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OF THE

**Kentucky Baptist  
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EDITED BY  
W. J. McGLOTHLIN, D.D.

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Author of "Normal Evangelism."
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## ❁ PREFACE ❁

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This second number of the "Proceedings of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society" presents two papers on as many subjects, which are of interest to the religious, and especially the Baptist, history of the State. In addition several original documents which have a very important place in the history of the doctrinal position of the early Baptists of Kentucky, are reproduced. They also serve to show the relation of Kentucky Baptists to those of the earlier colonies, as well as their general attitude towards confessions of faith and theological questions.

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# *The Revival of 1800-1*

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**By O. OLIN GREENE**

Author of "Normal Evangellism."

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*A Scotch-Irish Population.*

The Revival of 1800-1, commonly known as "The Scotch-Irish Revival," is one of the most famous in American history, if not in all history. The Revival had its origin in Kentucky among a population that was predominantly Scotch-Irish. They were a mixture of Teutonic and Celtic blood, and combined the shrewd, practical, common-sense and intelligent purpose of the Teuton with the strong emotionalism of the Celt. On the whole they were superior to their fellow-countrymen of their native land—less superstitious, better trained educationally, Protestant to the core and fond of theological argument, so that one of their own countrymen wittily remarked: "If we fail on the potato crop we live on the shorter catechism."

Early in the eighteenth century, and even back in the seventeenth century, these Scotch-Irish people came to America in great numbers. Some came by the way of Philadelphia and others by the way of Charleston and gradually worked their way to Kentucky and Tennessee. Long before the Cavalier planters had occupied the low lands of Virginia and the Carolinas these people had entered the rich valleys of the Green, the Tennessee, and the Cumberland rivers.

These people were independent, democratic, hardy and adventurous. Taking them as a whole, they were an excellent class of people, eminently fitted to become conquerors of the vast

stretches of wilderness in the New World. And it is but just to say of them that in the Revival of 1800-1, they do not appear to the best advantage. For here, as with other people under similar conditions, their emotional nature rises to the surface, and overshadows, in a great measure, their better qualities. We of today must not forget the superior qualities of this people nor fail to appreciate the service they rendered in helping to shape the affairs of our nation and the impetus they have given it toward better things. No class of people ever entered our borders who were more willing to divest themselves of everything pertaining to their manner of life in the Old World and to become—in language, manners, and customs—out-and-out, thorough-going Americans. They were among the first to declare for Independence and were not slow to take up arms in defense of their country. It is on record that “the decisive victory of General Jackson, of New Orleans, was largely won by the few hundred clear-eyed, straight-shooting, backwoods rifle-men from Tennessee.”

In many ways they were eminently fitted for frontier life. No doubt the environment had much to do with their mental make-up. They were in a new world and a new country without law or conventionalities to hold them in check, and it must be admitted that they deteriorated somewhat intellectually from what they had been in their old home-land. The natural restraints which they had felt in the Old World were entirely thrown off in matters of religion as well as in other things, and it must be said, to their shame, that they did not live up to the strict ethical code of Calvin and Knox in which they had been trained.

Their daily life was such as to make them impulsive and quick to respond to every influence. They lived in constant dread of the wild-men and wild beasts about them, and the slightest alarm would bring the men and boys of a community



together that they might defend themselves, and the women and children, against the attacks of savages. "They lived in an environment of fear, though they were of such sturdy stuff that they grew in the very midst of it to be utterly fearless and even reckless of danger that they could understand and measure. Nevertheless, the new experience of rational inhibitions removed, of a strange and dangerous environment, there was developed in them to a high degree the motor and emotional tendencies which were already in their blood and kind."\* Thus being of an excitable, sanguine nature, we can more easily understand how, under any powerful stimulus, and especially under that of religion, their emotions might be stirred to the point where they were unable to control themselves at all. This is exactly what happened in the Revival of 1800-1.

