the world, and sings missionary hymns as a kind of prelude to his boisterous vociferation against missions, schools, societies, etc.<sup>59</sup>

An article from a member of the Powell Valley Association of United Baptists calls benevolent, missionary and such institutions a part of a plan set up "over 1800 years ago." The writer is sorry that the anti-efforts keep striking at the flanks rather

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<sup>58</sup> Baptist, July 1836.

<sup>59</sup> Baptist, Feb. 1837.



than the "fountain," implying perhaps that they are fighting the Christian cause by hindering the spread of the gospel.<sup>60</sup>

In an editorial Mr. Howell of the Baptist vents his ire against the anti-missionists:

We have recently received a number of the Primitive Baptist with request to exchange. The Primitive Baptist is notorious for coarse abuse of missionaries and opposition to plans of enlightened benevolence.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the factions drew farther and farther apart, and a division seemed inevitable.

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<sup>60</sup> Baptist, Nov. 1837.

<sup>61</sup> Baptist, Mar. 1837.

#### IV

##### Churches and Associations Torn by Division

Until after the opening of the nineteenth century the Baptists had been strongly Calvinistic in doctrine. The idea of a called ministry was firmly established in their ranks. An educated preacher was a rather doubtful person, especially if he seemed to veer from the old established creed and customs. To be a preacher one needed first to exercise his "gift" in public under the close scrutiny of the elders. When a sort of novitiate was gone through for a period of a year or two, or perhaps even a shorter period, the church of his membership might, in accordance with the counsel of two or three elders, release the young preacher to exercise his "gift" among neighboring churches. If, after sufficient effort in the pulpit, he showed sustained or increasing power, he would be "set apart to the full work of the ministry," or in other words ordained. Education of the ministry or any preparation other than that bestowed upon them by God was looked upon as entirely unnecessary and in fact in direct opposition to the Bible. They recognized no human agency as necessary or even desirable in the work of salvation, so why should time and effort be expended to send missionaries to foreign fields when the Lord would save all His people, in whatever land they might be, at His own pleasure and in His own way?

The foregoing views were latent with the Baptists until the second decade of the nineteenth century. It is true that the Methodists had carried on great soul-saving revivals about them,

had established missions among the Indians, and had generally acted against the strict creed of Calvin. But the Baptists had been unmolested within their own ranks until a certain incident occurred in far-off India that was destined to play havoc among the Baptists, develop new attitudes toward the Scriptures, usher in a new era in denominational procedure, and finally to sever the cords of brotherhood and make of the Baptists two strongly opposing groups. From this schism, called by many writers the "great split", have emanated many strong, almost bitter, controversies.

The difficulty seems to have centered around one expression, principally, found in the Scriptures: "Go ye into all the world and preach my gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The anti-mission people held that God had given the command and that he would do the sending. Anyone sent by a Board of Foreign Missions might not be acceptable with God. The people imbued with a strong urge to do foreign mission work said the command had been given and it was up to the church to obey. In order to carry on this mission work successfully an organization must be had. It was necessary to raise money. And since the missionaries were to go among foreign peoples education was a requisite. So the battle was on.

But back to the immediate incident that precipitated the conflict: Luther Rice and another young Baptist, following the lead of the great English and New England mission movement, were in India in the second decade of the nineteenth century to survey the foreign mission situation. They had no funds. It was

therefore necessary for one to come to America to obtain money while the other stayed in India to carry on the work. It was agreed that Rice should come to America. Upon his return to the United States he made extensive tours of the South arousing the Baptists to interest in the mission work in India. A very favorable response was made, almost the entire South giving ear to the appeals of Rice. One section, however, though apparently favorable at first, soon showed signs of a vigorous reaction, which was not easily overcome and which almost paralyzed the mission spirit in that section until after the Civil War.<sup>62</sup> This section was Tennessee, and especially East Tennessee, and Northern Alabama.

The reaction set in about 1820 and continued unabated until the "great split," which came in the two-year period 1836-1838. For several years, quoting Riley, "not a man ventured to open his mouth in favor of any benevolent enterprise or action." There were a few churches throughout the state which contributed to missions but they were the exception rather than the rule. Repeated efforts were made to overcome this depression but to no avail. There were at least three reasons, it seems, for this strong reaction in Tennessee, according to Riley, but why the same reasons would not apply to neighboring regions, Kentucky and Georgia for example, I cannot tell:

1. The uneducated condition of the masses of Baptists.
2. The emphasis placed upon the hyper-Calvinistic view of the Scriptures by an illiterate ministry.

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<sup>62</sup> B. F. Riley, Baptists of the South in States East of the Mississippi, p. 195.

3. The activity of a very strange and powerful personality, Daniel Parker.

Why these should be considered forces accounting for the state of affairs among the Baptists of Tennessee and North Alabama and not forces in shaping trends in adjoining regions is left unexplained. Were the mass of people in Kentucky and Georgia more educated than they were in Tennessee? Had they a more enlightened ministry? Were the Baptists of these adjoining states less Calvinistic? Was the anti-mission feeling confined principally to the region of the Southern Appalachians? I cannot find a conclusive answer.

So far as Daniel Parker is concerned, I cannot see that he could have affected Tennessee more than Kentucky, for the gentleman moved from Tennessee to Kentucky in 1817. At this time the anti-mission feeling had not become rife in Tennessee. By 1820 Parker had removed to Illinois where he began advocating his "two-seed" doctrine. In 1829 he started a little magazine, the Church Advocate, for the purpose of spreading the new doctrine, but the "two-seed" doctrine had little effect on the Baptists of Tennessee or anywhere else.

Probably the greatest underlying objection to the mission movement was the strong dislike of centralization of authority. The Baptists held that every church was a unit, democratic in principles, and bound to no organization or board of authority. This did not mean they should not meet in association,--they had long done that--, but they did not like the idea of being directed or regulated by a board or convention.

Whatever may have been the cause or causes, we must accept the fact that division and dispute were rife in the Baptist church in Tennessee about 1836 to 1838.<sup>63</sup> The following is a reputed excerpt from the writing of a minister of the time:

Do not forget the enemy (missionaries); bear them in mind; the howling destructive wolves, the ravenous dogs, and the filthy and their numerous whelps. By a minute observation and the consultation of the sacred, never failing, descriptive chart, even their physiognomy in dress, mien, and carriage and many other indented, indelible and descriptive marks, too tedious at present to write. The wolfish smell is enough to create suspicion, and to ascertain; the dogs teeth are noted, and the wolves for their peculiar howl, etc.<sup>64</sup>

The church records which I have examined bear no evidence of any great stir over the separation. The disagreeing groups seem to have parted company peacefully, each group going its own way because of convictions and bearing no great malice toward the other group. The record of the Dumplin Creek church of East Tennessee, bearing the date of April 12, 1839, has this entry:

On further consideration furrin missions were protested against and other societies of the day, majority protested against home and furrin missions and all other societies of the day and all those that do fellowship them.

At the meeting on the fourth Saturday of April, 1839, which was a call meeting in which only a part of the members acted, this entry was made in the minutes:

Entered protest against the actions of our Brn. Resolved to meet them with it at our next meeting and offer terms of compromise

1. petition them to rescind the act
2. permit all orderly ministers to preach whether holding with missions or not.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Mr. Riley gives no authority for this excerpt.

May, fourth Saturday, 1839, we see the conflict still going on with this entry in the minutes, evidently done by the missionaries:

    Took up case of our opposing Brn. We can only say they have withdrawn from us, (contrary to the advice given by their association) that the joining or not joining of such societies not be made a test of fellowship.

Thus we can see that the separation had been effected. If any vigorous controversy accompanied the separation, the minutes are silent about it.

Elder Duke Kimbrough, then pastor of the church, declined to accept the pastorship of either group after the split, and there is no record in the minutes of the missionary side that he was ever their pastor after the separation.<sup>65</sup>

The Eljioy church, which was in Blount county, also briefly mentions the separation. An entry in the minutes of April 26, 1839, says:

    Appointed William Johnson, William Rogers and Calvin Johnson as delegates to the state convention.

At the next meeting, May 25, 1839, this entry was made in the minutes:

    Records of last meeting read and objected to where it said 'the church sent delegates' and was made to say part of the church sent delegates to the state convention.