"A population *per fervidum ingenio*, of a temper peculiarly susceptible to intense excitement, transplanted into a wild country, under little control either of conventionality or law, deeply ingrained for many generations with the religious sentiment, but broken loose from the control of it and living consciously in reckless disregard of the law of God, is suddenly aroused to a sense of its apostasy and wickedness. The people (during the revival season) do not hear the word of God from Sabbath to Sabbath, or even from evening to evening, and take it home with them and ponder it amid the avocations of daily business; by the conditions they are sequestered for days together in the wilderness for the exclusive contemplation of momentous truths pressed upon the mind with incessant and impassioned iteration; and they remain together, an agitated throng, not of men only, but of women and children. The student of psychology recognizes at once that here are present in an unusual combination the conditions of not merely the ready propagation of influence

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\*Davenport: "Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals," p. 64.

by example and persuasion, but of those nervous, mental, or spiritual infections which make so important a figure in the world's history, civil, military, or religious. It is wholly in accord with human nature that the physical manifestations attendant on religious excitement in these circumstances should be of an intense and extravagant sort."\*

Another element of this population was the presence of a large class of individuals who, to use a more modern term, might be called "undesirable citizens." It is a well-known fact that there was a large influx of immigrants into these districts known as convict servants, redemptioners, and the like, who were always more or less impulsive in social action and whose presence in any time of excitement only adds fuel to the already kindled flame. This criminal class often played a dramatic part in the time of revival by attacking the camp-meetings and often had to be repulsed by such splendid specimens of backwoods preachers as Peter Cartwright and Fennis Ewing. On the other hand, it was just as dramatic to witness the striking down of some of the very worst scoffers and opponents of religion, who, when converted, became "stalwart champions of a better order and a better life."

#### *Moral and Social Conditions.*

All the writers of this period agree that the moral, social, and religious conditions, not only of Kentucky and Tennessee, but of the whole country were very bad indeed. Up to the time of the War of Independence the morals of the American people had been of a high character; but when an unholy alliance was formed with France the people began to deteriorate at a rapid rate. France's hatred of England caused the French people to aid the young colonies in their struggle for independ-

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\*Bacon: "History of American Christianity," p. 238.

ence. This act of friendship was appreciated by the Americans and thus the two nations became fast friends. But young and impressionable America suffered much from such companionship. England has ever been superior to France in matters of religion and morals. Thus when America had once broken friendship with the mother country it was but natural that she should become greatly influenced by her new ally. Gambling, licentiousness, and infidelity were rife in France and soon became prevalent in this country. The writings of Tom Paine, Voltaire, and other infidel writers of that time were read and discussed by young and old. So fearful were the moral and religious conditions of the time that the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1798 found it necessary to protest against prevailing conditions in language like the following: "Formidable innovation and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion. Scenes of devastation and bloodshed unexampled in the history of modern nations have convulsed the world, and our country is threatened with similar calamities. We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principles and practice among our fellow-citizens, a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity, which in many instances tends to atheism itself. The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportionate to our declension in religion. Profaneness, pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness, and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence abound."\*

Such is the lament of almost every religious body of that time. So discouraged were the Episcopalians that Bishop Provoost of New York "laid down his functions, not expecting the church to continue longer." The Lutheran church had sadly

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\*Bacon: "History of American Christianity," p. 231.

deteriorated. The Methodists were diminishing at the alarming rate of four thousand a year. The Presbyterians made no gain from 1790 to 1800 and probably lost a considerable following because of the introduction of Watt's version of the Psalms, the dissenters preferring to sing the literal Psalms. "In 1790 the Baptist church (churches) registered 3,105 communicants [in Kentucky] or more than one to twenty-three in population. In 1800, the increase of membership was but 5,119, or only one to forty-three of the population; a relative decline in numerical strength of nearly one hundred per cent, comparing with the increase of population. This most numerous body of pioneer churches was divided into two parties, the Regulars, who adopted the Calvinism of the Philadelphia Confession, and the Separatists, who rejected all human creeds, held Arminian views, and professed the Bible alone for faith and guidance."\* Yet it must be said to the credit of Baptists that so far as statistics are available they are the only religious body who made any substantial increase during that dark period of history, thus proving their ability to cope with a most difficult situation.