This entry implies a little warmth of feeling, so we are not surprised to see in the minutes of June 22 of the same year this:

    Records of last meeting read and objected to. Moved record be altered to read 'the church sent delegates'-- failed, be as it is. Antis having their forces mustered.

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<sup>65</sup> The minutes of the Dumplin Creek Church, 1839, are to be found at the Lawson-McGhee library.

Nothing more is said in the minutes about the separation, but the separation came as this entry of September 27, 1839, confirms:

Elizabeth Thomas and Barsheba Thomas excluded for joining the anti-baptists.

While some churches were excluding members for joining the Missionary Baptists others made it clear that they favored missions. At their November, 1848, meeting, the Providence Church, Jefferson County, Tennessee, made it clear that they were opposed to missions. One item of this meeting stated:

Took up the Chge against Hopewell Church and Her preacher for Being too friendly with the misheanary Baptists and other Denominations. Hopewell acknowledged her fault and was given right hand of fellowship.

But at its March meeting in 1850 the church at Providence was still turning out missionaries. The record of the meeting was brief:

the met and so were dismist took up the case of John Lindsey for joining the mishionarys he is excluded for the act and is no more of us.<sup>66</sup>

In 1839 the French Broad Baptist Association met with Greasy Cove Church, Yancy County, North Carolina. The minutes of this meeting revealed two things: the division was not complete, but the association was pro-missionary. The sixth item of business showed them to be in correspondence still with the Nolachucky Association for the Nolachucky delegates, "Elder P. A. Witt and Bro. Nicholas Dunagin," were seated. That they were pro-missionary is shown by the fact that they declared Elder Isaac Tillery, a strong anti-missionary, in disorder and stated that "all who withdrew with him

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes of Providence Primitive Baptist Church, 1848, 1850.



should be considered as imposters."<sup>67</sup>

Christiansburg church, of Monroe County, Tennessee, took her stand with the missionaries, as is shown by the following entry in the minutes of her June, 1843, meeting:

3rdly Took up the request of Last Year's Association wheather or not we will take up a Correspondance with the Tennessee Association under the title of Primitive Baptist Association or not. We answer we will not take up Correspondance with them under that name.<sup>68</sup>

The mystery as to why the Baptists in Tennessee were so strongly anti-mission and anti-educational is still unsolved. Perhaps a close study of a great number of the church books covering the period, say, from 1815 to 1845, would present some valuable information that would lead to a logical and feasible conclusion.

The Powell Valley Association was strongly anti-missionary from the beginning of the controversy. Even before the years 1837 and 1838, when the schism over missions was generally effected, the Powell Valley had taken a stern stand against missions and mission societies. A brief review of the minutes of their association for the years 1835-42 seems appropriate.

On August 14, 1835, the Powell Valley Association of United Baptists<sup>69</sup> met with the church at Mulberry Gap, Claiborne County, Tennessee. At their business meeting they considered this query from Big Barren Church:

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<sup>67</sup> Minutes of French Broad Baptist Association, 1839.

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of Christiansburg Baptist Church, June, 1843.

<sup>69</sup> A name taken by the Baptists in Virginia and the Carolinas in the late years of the 18th century after a union had been accomplished which brought together groups then known as "regulars" and "separates." See Wm. Fristoe, History of the Ketockton Association, p. 23.

Is it gospel order for any member of the United Baptist Church to join any society whatever: Answer: We think not.

At the 1836 meeting of the association, held with the church at Powder Springs Gap, Grainger County, Tennessee, nineteen churches were represented, with a total membership of 974. In the statistics given at this meeting of the association a great many dismissals are noted from four churches. This short table will explain:

Church	Total membership	Dismissed
Powder Springs Gap	73	27
Big Barren	130	20
Big Spring	146	49
Puncheon Gap	90	30

Dismissals from the other fifteen churches represented amounted to a total of only 21. Therefore, it would appear that the four churches showing greatest number of dismissals were having internal distresses, probably relative to the mission controversy. None of these churches withdrew wholly from the association however, for they continued to send delegates to the association, as minutes of the 1840 meeting show.

At the 1836 meeting Mt. Hebron church presented two queries to the association:

1, When it shall so happen that a neighboring church of another district has passed a resolution that joining or not joining Missionary or Temperance Societies shall be no test of fellowship we have said it shall. The former were first in the act and still wish to correspond with us. Shall we use gospel labors with them or how shall we act?

2, When it so happens that a neighboring church of another district shall be separated on account of the Missionary or Temperance Societies the Anti-Missionaries choose Moderator and Clerk and agree to give each other letters of dismission in order to join a sister church where they may have peace shall that church receive them?

The association, true to Baptist polity, made the following answer to these queries:

As we are an advising council and not a legislative body and as each church is an independent body we answer the same to both queries: We have no authority nor control over churches while they adhere to the principles on which they were constituted and to the word of God.

But the controversy had caused great distress in the association as will be seen by the following from the minutes of the 1837 meeting of the association:

4th item of business--on motion, in answer to the petitions of Old Town Creek, Davis Creek, Mt. Hebron, Big Barren, Hinds Creek, Lost Creek and Rooky Springs Churches to drop a correspondence with all associations, churches, and individuals that hold members of the Missionary or Temperance societies and that hold to the schemes of the day or advocate its (their) cause. We answer that we have no authority over churches and individuals but in answer to the several requests we drop correspondence with all Associations.

A committee was appointed, consisting of N. S. McDowell, Isaac Long and William McBee to draft a letter setting forth the terms upon which correspondence with other associations would be resumed. The letter, after offering references to the Scriptures in condemnation of the "societies of the day," and appealing to their brethren to keep the "unity of the spirit," concluded:

Therefore, brethren, should you advise your churches to use gospel labors to reclaim transgressors who may have transgressed by joining any of these societies or should you use any other means agreeable to the word of God to put those things from amongst you, then we can walk together and still correspond with you as heretofore.

It was noted that the statistics of the 1836 meeting of the association showed many dismissals from Powder Springs Gap, Big Springs and Puncheon Gap. The minutes of the 1838 meeting reveal that division was rife in these churches, as the following will

show:

5th item of business: The case of Powder Springs Gap church taken up respecting two letters that came up each purporting to be the church and the matter of controversy was made known to the Association and investigated and the part that declared against the Societies of the Day was sustained by the Association and the brethren delegates invited to seats.

6th. The case of Blue Springs Church taken up, whereas two letters from said church each purporting to be the church, the truth of the matter was fully made known to the Association that three members of the church refused to dismiss their pastor who had joined the Societies of the Day and that those three members had been labored with to get them to go with the balance of the church and all to no purpose; and those of the Anti-Missionary part excluded them and the Association sustained them in what they had done; received their letter and invited the brethren delegates to seats.

The "split" was now wide open. The minutes of the 1839 meeting of the association, held at the Glade Springs Meeting House, Campbell County, Tennessee, show this conclusively. The eighth item of the business meeting says:

The case of two letters each purporting to be Puncheon Gap Church was taken up. Upon examination of the cause why two letters were presented we find by confession and relation of the parties that the church as represented by James Bunch and David Watson withdrew from the church because a large majority had entered into a resolution and would not rescind it, that joining or not joining the societies of the day, or the Baptist Convention and other societies called Benevolent, should not be a test of, or bar to, fellowship. We therefore receive the party so withdrawn, and declare them to be Puncheon Gap Church with all its privileges and powers.

That the lines of division were finally set and hardened is seen by the following from the minutes of the 1842 meeting of the association.

5th item. Hickory Flat, Zion of Virginia, and Black Water Churches, formerly of Mulberry Gap Association feeling to unfellowship that Association because they hold in fellowship the Societies of the Day pray

admission into our Union which was granted.<sup>70</sup>

The Mulberry Gap Association, which had been formed in 1836 by churches dismissed from the Powell Valley for that purpose,<sup>71</sup> was composed of churches that were pro-missionary for the most part. But not all of them were, for at their 1839 meeting the tenth item of business concerned some anti-mission resolutions. These resolutions were sent by Cedar Fork and Gap Creek churches, declaring "an unfellowship to the new institutions or societies of the day--such as Baptist state convention, Missionary or Temperance, & C."

A committee was appointed to draft an answer, who submitted the following:

We as a common committee do most sincerely believe that our much beloved brethren have committed an error...and do with much love and tenderness request our much beloved brethren not to offer up such resolutions any more to our Association<sup>72</sup>

In 1841 Cedar Fork and Gap Creek were not represented at the meeting of the Mulberry Gap Association. They had gone back to the Powell Valley, where resolutions against the missionaries would be welcome.

While the Powell Valley Association was being rent by the mission controversy her sister associations were having their troubles too. The Nolachucky Association at its 1839 meeting, held with the church at Concord Meeting House, Greene County,

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<sup>70</sup> Minutes of the Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association, hereafter referred to as P. V. Assn. (copy in McMillon Papers) 1835-1842.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., 1836 (copy in McMillon Papers).

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of Mulberry Gap Association, 1839.

Tennessee, set forth eighteen reasons why they could not fellowship those who belonged to the "societies of the day." Copious quotations from the Bible were made in defense of this stand, with emphasis on the money changers in the temple, love of money as the root of all evil, the danger to democratic church bodies, and other such appeals. The writer then quotes Romans, ch. 16, to say, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Then a quotation is given from Revelations, ch. 18: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues." The writer then concludes:

If you will not believe from these passages that we are justifiable in what we have done, we say neither would you believe though one arose from the dead.

The proceedings of the meeting as recorded in the Association record book are signed:

"Elder Henry Randolph, Moderator  
"Elder Pleasant A. Witt, Clerk."<sup>73</sup>

As far as the associations were concerned the die seemed cast earlier, but as late as 1849 the churches were still laboring with the problem, as the following from the minutes of the meeting of the Holston Association of that year shows:

Query from Stony Creek Church asking what "to do with a church that opposes missionary operations, or allows members to do same."

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<sup>73</sup> Records of the Nolachucky Primitive Baptist Association, hereafter referred to as Nola. Assn. (copy in McMillon Papers).



Answer: 1, We consider the missionary enterprize as being strictly in accord with the gospel of Christ. 2, We regard a church or minister that opposes the same as opposing the Spirit of the gospel. 3, We advise that any of the churches connected with the Association that may be opposed to the cause of missions or its operations--to examine prayerfully the spirit of the gospel on that subject.<sup>74</sup>

The Holston Association would appear, therefore, to have espoused wholeheartedly the cause of missions. As early as 1840 they were not receiving delegates sent to their association by the Nolachucky Association, as is shown by an item in the minutes of the 1840 meeting of the latter:

14th Our delegates appointed to Holston and French Broad Associations rejected because we have declared a non-fellowship with the institutions of the day. Therefore we have dropped correspondence with them.<sup>75</sup>

When the division became complete the associations which denounced missions began to call themselves Primitive Baptists, holding that they were the original churches of the state, that they still adhered to the articles of faith upon which they were organized, and that therefore the missionaries who had departed from that faith in essence constituted a new order. The word Primitive prefixed to their name was simply intended to indicate that they considered themselves the true Baptists, holding to the Scriptures as their rule of faith and practice, and that they did not consider the missionary Baptists as true Baptists.

The remainder of our work will be to relate something of these Primitive Baptists in East Tennessee. It is to be deplored that

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<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Holston Association, 1837, p. 28. Given in an "Historical Sketch."

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of Nola. Assn., 1840 (copy in McMillon Papers).



data relating to the activities of the Primitive Baptists are hard to get at. But such as have been made available will be treated as fully as possible.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANTI-MISSION BAPTISTS OCCUPIED BY DOCTRINAL DISPUTES

After the mission schism the anti-mission or Primitive Baptist churches lapsed into a period of doctrinal disputation that threatened their utter dissolution. Condemning missions as institutions of men unauthorized by the Scriptures, they withdrew doggedly into their stern predestinarian doctrine and for a few years were torn by grave doctrinal disputes.<sup>1</sup>

Though the records of those years between the division caused by the mission controversy and the outbreak of the Civil War are at this time scanty and scattered, enough has been preserved to show something of the confused mentality under which the Primitive Baptists labored. Perhaps their little differences of opinion concerning the Civil War gave them much needed respite from doctrinal troubles that might have been more trying had the war not come when it did.

An examination of a few of the queries that were presented to the various associations about this time will show in some degree with what problems they were faced.

In 1840 the Nolachucky Association met with the church at Friendship Meeting House,<sup>2</sup> Jefferson County, Tennessee. The

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the P. V. Assn., August, 1934. Friendship now belongs to that branch of the P. V. Assn. which brought about the division of 1889. They preach what is called in Primitive Baptist circles "absolute predestination of all things, both good and evil." Some of their ministers and churches hold universalist views, notably Big Spring.

fourteenth item of business at this meeting reads:

Our delegates appointed to Holston and French Broad Associations rejected because we have declared a non-fellowship with the institutions of the day. Therefore we have dropped correspondence with them.<sup>3</sup>

After that it seems no further correspondence was carried on with the Holston and French Broad associations, whose churches must have gone almost wholly with the missionaries. The Nola-chucky continued correspondence, however, with the strongly anti-mission Powell Valley and with the Tennessee, as examination of the association records of all three associations will show.<sup>4</sup>

In 1859 the Tennessee Association, meeting with the church at Wear's Cove, Sevier County, Tennessee, received two doctrinal queries from their churches:

Query No. 1 Is the doctrine, taught by some, that the devil is self-existent and eternal true or not?  
 Answer: We believe it is not true and for testimony we refer you to Col. 1st chap., 16th and 17th verses.  
 Rev. 1st chap., 8th and 11th verses.

Query No. 2 Is the doctrine, taught by some, that the Abrahamic body of Christ never went to heaven true or not? Answer: We believe it not true. We believe the same body of Christ that rose from the earth went into heaven and for testimony we refer you to Acts 1st chap., 8, 10 and 11 verses.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever doctrinal dispute arose in one association seemed to spread like measles to the others. In 1860 the Nalachucky association was troubled by the same questions that had plagued the Tennessee at her meeting the previous year. The meeting was held with the church at County Line Meeting House, Grainger County,

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<sup>3</sup> Minutes of Nola. Assn., 1840 (copy in McMillon Papers).

<sup>4</sup> The McMillon Papers contain a great wealth of minutes of all the Primitive Baptist Associations in East Tennessee and surrounding area.

<sup>5</sup> Tennessee Primitive Baptist Association Book (copy in McMillon Papers).

Tennessee, in September, 1860, and the tenth item of business concerned the eternal-devil doctrine:

Bethany church wants to know if she has done right in declaring a non-fellowship against the eternal devil doctrine and them that teach it. Answer: We believe they have. They having also declared a non-fellowship against the doctrine and them that teach it that men and women cannot live moral, that is, cannot keep from committing fornication, lewdness, and all such like abominations. Answer: We believe they have done right in this too.<sup>6</sup>

Then came the war and further distress was wrought. No doubt all the associations in the eastern part of the state were affected by the war, for the area was generally pro-union, while the state itself was secessionist.

The minutes of the Powell Valley association are revealing. Most of the churches were filled with people of pro-union sentiments but some churches evidently were strongly in favor of the Confederacy. At the 1865 meeting of the association, held with the church at Mountain Creek, Claiborne County, Tennessee, fifteen churches were represented. But six churches sent no delegates and no letters. At this meeting Elder S. D. Branson of Salem church was moderator and William Hodges was clerk. That the war had wrought havoc in the association is seen by the fact that six of the twenty-one churches comprising the association sent no delegates, and did not even write to the association. One church even asked to be dropped from the association. The eighth item of Saturday's business said: "Dropped Big Spring Church from the association for the present by request of her delegates." The tenth item of business showed still further how confused they had

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<sup>6</sup> Nolachucky Primitive Baptist Association Book (copy in McMillon Papers).

become as a result of the war.<sup>7</sup> It said:

We discontinue correspondence with sister associations on account of the recent Rebellion--not knowing how they stand respecting it.

The sixth item of business showed that the rebellion had even disrupted the business affairs of the church:

Appointed Henry Ausmus, John Hopper, and Palmer Sulfrage to call on our former clerk for the Association Book, and funds, if any and report to our next association.