It is interesting to note that of the very place where the Revival of 1800-1 began and rose to its height of power, namely, Logan county, Kentucky—of this place the famous pioneer preacher, Peter Cartwright, wrote in 1793: "Logan county, when my father moved into it was called 'Rogues Harbor.' Here many refugees from all parts of the Union fled to escape punishment or justice; for although there was law, yet it could not be executed, and it was a desperate state of society. Murderers, horse-thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeits fled there until they combined and actually formed a majority. Those who favored a better state of morals were called 'Regulators.' But they encountered fierce opposition from the 'Rogues,' and a

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\*Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, May, 1909.

battle was fought with guns, pistols, dirks, knives, and clubs in which the 'Regulators' were defeated.'\*\*

Upon such dark and dreadful scenes as these—of spiritual declension, infidelity, immorality, lewdness, and outlawry—the Revival of 1800-1 dawned. The story is that of a sudden awakening after a long night of spiritual apathy, sin, and shameless profligacy. Can we wonder at the strange and mysterious phenomena that occurred under the faithful preaching of godly men, and when people were awakened to a consciousness of their sins and the fearful doom that awaited them?

#### *Origin Among Presbyterians.*

The great religious awakening known as the Revival 1800-1 had its origin among the Presbyterian church of Logan county, Kentucky. This district was commonly known as the Cumberland country. The country was beautiful, the climate good, and the soil was rich and productive. A continual stream of population was pouring into this region from Virginia, the Carolinas, and other parts of the country. It is interesting to note here that the population of Kentucky in 1790 was 73,677, and in 1800 it had increased to 222,955; this would mean practically an influx of population into this country of about 400 per day. And a great many of these came to the Cumberland country. The predominant religious body consisted of Presbyterians; nearly all the preachers who were leaders in the Revival were the pioneer preachers from this denomination, although Methodists joined heartily in the work. Baptists do not seem to have been prominent in the beginning of the Revival, as is shown from Spencer's History of Kentucky Baptists: "At that period there was not a single Baptist church, in all that part of Ken-

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\*\*Quoted from "Autobiography of Peter Cartwright."

tucky, lying south of Salt river and west of the present line of the Louisville & Nashville railroad, except one at Severn's Valley, forty miles south of Louisville." There were Baptists, however, scattered throughout this region, but it is on record that they declined participation in the meetings except as spectators, the reason being given that they were "Close Communionists" and as the revivals usually began at communion seasons the Baptists were slow to give their support.

It was under the ministry of the Rev. James McGready that the revival movement received its greatest impetus. The Rev. McGready had come from North Carolina in 1796, having received a letter written in blood warning him to leave the State. So fierce were his denunciations of sin that some of the people became enraged and resorted to this cowardly deed to get rid of him. He shook off the dust of his feet against the country but not through fear, it is stated, but because some of his friends had gone to the Cumberland country and had written to him inviting him to come and join them in their new home. He came and took charge of three Presbyterian churches, Red River, Muddy River, and Gasper River, in 1796. From all accounts, the Rev. McGready was a remarkable man and preacher. It is said of him that "the fierceness of his invective derived additional terror from the hideousness of his visage and the thunder of his tones." He preached a modified Calvinism and dwelt upon the necessity of the new birth. He also insisted on knowing the time and place of one's conversion. This was a new note with his denomination in that part of the world. Like the great New England preacher, Jonathan Edwards, his denunciation of sin was so terrific, and his portrayal of the doom of the wicked so vivid, that people would fall to the ground under the power of his fiery eloquence. He would "so array hell before the wicked that they would tremble and quake, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to overwhelm them and

the hand of the Almighty thrusting them down to the horrible abyss."