At the meeting of the association the following year the committee appointed to secure the association book and funds reported that the former clerk had refused to give them the book, saying the association was indebted to him and must settle before he would hand over the book.<sup>8</sup>

When the association met the following year, 1866, it was to face more trouble over the rebellion. A query from Hind's Creek was curt:

We want to know why the association dropped Big Spring Church out of the Union.

The eighth item, of which this query was a part, continues:

Appointed Brethren S. D. Branson, J. Freeman, C. J. Idol, A. B. Hansard, P. Bolinger and J. Hopper to prepare an answer and say on what principles we will revive correspondence with sister associations, who made the following report, which was received. In answer to the request from Hinds Creek Church the association took up the matter and received information that it was on account of the Rebellion that had caused the difficulty to exist in their own body, the majority of that church being rebels

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<sup>7</sup> Big Spring, in Southeast Claiborne County, was in a strongly pro-Confederate section. This is the famous 4th District, still strongly Democratic.

<sup>8</sup> P. V. Assn. Book (copy in McMillon Papers).

caused the minority to withdraw and unite with other churches which they considered in order. This is the cause why that church was dropped from the association. On what principles shall we revive correspondence with sister associations. Answer: We, as an association, to our former sister associations with whom we were in correspondence heretofore. We are willing to revive correspondence provided they have not aided or abetted willingly in the past wicked rebellion against the government of the United States and stand upon the old platform as before. Also we are willing to receive any church or members of any church of our faith and order to fellowship with us that have stood opposed to the rebellion and are otherwise orderly.<sup>9</sup>

At the 1867 meeting of the association held with the church at Lost Creek Meeting House, Union County, Tennessee, a query was presented asking advice of the association as to how to deal with a minister who "publicly charges the churches and association of erring in declaring a non-fellowship for those who aided willingly in the past Rebellion...without a satisfactory acknowledgment." The association answered this query with the simple and very inclusive statement: "We advise them to deal with them according to the word of God."

The association received delegates from the Nolachucky and Hiwassee associations but nothing was said about sending delegates to meet with these associations. They were still intent on their own affairs, though, trying to get the association book from the former clerk, as is shown by the twelfth item of business, which reads:

Took up the claim of Wm. McBee against the association and after consultation we appointed Andrew Bolinger to pay him \$3.40 provided he gives up the Association Book, and if he fails to give up the Book, we hereby appoint our clerks together with Andrew Bolinger to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

bring suit against said Wm. McBee for possession of said Association Book<sup>10</sup>

The Powell Valley had eighteen churches and a total membership of 633 according to the statistics of the 1867 minutes. Two churches were listed as being still in fellowship, but they sent no letters or delegates to the meeting.

The Hiwassee and Nolaohucky associations, who had sent delegates in 1867 sent none in 1868, believing no doubt that the Powell Valley meant what it said when it said it was dropping correspondence with all sister associations.

But the following year, 1869, when the association met at Glade Springs Meeting House, Campbell County, Tennessee, the Nolaohucky was back on the job trying to revive correspondence with the Powell Valley. Hiwassee, however, still stayed away. The Nolaohucky messengers were received and seated, and this time the Powell Valley people decided to send a letter and delegates to the Nolaohucky, which was to convene with the church at Slate Creek, Cooke County, Tennessee. Thus they gradually overcame the lethargy into which they had fallen during the War years.<sup>11</sup>

The Nolaohucky association had also declared non-fellowship for all rebels and their works unless they would "turn and repent of their evil ways." This action was taken at the 1866 meeting of the association.<sup>12</sup>

The controversy over non-fellowship for the rebels had not caused the Primitive Baptists (all the anti-mission Baptists now

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Nola. Assn. Book (copy in McMillon Papers).



called themselves Primitive Baptists) to forget their old enemies the missionaries. The ninth item of business at the 1869 meeting of the Powell Valley association is a reaffirmation of their stand on "institutions of the day." It says:

Took up the case of Gap Creek Church, and the association agreed to sustain her former act in declaring a non-fellowship with all institutions of the day that are unauthorized by the Word of God.<sup>13</sup>

While the churches of the Nolachucky association were principally in Cocke and Sevier counties, those of the Tennessee principally in Sevier and Blount counties and those of the Hiwassee in a small area, the Powell Valley association had churches scattered all the way from Lee County, Virginia, to Roane County, Tennessee. The over-mountain churches in Roane and Scott counties often were represented at the association meetings only by letters. So it was only natural that at the 1869 meeting a petition was presented for the dismissal of the churches on the northwest side of Cumberland mountain for the purpose of organizing a new association. Such had been common practice since 1802, when the Holston association released several of her churches to form the Tennessee. Therefore, in 1870 six churches in Scott and Roane counties were dismissed from the Powell Valley association to form the new association. Delegates from these six churches met in October, 1870, at Bethlehem Meeting House in Scott County, Tennessee, and formed the Bethlehem Association.<sup>14</sup> For about half a century some of them had belonged to the mother association, and their delegates had traveled long distances to the annual meetings of the

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<sup>13</sup> P. V. Assn. Book (copy in McMillon Papers).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

association. Now they had their own little association and hereafter would correspond with the Powell Valley and other associations in their new capacity.

Evidence that the various churches were anxious to forgive and forget concerning the "past wicked Rebellion" was shown at the 1870 meeting of the Powell Valley association. The ninth item of business at that meeting said:

    Took up the petition of Union Church asking the Association to rescind their Rebel non-fellowship declaration. Request rejected.

But the churches were persistent in their efforts to have the act annulled, as we shall see.

In 1871 two churches, Browney's Creek<sup>15</sup> and Pine Grove, sent requests asking the association to rescind their rebel non-fellowship act. The association appointed a committee to draft an answer who reported as follows:

    Respecting those who were engaged in the past Rebellion. We say that we declare a non-fellowship with none but those who transgressed the laws of our land and the word of God. It reaches not those that had mere opinion. We hold none guilty but transgressors. Neither do we make politics a test of fellowship in the churches.

But this was not satisfactory. The church at Pleasant Point, Claiborne County, Tennessee, sent a request to the association when it convened in 1874. This was not a mere query. It said:

    We ask the association to reconsider her former acts concerning those engaged in Rebellion, whether they are sustained by the word of God or not.

The item continued:

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<sup>15</sup> Browney's Creek Church is in Bell County, Ky. The association has always disregarded state lines, having at present at least five churches in Kentucky.

After consideration agreed to defer the above until our next association.

The next year, 1875, the association appointed a committee to answer the request sent in by Pleasant Point the previous year. After due deliberation the committee reported that they believed the association sustained by the word of God in restoring the rebels to fellowship. And the following year the eleventh item of business straightened the whole matter out, for it read:

We repeal all former acts of the association touching the fellowship of the saints contrary to the word of God and take the word of God as our guide.<sup>16</sup>

At the 1876 meeting the association felt kindly disposed. Having rescinded the rebel non-fellowship act, they extended fellowship even further by appointing delegates to attend the meeting of the Tennessee association, which was to meet that year at Ogle's Chapel in Sevier County, Tennessee. As in previous years the Nolachucky association sent a delegate to the 1876 meeting of the Powell Valley. He was an able preacher of the Nolachucky, Elder Humphrey Mount.<sup>17</sup>

The Tennessee and Nolachucky associations had little or no trouble over non-fellowship because of participation in the rebellion,<sup>18</sup> so it was easy for fellowship to be re-established with the Powell Valley after they had rescinded their non-fellowship acts within their own association and had settled the differences among their churches.

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<sup>16</sup> P. V. Assn. Book (copy in McMillon Papers).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Elder W. C. McMillon, April 15, 1940.

But that settled, something of a controversial nature seemed sure to arise to occupy their attention for another period of time, and a controversy did pop up. It was the two-seed heresy, which had been so rigorously and ably propounded in the early decades of the century by Daniel Parker.<sup>19</sup> This and the trouble over absolute predestination will be taken up in the next chapter.