McGready was very much in earnest and wherever he preached he was able to awaken great interest in religious things. It is said that wherever a group of his members, young or old, was found they might be seen weeping and talking about the condition of their souls. His influence and power over the people so increased that soon great crowds came to hear him. He was reinforced in his labors by the coming of the McGee brothers, one a Presbyterian and the other a Methodist. This was in 1799. They too had heard of the fame of this wonderful preacher and came to witness for themselves the wonderful power attendant everywhere upon the ministry of this "son of thunder."

In July, 1799, the religious fervor grew so strong at Gasper River that frequently the unconverted under the power of conviction would fall from their seats and lie helpless on the floor. This was the beginning of what was known as the "falling exercise," which became so prevalent not only in this region but in Tennessee and other parts of the country. In fact by the following spring it is said to have reached all parts of Kentucky. This was especially true of the meeting held by Presbyterians and Methodists. As to the part Baptists played in this revival we quote from Spencer's History of Kentucky Baptists: "Their principles and polity have usually disposed the Baptists to avoid union meetings, and, during this revival, as at other times, they held their own meetings, and labored in their own quiet unpretentious way. There have been a few instances in which some of them took part in the great ostentatious meetings, but these occasions, if indeed such occasions occurred at all, were rare, and were exceptions to their general rule. The wisdom of

their course will be unquestioned, when the history of the great revival and its fruits are studied.'\*

*The First Camp Meeting.*

The first American Camp Meeting, if not the first in history, was held near Gasper River church in July, 1800. No doubt the present-day Chautauqua with its ever-increasing influence had its origin in the religious camp meeting of a hundred years ago. At the sacramental meeting held at Red River the month before, some families camped on the ground; this suggested to Mr. McGready the idea of a camp meeting. Such a meeting was announced for the Gasper River church the following month. The announcement was proclaimed far and wide and people came as far as one hundred miles. Throngs of people were present at this meeting. They had no tents or cabins as in after years, but slept in wagons, or improvised shelters made from bed clothing and branches of trees.

The preachers at this meeting were McGready, William Hodge, William McGee, and perhaps some others. On Saturday evening two pious women were talking earnestly about the condition of their souls. Some persons were standing near by and heard the conversation and were deeply affected by it. "Intsantly the divine flame spread through the whole multitude. Many of the unconverted were so deeply affected that they fell powerless on the ground, and cried aloud for mercy. Ministers and pious Christians passed among them, giving them instruction and encouragement to close with Christ, as he is offered in the Gospel. In this way the night was spent, and before Sabbath morning, a goodly number obtained peace and joy. From this time the work continued to advance day and night, until Thursday morning, when the meeting closed. The

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\*Spencer: "History of Kentucky Baptists," p. 507.



result was that forty-five precious souls were believed to have passed from a state of nature to a state of grace." It is said that this meeting lasted from Friday night until Thursday morning and that the preaching, praying, and singing continued almost without intermission except during the early morning hours. "The camp became a battle ground of sobs and cries, and ministers spent nearly the whole night in passing from group to group of the 'slain.' "

"The 'slain' were those who, under intense religious excitement, had fallen to the ground and were regarded as the "slain of the Lord." This strange "exercise" was not altogether new, as similar phenomena had occurred under the preaching of Wesley, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Finney and others. "Some fell suddenly as if struck by lightning, while others were siezed with a universal tremor the moment before, and fell shrieking. Piercing shrieks were uttered by many during the whole period of prostration, intermingled with groans, cries for mercy, and exclamations of 'Glory! Glory to God!' In general there was no complaint of pain but of great weakness, during and after the paroxysms. Women would fall while walking to and from the meeting house, engaged in narrating past experiences, or drop from their horses on the road. In this condition the subject would lie fifteen minutes to two and three hours; and we are even told of a woman's lying without eating or speaking, for nine days and nights. Some were more or less convulsed, and wrought hard in frightful nervous agonies, the eyes rolling wildly. But the greater number were motionless, as if dead or about to expire in a few minutes. Some were capable of conversing, others were not. During the syncope, and even when conscious, and talking on religious

topics, the subject was insensible to pain. Vinegar and harts-horn were applied with no perceptible effects.’\*’

During the year of 1800 ten sacramental meetings were held in the Green River and Cumberland districts. These meetings were all characterized by great zeal, intense excitement, and super-emotionalism. John McGee, one of the leaders in these revival movements in describing these meetings says: “The people prayed and the power of God attended. There were great cries for mercy. The night scenes were truly awful. The camp-ground was well illuminated. The people were differently exercised all over the ground, some exhorting, some shouting, some praying, and some crying for mercy, while others lay as dead or wounded men on the ground. Some of the spiritually wounded fled to the woods, and their groans could be heard through the surrounding groves, as the groans of dying men.

“The people fell before the word like corn before a storm of wind, and many rose from the dust with divine glory shining in their countenances, breaking forth into volleys of exhortations. Amongst them were some small home-bred boys, who spoke with the tongue of eloquence, and wisdom of the learned, and truly they were learned, for they were taught of God. Some of the rigid conformists cried disorder and confusion. But there were none harmed by violence or disorder. Women laid their sleeping children at the roots of the trees, while hundreds of all ages, sexes and color, were stretched on the ground in the agonies of conviction, as dead people; and thousands day and night were crowding around them and passing to and fro; yet nobody was hurt.’\*\*

#### *Spreading of Revival Fires.*

After the holding of the first few camp meetings the Revival

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\*Quoted from “History of the Presbyterian Church.”

\*\*Quoted in “Register of Kentucky Historical Society,” May, 1909.

spread like forest fires in dry weather. Those who attended the first meetings went home and told their neighbors of all the wonderful things they had seen and heard. By this means great interest was aroused and the minds of the people were prepared for a hearty reception of an announcement of the next camp meeting. At the appointed time for such meetings to begin the woods and paths would be full of people on their way to the camp meeting. The numbers reported at some of these gatherings were almost incredible. "The laborer quitted his task; the aged snatched his crutch; the youth forgot his pastime; the cattle were turned to forage abroad; the plow was left in the furrow; the deer was given a respite upon the mountains; business was suspended; dwellings were deserted; whole communities were emptied; bold hunters and sober matrons, young men, maidens, and little children, flocked to the center of attraction."\*

Religion was the all-absorbing theme with the great masses. People became devoutly in earnest about the salvation of their own souls and the souls of others. Along with the intense excitement attendant with these revivals were strange and varied phenomena. There seemed to be a sort of nervous epidemic which took various forms. One writer says that "sudden outcries, hysteric weeping and laughing, faintings, catalepsies, trances, were customary concomitants of the revival preaching. Multitudes fell prostrate on the ground, spiritually slain, it was said."

One of the most remarkable of these phenomena was what was commonly called the "jerks." This malady began at the head and spread to all parts of the body. The head was violently jerked from side to side, the features distorted beyond recognition, and the hair of the women made to snap like a whip. The

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\*"Register Kentucky State Historical Society," May, 1909.

sufferer was hurled over obstructions that happened to be in his way and was finally thrown to the ground, and caused to bounce like a ball. It is related that in one of William McGee's meetings there was a man present with a large bottle of whiskey in his pocket. He reviled both the "jerks" and religion. Instantly he was siezed with the contagion and started to run. Unable to do so, he took hold of a sapling, drew out his bottle, and said he would drink the d——d "jerks" to death. He could not even get the bottle to his mouth though he struggled hard. With this he became enraged, gave a violent jerk, snapped his neck, fell down, and soon expired.

The eccentric Lorenzo Dow relates his observations regarding this phenomena in the following manner: "I have passed a meeting-house where I observed the undergrowth had been cut for a camp-meeting and from fifty to a hundred saplings were left breast high on purpose for persons who 'jerked' to hold on to. I observed where they had held on they had kicked up the earth as horses stamping flies."