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<sup>19</sup> The so-called two-seed doctrine, the chief advocate of which was Elder Daniel Parker, was a very extreme predestinarian doctrine. The gist of it was this: There are two kinds of people in the world, those born of God and those born of the devil. Those of the good seed will do the will of their father (God) and those of the evil seed will do the will of their father (the devil). One of Elder Parker's favorite quotations concerning the evil seed was: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father will ye do." For a more complete discussion of the two-seed doctrine see Sweet, op. cit., pp. 67-75, and Grime, op. cit., p. 548.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TWO-SEED HERESY AND ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

The Two-Seed doctrine, which was beginning to occupy the attention of the churches in the early 1870's, continued to plague the Primitive Baptists, especially those of the Powell Valley association, until 1889, when a split occurred in the association.<sup>1</sup> The Nolaohucky association, too, felt the impact of this conflict,<sup>2</sup> but no complete rift, such as the Powell Valley experienced, occurred in any of the other East Tennessee associations.

At the 1879 meeting of the Powell Valley association the tenth item of business said:

Committee appointed to draft advice to the churches in regard to the Two-Seed doctrine, who reported as follows: We as an association advise our sister churches to have no fellowship with what is generally known as the Two-Seed Heresy or those who teach the doctrine of an Eternally damned or Eternally Justified outside of the preaching of the gosple of the Kingdom of God and teach that the unbeliever is no subject of gosple address. We believe that God makes use of the Gosple as a means of calling his Elect and this means is the work of the Spirit in the church.

This action of the association drew fire from some of the churches, who accused the association of setting itself up as a governing body, formulating rules by which the churches were to be governed, which they considered a usurpation of authority not in keeping with the general conception of Baptist polity. In 1880 when the association met it found itself faced with the necessity or advisability of making a denial, as revealed by the seventh

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the P. V. Assn., 1889.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Nola. Assn., 1890.

item of business:

The committee of investigation was called for who reported as follows: We, your committee, after looking over the former acts of the association deny that we as an association have any by-laws instituted by men to govern either the association or the churches and we appeal to the record for our assertion.

But this solved nothing. The following year, 1881, Hurricane Branch church precipitated the conflict by writing a letter to the association openly accusing it of "setting up laws contrary to the commandments of Christ" and accusing "nearly all the preachers" of the association of preaching unsound doctrine. The committee chosen to answer Hurricane Branch did so very bluntly with this statement:

We say to Hurricane Branch church, as many as do not believe the Two-Seed doctrine hereby to come out and stand approved.

Among those who stood with Hurricane Branch in the controversy were two of the churches which had gone with the Bethlehem association when it was formed but which came back to the Powell Valley about 1878.<sup>3</sup> These were New River and Brimstone. Later these churches were to stand with Big Spring, Hind's Creek and Powder Spring Gap in the separation known as the absolute predestination split.

In 1882 the association withdrew itself from Hurricane Branch and the "embodiment she has gone off with."<sup>4</sup>

The trouble continued to rankle, but by 1886 the association seemed anxious to call a halt to the controversy, for at the

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<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the P. V. Assn., 1878 (copy in McMillon Papers).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1882.

meeting of the association that year the third item of business was a lengthy report of an appeasement committee, which in substance called for confession of faults by "both wings" of the association and presented a plea that "the association fall back to where she started wrong and be as one as she was."

At this 1886 meeting, too, the association took time out from its worries over the Two-Seed doctrine to reaffirm its opposition to Sunday Schools. The fifth item of business concerned a query from one of the churches which asked: "Is it right for Primitive Baptists to engage in religious Sunday Schools or to send their children to engage in them?"

The answer to this query was interesting in that it showed the Primitive Baptists were not opposed to learning as such. It stated:

We oppose any Sabbath School which has for its object an auxillary of any church denomination, but such as reading the scripture or teaching science we do not oppose such in this way.

Appeasement and pleas for reconciliation availed nothing, however, concerning the Two-Seed doctrine. In 1888 the association convened with the church at Browney's Creek, Bell County, Kentucky, and went through a business session that was fraught with dissension and impending trouble. The eighth and ninth items of business are revealing. The eighth referred to a query from Big Barren church asking if the doctrine that God predestined everything that comes to pass, both good and evil, is Bible doctrine. The answer was: "No, we do not understand it to be a Bible doctrine." The ninth item referred to a difficulty which turned out to be one of the greatest factors in bringing about the division.



Union Church, Union County, Tennessee, had sent two letters and two groups of delegates to the association, each claiming to represent the church. Clearly, this was division. The association advised them to settle the matter in their own church, but if they could not settle their trouble among themselves that they should invite sister churches to help them. The association evidently wanted to keep clear of this trouble, for it had already undergone severe criticism as a "governing body."

Among those who held to the Two-Seed doctrine were James "Black Mac" McDonald, James C. Walton, G. P. Wilder, Reuben West and Philip Moyers, who all went with the Two-Seed side after the split. But they were all present at the 1888 meeting when the association declared against the Two-Seed doctrine as above stated.

The association was appointed to meet with the church at Brimstone, Scott County, Tennessee. Brimstone, as we have seen, was favorable to the Two-Seed doctrine. So it was a likely setting for what happened at the 1889 meeting.

For that meeting we must refer to two records, for the fact is two associations were held, two minutes prepared, and two sides of the controversy presented. There was born what was afterwards called the Absolute Side of the Powell Valley association.<sup>5</sup>

When the association tried to elect a moderator, trouble flared. One faction, that which later was designated as Two-Seed or Absolute Predestinarian, after failing to elect a moderator, withdrew from the house and held their services in a grove nearby,

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<sup>5</sup> Hereafter referred to as P. V. Assn., No. 2.

as they stated in their minutes, "to keep down confusion."<sup>6</sup> At this session those who withdrew elected the moderator and clerk whom they had attempted to elect before withdrawing from the main body of the association.

Those who remained in the house elected the moderator and clerk they had attempted to elect before the others withdrew to the grove. The minutes of this body say nothing about a withdrawal of part of the members to hold a separate meeting. But names of several ministers prominent at previous meetings of the association are not given. These were the men who led the withdrawing party; foremost among whom were J. C. Walton, James McDonald, Reuben West (who was elected moderator of the withdrawing faction), G. P. Wilder, and P. N. Moyers. Elder Moyers was appointed to write the circular letter to sister associations. The letter stated in part:

We feel to say to you that we are in peace with ourselves as the Lord has cleansed the body, the Church, from Arminianism as we hope. In order that you may know how He cleansed it we refer you to our minutes.<sup>7</sup>

At the 1889 meeting the withdrawing faction, called sometimes the Walton faction, and designated as Absolute Predestinarians, answered a query of one of the churches as to predestination, affirming their belief that predestination is a Bible doctrine.

The following year, 1890, the year after the division, the other faction, who now called themselves the Original Powell Valley Association of Primitive Baptists, took note of this action by the

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn. No. 2, 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Walton faction and did some explaining as to their own stand on predestination by answering a query from one of their churches. The somewhat lengthy answer is as follows:

Whereas, there are now two organized bodies claiming to be the Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association, we, therefore, deem necessary, for the information of sister Associations with whom we correspond and Baptists in general, to publish in our minutes the cause of the division, whatever may be said to the contrary, it is clear to our minds that a doctrinal issue has separated us, whatever else may be stated as the ground for the division, the advocacy of the doctrine of God's absolute predestination of all things, both good and evil, led to it. In 1888 a query was sent by one of our churches as follows: "Is the absolute predestination of all things whatsoever comes to pass, both good and evil, a Bible doctrine?" Answer--"No, we do not understand it to be a Bible doctrine."<sup>8</sup>

In a lengthy statement of about two pages they go on to state that, despite accusations of the other faction, they do hold predestination to be a Bible doctrine. They deny they are Arminian but also "deny that vile wickedness is a fruit of God's holy decrees." They openly accuse two of the leaders of the Walton faction:

Elders James McDonald and J. O. Walton have precipitated the division by advocating the doctrine of God's absolute predestination, both good and evil.

Thus names were called, accusations and denials made, and the separation effected.

This same year, 1890, the No. 2 side held their association at the usual time, the third Saturday and Sunday in August, the time used by the Powell Valley for its associational meetings since its organization in 1818. But they arranged to meet at another time thereafter. The time for meeting of the association

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<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Original Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association, hereafter referred to as P. V. Assn. No. 1, 1890.

the following year was set on the first Saturday in September.