*Revival Fire in the "Blue Grass."*

The revival spread not only over Kentucky, but into Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Ohio. The revival fire was carried to the Blue Grass region by Rev. Barton W. Stone, then pastor of Cane Ridge and Concord Presbyterian churches in Bourbon county. He had heard of the revival among his brethren of the Green River district and visited that country and attended one of their camp-meetings. He returned home and related what he had seen and heard to his congregations. The people were deeply affected and many of them returned home weeping. Then came the climax of revival enthusiasm in Kentucky.

"A memorable meeting was held at Cane Ridge in August,

1801. The roads were crowded with wagons, carriages, horses, and footmen moving to the solemn camp. It was judged by military men on the ground that between twenty and thirty thousand persons were assembled. Four or five preachers spoke at the same time in different parts of the encampment without confusion. The Methodist and Baptist preachers aided in the work, and all appeared cordially united in it. They were of one mind and soul: the salvation of sinners was the one object. We all engaged in singing the same songs, all united in prayer, all preached the same things. . . . The numbers converted will be known only in eternity. Many things transpired in the meeting which were so much like miracles that they had the same effect as miracles on unbelievers. By them many were convinced that Jesus was the Christ and were persuaded to submit to him. The meeting continued six or seven days and nights, and would have continued longer but food for sustenance of such a multitude failed.

“To this meeting many had come from Ohio and other distant parts. These returned home and diffused the same spirit in their respective neighborhoods. Similar results followed. So low had religion sunk, and such carelessness had universally prevailed, that I have thought that nothing common could have arrested and held the attention of the people.”\*

“Here were collected,” says another writer of that period, “all the elements calculated to affect the imagination. The spectacle at night was one of wildest grandeur. The glare of the blazing camp-fires falling on the dense assemblage of heads simultaneously bowed in adoration, and reflected back from long ranges of tents upon every side; hundreds of candles and lamps suspended among the trees, together with numerous torches flashing to and fro, throwing an uncertain light upon the trem-

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\*Quoted in Bacon's "History of American Christianity," pp. 235-6.

ulous foliage, and giving an appearance of dim and infinite extent to the depth of the forest; the solemn chanting of hymns swelling and falling on the night wind; the impassioned exhortations; the earnest prayers, the sobs, shrieks or shouts, bursting from persons under intense agitation of mind; the sudden spasms which siezed upon scores, and unexpectedly dashed them to the ground—all conspired to invest the scene with terrific interest, and to work up the feelings to he highest pitch of excitement.”\*

Often, it is said, the meetings were continued until two o'clock in the night and even beyond that time. We can readily see how the people, under these conditions, with over-wrought nerves, intense excitement, eager expectation, and unbounded enthusiasm, allowed themselves to become uncontrollable, and were led into the wildest extravagances and disorders. A Rev. Mr. Lyle, it is stated, kept an accurate account of the happenings of this period even through all the excitement; he said that as the preachers were preaching to different groups, if it were whispered that it were “more lively” at a certain point, the crowd would soon be seen rushing to that place. If a brother had “fallen” they might be seen crowding around him, laughing, leaping, sobbing, shouting, and swooning. If a meeting became languid, a few shrieks, or one or two instances of falling would arouse and quicken the interest in every direction. As the people could see or hear the contagion would spread and many others would be shrieking and falling likewise. In some instances, little children were allowed to preach. A little girl of seven was propped upon the shoulders of a man and exhorted the multitude until she fell down exhausted.

It is estimated by the Rev. James Crawford, who endeavored to keep an accurate account of the Cane Ridge meeting, that

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\*Quoted in Spencer's "History of Kentucky Baptists," pp. 510-11.

the numbers of persons who "fell" in this meeting reached the astonishing number of three thousand.

*Simultaneous Revivals.*

One of the marked features of the Revival of 1800-1 was the suddenness with which it began at various places almost simultaneously. Within a few months' time the revival began at four different points, namely, near Nashville, Tenn.; Logan county, Ky.; Woodford county, Ky.; and Carroll county, Ky. One peculiarity in many of these revivals was the prominence of children in the work. In the vicinity of Nashville, two small boys were instrumental in inaugurating a revival which resulted in the conversion of many persons. Near Flemingsburg, Ky., in April, 1800, during a service two little girls were deeply affected and cried out in distress. They both continued to cry and to pray for mercy. Finally one received peace and began to exhort the other: "Oh! I have found peace to my soul! Oh! the precious Saviour! Come just as you are, he will take away the stony heart and give you a heart of flesh. You can't make yourself better. Just give up your heart to Christ now." Thus she continued to exhort her companion until the latter received a ray from heaven that produced a sudden and sensible change. These children were perhaps nine or ten years of age.

Another instance of a child's preaching might be mentioned. At a general meeting held at Indian Creek, Harrison county, Ky., the following incident is said to have taken place: "A boy, from appearance about twelve years old, retired from the stand in the time of preaching, and under a very extraordinary impression: having mounted a log at some distance, and raising his voice, in a very affecting manner, he attracted the main body of the people in a very few minutes. With tears streaming from his eyes, he cried aloud to the wicked, warning them of their

danger, denouncing their certain doom, if they persisted in their sins; expressing his love to their souls, and desire that they should turn to the Lord and be saved. He was held up by two men, and spoke for an hour, with that convincing eloquence that could be inspired only from above. When his strength seemed quite exhausted, and language failed to describe the feelings of his soul, he raised his hand, and dropping his handkerchief, wet with sweat from his little face cried out: 'Thus, O sinner! shall you drop into hell, unless you forsake your sins and turn to the Lord.' At that moment some fell like those who are shot in battle, and the word spread in a manner which human language cannot describe.'\*

*Causes of the Phenomena.*

Instances might be multiplied in which many and strange phenomena occurred. So mysterious are these phenomena that, were it not for the fact that they are so well attested by reliable witnesses, we of today, could scarcely believe them. But we must accept the facts whether we can understand the causes or not.

Of these many and varied phenomena such as falling, jerking, rolling, dancing, laughing, barking, visions and trances, which were attendant on this great religious awakening a great deal might be written. In fact, a great deal has been written, but nothing to my mind which constitutes a very satisfactory and adequate explanation. Nor do we here attempt such an explanation. We can only cite a few quotations and call attention to some self-evident facts.

We must bear in mind that all great revivals have followed a period of great spiritual declension. This was pre-eminently

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\*Western Miscellany, Vol. 1, p. 278, quoted in Spencer's "History of Kentucky Baptists," p. 514.



true of the Revival of 1800-1. The sudden awakening of conscience-stricken men and women is quite likely to manifest itself in some physical demonstration. Under conditions of fear, anger, surprise, and other intense emotions people have fallen down, and even expired. It is not so wonderful that persons under the strain of great religious excitement should be moved, under the power of intense emotion, to do what seems to us preternatural things. Mr. Cutten points out the tendency to imitate under such conditions and very appropriately remarks: "We must also notice what have been called 'fashions' in physical manifestations. Wesley's converts fell as though thunderstruck, the Kentucky converts had the 'jerks.' Over-wrought emotion may take different forms with different people according to temperament and habits, but when one person in a meeting has been affected in a peculiar manner the power of suggestion and imitation overcome the tendencies of different temperaments and a common affection is the result. We have in this another example of what has been called, in a too loose use of the word, I believe, 'crowd hypnotism.' At any rate the contagious quality of the manifestations cannot be doubted. The revival is characterized by conditions most favorable to this state, e. g.. monotony, fixed attention, control gained by singing manoeuvres, limitation of voluntary movements, the excitation and depression of fear, intense emotion, eager expectation, and the suggestion given both by the speaker and the audience."\*

Mr. F. M. Davenport, speaking on the same theme, says: "Religious movements of magnitude have often assumed a mode which sociologists call sympathetic likemindedness . . . Likeminded people are those whose mental and nervous organizations respond in like ways to the same stimuli . . . Just as every

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\*Cutten: "The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity," pp. 186-7.