The churches were almost equally divided between the two sides, some going altogether with the No. 2 side, some remaining altogether with the No. 1 side, and some dividing their allegiance. No. 2 had thirteen churches represented at the 1890 meeting, with a total membership of 437.<sup>9</sup> No. 1 had fifteen churches and a total membership of 796.<sup>10</sup>

After this division the No. 1 side continued correspondence with the other Primitive Baptist associations in East Tennessee and surrounding area<sup>11</sup> with which they had been in correspondence before the split but the No. 2 side dropped correspondence with these associations, all except the Red Bird (Kentucky), which advocated doctrine similar to theirs.

The No. 1 side, though staggered by the blow of the separation for a few years, regained its balance and began to grow, while the No. 2 side dwindled in numbers from year to year. In 1939 the No. 1 side, after having undergone another separation in 1906 and 1907 in a controversy concerning secret orders, had a total membership of 871. The most recent intelligence of the No. 2 side, that given in their 1934 minutes, shows that they were not in correspondence with any other association and that they had five churches with a total membership of 102. Their churches and membership are principally in Union and Grainger counties in Tennessee and in Bell County, Kentucky.<sup>12</sup> In the

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<sup>9</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 2, 1890.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 1, 1890.

<sup>11</sup> The minutes of the 1899 meeting shows that they were corresponding with the Tennessee, the Nolachucky, and the Mud Creek (Alabama) Associations.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 2, 1934.

Articles of Faith of the No. 2 side given in the 1934 minutes the second article states that they believe in "the absolute predestination of all things."<sup>13</sup>

The No. 2 side was in correspondence with the Washington District Primitive Baptist Association in 1922, which had at that time twenty-seven churches. That year they seated Elder S. H. Gilbert as a visitor from the Powell Valley Association.<sup>14</sup> Elder Gilbert, at that time pastor of one of the churches of the No. 2 side, later left the association and began advocating Universalism, or what the Baptists call No Hell Doctrine. He later became identified with one wing of the Washington District Association and with the Stony Creek Association, both of which advocate universalism.<sup>15</sup> He even drew off with him one of the churches of the Powell Valley No. 2, Big Spring, whose present pastor is Elder Bert Wolfenbarger.

Big Spring must have withdrawn from the Powell Valley Association No. 2 to become identified with universalism about 1925 or 1926. Elder S. H. Gilbert, then pastor of the church, was also pastor of one of the churches in the Tennessee-Nolachucky Association, Big Pigeon. Big Pigeon, having heard that Gilbert was advocating universalism, passed Resolutions on August 30, 1927, condemning "Fatalism and Universalism and its Kindred doctrines." In these Resolutions they took occasion to reaffirm their belief in predestination and to declare that they were standing firm on the old principles--free and unconditional election, or salvation by

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Washington District Association of Primitive Baptists, 1922.

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Old Constitutional Washington District Association, 1924-1927.

grace. The Resolutions read in part:

this church dont now nor we don't believe ever did love the doctrine of eternal salvations on conditions nor the doctrine of the absolute predestination of all things to the extent that men and women cannot live moral as some of the brethren advocate.<sup>16</sup>

This trouble at Big Pigeon seems to be the only indication that the churches of the Tennessee-Nolachucky Association were troubled by Absolute Predestination or Universalism.<sup>17</sup> The Hiwassee was not troubled by the controversy,<sup>18</sup> neither was the Sequatchie Valley.<sup>19</sup> The Powell Valley was the one East Tennessee association to suffer a major division because of these doctrines.

But the Powell Valley seems to feed on division and dissension, for in the early years of the twentieth century it was again torn asunder. This time secret orders caused the trouble. This controversy, however, was not so localized as the one which caused the division in 1889. It swept all Primitive Baptist groups in the South and Midwest and even today calls forth editorials now and then from controversial writers.<sup>20</sup> The next chapter will show how the secret order controversy affected the East Tennessee associations.

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<sup>16</sup> Original copy of these Resolutions is to be found in McMillon Papers.

<sup>17</sup> The Nolachucky and Tennessee associations of Primitive Baptists were united in 1921 to form the Tennessee-Nolachucky Association. Big Pigeon is a member of this association.

<sup>18</sup> D. L. Cooper, Letter.

<sup>19</sup> D. M. Raulston, Letter.

<sup>20</sup> Primitive Baptist editorials, April 4, 1905, April 17, 1906, Sept. 11, 1917. The editorial writers of the Primitive Baptist, Thornton, Ark., seem to have borne the torch of the crusade against secret order members having membership in the churches.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SECRET ORDER CONTROVERSY

Hardly more than a decade passed after the distress the Powell Valley experienced over the Two-Seed doctrine before a more wide-spread division began. This was the division caused by barring members of secret orders from membership in the church. This controversy, far from being confined to one association, spread far and wide, affecting many associations in several states. Some associations, notably the Hiwassee<sup>1</sup> in East Tennessee, held together in a body and raised no bars of fellowship against secret order members. Others, the Sequatchie Valley,<sup>2</sup> for instance, held altogether with those declaring a non-fellowship for secret order members. But in most cases the associations were divided in sentiment, the bodies of many churches being divided and new churches set up where no bars to fellowship were raised against members who belonged to secret orders. This was the case especially with the Powell Valley and the Nolachucky associations.

In the Powell Valley, as well as in the Nolachucky, personalities entered into the dispute, and the opposing sides were called by the names of their respective leaders. For instance, in the Powell Valley association "Big John" Miller, a member of Union Church, Union County, seems to have been the leader of the side which sought to bar members of secret orders from membership. That side in the controversy was therefore called the "John Miller Side." The other side was led by Elders M. B. Weaver and J. D. Monroe. It

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Hiwassee Primitive Baptist Association, 1906, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of Sequatchie Valley Primitive Baptist Association, 1907.



was called the "'Manny' Weaver Side," and sometimes the "'Jeff' Monroe Side."<sup>3</sup>

The Nolachucky, which had its division a few years after the Powell Valley, divided into the Ogle faction, led by Elder I. L. Ogle, and the McMillan faction, led by Elder Samuel McMillan. The Ogle faction was the secret order side and the McMillan faction barred secret order members from fellowship.<sup>4</sup> The division occurred in the Powell Valley in 1906 but did not occur in the Nolachucky until 1912, as will be seen by an examination of the minutes of those associations for the years mentioned.

When the Powell Valley association met in August, 1904, with the church at Gibson Station, Lee County, Virginia, it was faced with a problem similar to that which it had faced in 1889--a problem concerning two letters sent to the association from one church, obviously by opposing factions in that church. The two letters were referred to a "Committee on Credentials," which submitted the following report:

We your committee to whom was referred the matter of the two letters and messengers of the Mossy Spring Church, advise that the matter be referred back to the said church, to use all lawful means according to the gospel of Christ to settle said matter in the church.<sup>5</sup>

Another item in the minutes of this year, 1904, showed that the association was deeply concerned over the impending strife. This was the fifteenth item, which was as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 1, 1904-1906; Minutes of Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association (Secret order side), 1906, 1907, hereafter referred to as P. V. Assn. No. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of Nola. Assn., 1911, 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 1, 1904.

On motion, we advise each church in the Union to appoint two days of fasting and prayer that the Lord would enable each member by His Holy Spirit to lay aside everything that causes offense; submitting themselves one to another according to the Bible, by putting away all malice, evil-speaking, back biting and hypocrisy; adhering more closely to the Golden Rule.

But the fasting and prayer availed nothing. The various churches in the association went about the business of excluding members who would not declare non-fellowship for members of secret orders. Some of the association's ablest ministers were excluded before the meeting of the association in 1905. The seventh item of the proceedings of that year says:

On motion we fully endorse the action of the churches that excluded Elders A. Boruff, J. D. Monroe, S. M. Petree and M. B. Weaver.

Another item in the 1905 minutes shows that they would not accept a letter from a church "for holding and fellowshiping members whose baptism was administered by ministers in disorder."<sup>6</sup>

In 1906, as was to be expected, two associations were held, each claiming to be the Powell Valley Primitive Baptist Association. The Original, or No. 1, association held its meeting with Lost Creek Church, Union County, Tennessee. The Secret Order, or No. 3, association held its meeting on the same days, with Oak Grove Church, also in Union County. They elected one of the elders who had been foremost in the controversy to be their moderator, Elder M. B. Weaver. Then they proceeded to condemn the action taken by the association the previous year in which they upheld the churches which excluded some elders. A "Committee on Requests" submitted a lengthy report which is given here in part:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1905.

Whereas, There are two parties claiming to be the Powells Valley Association, and one of them having published a false exclusion, stating the following named elders were excluded from the fellowship of the churches, to wit: Elders S. M. Petree, M. B. Weaver, J. D. Monroe and Alfred Boruff. Said elders being in full fellowship with the original churches, and in good standing with said churches and surrounding country....Therefore we ask the Association to publish in their minutes standing of said elders or ministers.

They continued by regretting "that the real cause of said trouble is hid from so many of our good brethren," and contended that "there is no issue between our people on doctrine, neither was the secret order question the original cause."<sup>7</sup> They contended further that "we have had members belonging to secret orders in our fellowship for perhaps one hundred years or more." Why, then, should such be made subjects of non-fellowship now, they wondered.<sup>8</sup>

The No. 3 association drew a goodly number to it, for the statistics of the meeting in 1906 show they had eight churches and a total membership of 475.

The following year, 1907, the No. 1 association held its meeting with the church at Sanders Chapel, Knoxville, Tennessee. At this meeting eighteen churches, having a total membership of 940, were represented. Having excluded the secret order members, they gave a lengthy explanation of their stand in the minutes of the meeting. They cited many instances in Baptist history in which members had been forbidden to join secret societies. They referred especially to a query that came to the association in

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 3, 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

1835 from Big Barren Church asking: "Is it gospel order for any member to join any society whatever?" and said the association had answered: "We think not." They continued, speaking of excluded members:

Brethren, it is useless to dispute about their reasons, as history plainly gives the evil results of such practices in some churches and associations in generations past.<sup>9</sup>

At this meeting it was shown that the No. 1 association was in correspondence with Nolachucky, Tennessee, Mud Creek (Alabama) and Sequatchie Valley associations.<sup>10</sup> The No. 3 association dropped correspondence in 1906 with all associations pending outcome of the controversy which had caused the division.<sup>11</sup>

The No. 2 Powell Valley Association, composed of the churches which withdrew in 1889 in the Two-Seed controversy, were not affected by the trouble in 1906 and 1907. Perhaps they had seen enough of disputes. Perhaps they were too weak to enter into another battle. They had only a few churches and a very slender membership.<sup>12</sup>

The Tennessee Primitive Baptist Association had its first trouble in the secret order controversy the same year the Powell Valley saw the strife approaching and began girding for the conflict. This was in 1904, when the Tennessee at its regular meeting, held with Bird's Creek Church, Sevier County, Tennessee, received the following query: "Is it gospel order for any of our

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<sup>9</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 1, 1907.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the P. V. Assn., No. 3, 1906.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix C.

ministers or members to join any secret or oath-bound society?"

The answer was stern:

Such a course is contrary to the scriptures and contrary to the faith and practice of the Primitive Baptists, in all ages and in all countries, and is contrary to the great design of the head of the Church, which is to keep the Church separate from the world. Therefore, we advise the churches of this Association to exercise discipline with such members, and if they refuse to be admonished and to abandon such organizations, to exclude them from church membership.<sup>13</sup>

At this meeting of the Tennessee ten churches were represented, having a total membership of 722.

Though a few were excluded from the churches, no major division occurred as a result of the stand taken by the association concerning secret orders. A division did occur, however, a few years later which divided the Tennessee into what might be called a 'progressive' side and a 'conservative' side. But more of that later.<sup>14</sup>

In 1906 the Nolachucky association had fourteen churches with a total membership 669. At that time no discord appeared to exist such as was tearing the Powell Valley and such as the Tennessee nipped in the bud in 1904. But discord was soon to come out in the Nolachucky, for at their meeting in 1910 they were faced with a query asking if it is gospel order "to exhort alien sinners for the purpose of quickening them into divine life." It was answered in the negative:

No, it is not gospel order for ministers to exhort alien sinners for the purpose of quickening them into divine life. It is right to continue meeting from

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<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Tennessee Primitive Baptist Association, 1904 (hereafter referred to as Tenn. Assn.).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1912.

day to day and to pray for and exhort those that are quickened by the spirit of God, but all fleshly revivals should be avoided.

It is evident from this that some of the ministers had been holding revivals and exhorting sinners to believe and be saved. This was contrary to Primitive Baptist doctrine. They had withdrawn from the missionaries because of this very sentiment in the 1830's.

The die seemed cast for a division, for at the 1911 meeting a faction under I. L. Ogle, seeing they were unable to elect Ogle as moderator, withdrew from the house and formed an association of their own, calling themselves the Nolachucky Primitive Baptist Association.<sup>15</sup>

That faction left in the house elected S. O. Roberts moderator and proceeded to business, the seventh item of which was a motion "to advise our churches to abstain from all Arminian doctrines and practices such as secret orders, alien Baptism, Sunday Schools and etc."

The eighth item was a motion to drop two churches from fellowship, and the ninth item advised these churches that should they desire to return to the association "to come according to discipline."<sup>16</sup>

The Ogle faction blamed the Roberts faction for the division, claiming to stand on the "same doctrine, principle, faith and practice that our mother Association, the Tennessee, organized

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<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Nola. Assn., 1911.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

us on." S. C. Roberts and Samuel McMillan were branded as being "in disorder" and accused of "abruptly" breaking off to form a "new Association."

At their meeting in 1913 the Ogle faction, presumably because they were favorable to secret orders, left off the thirteenth<sup>17</sup> of the Articles of Faith long subscribed to by the Nolaohucky association.<sup>18</sup>

This division in the Nolaohucky association seems to have been caused partly by the secret order question and partly by differences of opinion on doctrine. The followers of Ogle later opened correspondence with the secret order faction of the Powell Valley<sup>19</sup> and continued correspondence with a similar body of the Tennessee after that association experienced a division in 1914.<sup>20</sup>

The Roberts-McMillan faction of the Nolaohucky continued correspondence with the Powell Valley No. 1, with the Sequatchie Valley, and with that part of the Tennessee which barred members of secret orders from church membership, as examination of the minutes of these associations for the years 1913 to 1915 will show.

To continue about the division in the Tennessee association let us begin with their trouble in 1912. That year a circular letter by Elder William Brickey was put in the minutes. This letter

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes of the Nola. Assn. of Primitive Baptists (Ogle faction), 1913.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of P. V. Assn., No. 3, 1939, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> The faction of the Tennessee referred to called itself the "Original Tennessee Primitive Baptist Association," in 1914, when it convened at Law's Chapel, Blount County, Tennessee.



called for indiscriminate preaching, to all people, but denounced Parkerism (the Two-Seed doctrine), Arminianism, and Modern Missionism.

At the 1913 meeting the association advised all churches that had not already done so to adopt the principles set forth by Elder Brickey in the circular letter of 1912.<sup>21</sup>

All did not seem to relish the idea of having the association 'advise' them, for the next year, 1914, the Tennessee association met in two separate bodies! Just as the Powell Valley first and then the Nolachucky had been torn apart, now the old "mother association" of the Primitive Baptists of East Tennessee was having her own troubles. One faction led by Elder W. H. Oliver met at Law's Chapel, Blount County, and declared themselves to be the "Original Tennessee Association of Primitive Baptists."<sup>22</sup> The other faction, which was composed of the main body of the churches, met at Tuokaleechee Cove, Blount County. The latter faction took occasion to reiterate its stand on doctrine, advising the churches to "look more closely after their preachers as regards the soundness of their preaching and every day holy living," and to "stand firm on the principles of Orthodox Primitive Baptists and not be blown about by every wind of doctrine."<sup>23</sup>

The division was complete. The minutes of the Oliver faction, 1914, show that seven churches, or parts of churches, and seven ministers, representing a total membership of 369, withdrew that year from the Tennessee.

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<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the Tenn. Assn., 1913.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote No. 20, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Tenn. Assn., 1914.

The next year, 1915, four churches of the Tennessee association petitioned for dismissal to form a new association.<sup>24</sup> These were churches in North and South Carolina. The association gave them letters of dismissal for that purpose. Thus the association was again weakened. In 1916 the Tennessee had only six churches with a total membership of 440.<sup>25</sup> This of course does not include the churches which withdrew under the leadership of W. H. Oliver. These churches, it is said, have leaned heavily toward missionary doctrine in recent years and no longer correspond with Primitive Baptist associations.<sup>26</sup> An examination of recent minutes of all East Tennessee Primitive Baptist Associations fails to reveal the whereabouts of this Oliver faction of the Tennessee Association.

A few years later, the Nolachucky and the Tennessee, having been weakened by strife and division, decided to combine and call themselves the Tennessee-Nolachucky Primitive Baptist Association. This combination was made in 1921. The new association was composed of five churches from the Nolachucky and six churches from the Tennessee, all that was left from years of strife and bickering.<sup>27</sup> The total membership, as shown by the minutes of the newly organized association in 1922, was only 397.<sup>28</sup> The 1939 minutes show the association to have ten churches and a total membership of 461.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1915.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1916.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with W. C. McMillon, April 15, 1940

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of Tennessee-Nolachucky Primitive Baptist Association. 1921.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1922.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1939.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The Primitive Baptists, as stated in the foreword, are a controversial people. They have lived up to that description in East Tennessee. They are, as we have seen, divided now into many small bands, called after the names of their various leaders, holding or not holding to this, that or the other in such a way as to brand them as 'secret order' Baptists, 'bar' Baptists, 'soft side,' 'hard side,' 'Two-Seeders,' and 'Progressives.'

How much longer they will be able to maintain their identity as a people holding distinctive doctrinal views and following certain rules of practice and decorum is hard to say. Some of them are organizing Sunday schools, some lean toward the revival spirit, conducting revival or 'protracted' meetings at frequent intervals. Others, fearing the trend in this direction, withdraw further into their stern predestinarian doctrine and lose themselves in a maze of doctrinal controversy and disputation.

They are not strong in numbers in any one sect, as can be seen by examining Appendix C; but if all groups are included the number is not a small one, especially when it is remembered that they do not seek to expand their borders but wait for voluntary membership.

It is to be hoped, for the benefit of writers, too, that the Primitive Baptists prove to be better record-keepers. Their history is such a tangled mass of bits of data that it is hard to do justice to every phase of their growth and conflicts.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

CONSTITUTION OF DUMPLIN CREEK CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

July the 30 1797 Jefferson County about Dumplin Creek we the Baptist Church of Christ believeing it to be our duty to pay a true regard to the law of Love and gospel ordinances instituted and commanded in gods holy word for the better regulation of our conduct towards god and each other sollemly promise by the assistance of the holy spirit the serious regard to the following particulars first. to strive together for the truth of the gospel and the purity of gospel institutions Desiring for the grace of god to live and die in the faith of gods Elect serious adhearing to the glorious doctrine of grace such as affectual calling by the Holy ghost justification by the Imputed Righteousness of Christ progressive sanctification by the grace of god Imparted the final perseverance of the saints in grace water baptism by immesion to such and only such as profess their faith in Christ professing to walk in newness of life. They believeing that their will be a Ressurrection of the dead of the just and unjust and that the Resurrection of the just will be to everlasting happiness and the Resurrection of the unjust will be to Everlasting misery. 4thly we promise also to take the holy scriptures of the old and new testament which we believe to be the written word of god for our Rule and guide and in particular with Respect to Church government keeping the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace bearing with

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Dumplin Creek Church, pp. 1-2.

one anothers weakness and not willingly suffer sin to ly upon a brother but deal with him as follows for private truspases agreeable to our lords directions in Mathew the 18th ch. 15th, 16th, 17th, verses and for publick transgretions a publick satisfaction as becometh those who give themselves up to the lord and one another to walk in Church fellowship we promise to endeavor to suport the worship of god in the word and ordinances and to wach over one another in love and solely to renounce all evil words and actions, foolish talking, jesting, all lightness of behavior profain swearing, cursing, lying, malicious anger Extortion and fraud of every kind covetousness Drunkness and keeping evil Company and to abstain from sinful whispering, back biting, all wilful hypocricy and dishonesty all excess and superfluity to the gratification of pride and also Resist from gaming wagering singing of Carnal songs and all Carnal myrth fidling dancing and vain recreation and all sinful contentions and not wink at disorder of any under our care but prudently use the Rod of Correction when necessary and not neglect family devotion. We are to mind our own business and not Indulg Sloth nor will we go to law with each other and if god should bestow on any of us Ministerial gifts we promise not to hide them nor exercise them publickly with out the approbation of the Church we do therefore desire to give our selves to the lord and one another to walk in humility in the command and ordinances of the lord all the days of our lives and for acceptance of the last we desire to depend entirely and along one the virtue and spotless Righteousness of our adorable and Divine Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ

Amen

## APPENDIX B

## ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE

TENNESSEE-NOLACHUCKY PRIMITIVE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION<sup>1</sup>

1. We believe in only one true and living God the father, son and Holy Spirit and these three are one.
2. We believe that the scriptures of the old and new testament are the word of God and the only rule of saving knowledge.
3. We believe in election according to the foreknowledge of God the father through the sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.
4. We believe in the doctrine of original sin.
5. We believe in man's impotency to recover himself from the fallen state he is in by his own free will or ability.
6. We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God only by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.
7. We believe that the saints will persevere and will not fall finally away.
8. We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Jesus Christ and that the true believers are the only subjects of these ordinances and that the true mode of Baptism is immersion.
9. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and a general judgment.
10. We believe the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting and the joy of the righteous will be eternal.

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Tennessee-Nolachucky Association of Primitive Baptists, 1939.

11. We believe that no minister has a right to the administration of the ordinances but such as are regularly called and come under the imposition of hands by a presbytery.
12. We believe in observing the sabbath day as a day of rest and that feet-washing ought to be kept up by the church of Jesus Christ.
13. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ should have no organic connection with any society or institution of man not authorized by God's word.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Articles of Faith of P. V. Assn. No. 1 do not contain the 13th article, although the association in practice adheres to it.

APPENDIX C  
PRESENT STATUS OF EAST TENNESSEE  
PRIMITIVE BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS<sup>1</sup>

Name	Distinction	Year	No. of Churches	No. of Elders	Membership
Tennessee-Nolachucky	Members forbidden to join secret orders; Sunday schools forbidden.	1939	10	8	461
Hiwassee	Members may belong to secret orders; promote Sunday schools.	1939	12	19	865
Sequatchie Valley	Members forbidden to join secret orders; Sunday schools forbidden.	1939	7	3	189
Original Powell Valley*	Members forbidden to join secret orders.	1939	16	23	871
Powell Valley*	Advocates of predestination of all things, good and evil.	1934	5	2	102
Powell Valley*	Members may belong to secret orders; promote Sunday schools	1939	14	13	1141

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the various associations for the years indicated.

\* The Powell Valley associations are referred to in this thesis, in order here given, as No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3.



## APPENDIX D

## DIVISION AND REDIVISION CAUSED BY CONTROVERSY

(1779) First Baptist Church in Tennessee

Organized at Buffalo Ridge, Tidence Lane, Pastor<sup>1</sup>

Great Revival, roughly (1800-1825)

(1830) Campbellite  
(Christian) Church  
founded by Alexander  
Campbell<sup>2</sup>(1830-1845) Dissension and Division over  
Missions<sup>3</sup>Missionary Baptist  
Church formedPrimitive Baptist (anti-  
Mission) Churches(1875-1890) Doctrinal Contro-  
versy"Original" Primitive  
Baptist ChurchChurches of the  
"Two-Seed"  
Persuasion<sup>4</sup>(1900-1915) Dissension over  
Secret Orders"Original" Primitive  
Baptist ChurchesChurches which  
allowed members  
to belong to  
secret orders<sup>5</sup><sup>1</sup> See pp. 13, 14.<sup>2</sup> See pp. 42, 43.<sup>3</sup> The dates are approximations.<sup>4</sup> See Chapter V.<sup>5</sup> Known locally by various names such as soft-side, liberals, and secret order-side. See Chapter VI.