human being tends to respond to a sensation by the same reflex movement, so every human being tends to respond to an idea implanted in his consciousness. He is suggestible. He is imitative. He is also more or less a creature of imagination. In proportion as these tendencies in a population are held in check, we have a population under control. We have deliberation and public opinion and social evolution rather than revolution." The same author further says: "It is at once manifest, however, that a religious camp-meeting such as formerly took place in the central south—in Kentucky and Tennessee, for example—which continued for days together, morning, noon, and night, which never broke up until the food supply gave out, and which was characterized by fervid appeals to feeling and imagination rather than to intelligence, would be a hot-bed of disorder and mental disintegration."\*

These are the words of men who have earnestly sought to give a scientific explanation of these phenomena. They help us greatly to understand some things about this subject, and we have no disposition to belittle their efforts for they are worthy of consideration. But it is quite evident that neither of these estimable gentlemen ever had the "jerks" and hence cannot speak from experience; for, as Lorenzo Dow wittily remarked: "I believe it does not affect those naturalists who wish to get it to philosophize about it." Yet, if they could speak from experience, they could, perhaps, tell us no more than they have; for as every earnest student of this period of religious history must admit, there were many things, so much beyond the natural order of things as to convince us that they were all but supernatural. So much of religion belongs to the sub-conscious man, hidden from the reach of the investigator that even under normal conditions accurate data is next to impossible; so, much

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\*F. M. Davenport: "Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals," pp. 1-2.

more difficult are investigations under abnormal conditions such as characterized the Revival of 1800-1.

Was the revival of God? or of man? or of the devil? I think that all had a part in it. When the excesses reached the point where people danced, laughed, and barked like dogs thereby pretending to be treeing or chasing the devil, I think "his majesty" must have been there, seeking to bring religion into disrepute in which he was successful in a measure. Man's part in the revival was evinced by the nervous epidemics, which, though genuine, were the result of excitement, suggestion, imitation, and the loss of inhibitive control. But God, also, was in the revival as was evidenced by the transformation wrought on the most hardened sinners and by the fact that a better order of things prevailed after the revival. "To speak negatively, it was not all man's work, because it was beyond the power and control of man. It was not the work of the devil, because it had no bad effects. It made people no worse. It never injured them, physically, morally, or religiously. It must have been the work of God because it was superhuman, and beyond the power and control of man. The wicked were turned from their wicked ways to the service of the living God."\*

*Results of the Revival.*

As a result of this Revival, communities noted for their infidelity, drunkenness, gambling, and profligacy were transformed into those of peace, good order, piety, and religious devotion. Many notoriously wicked persons were reformed, the moral tone of many communities was greatly purified and elevated. The home, social, and religious life of the people was entirely changed for the better. Dr. George A. Baxter who vis-

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\*Register of Kentucky State Historical Society," May, 1909.

ited the scenes of the Kentucky Revival writes thus of its effects: "On my way I was informed by settlers on the road that the character of Kentucky travelers was entirely changed, and that they were as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for disoluteness and immorality. And indeed I found Kentucky to appearances the most moral place I had ever seen. A profane expression was hardly ever heard. A religious awe seemed to pervade the country. Upon the whole, I think the revival in Kentucky the most extraordinary that has ever visited the church of Christ; and all things considered, it was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country into which it came. Infidelity was triumphant and religion was on the point of expiring. Something extraordinary seemed necessary to arrest attention of a giddy people who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a delusion. This revival has done it. It has confounded infidelity and brought numbers beyond calculation under serious impressions.'"\*

*Increase in the Churches.*

*Baptists.*

The revolution in religious conditions may be seen from the great increase in numbers and spiritual strength which came to the churches. The Baptists had in 1800, 106 churches and 5,119 members. In 1803, they had 219 churches and 15,495 members. Besides, the two parties among the Baptists—the Regular and the Separates—became united. The very reverse happened to them as with the Presbyterians for their body was rent asunder. Had it not been for the fact that later on the Baptists became contentious over doctrinal points they would have reaped more lasting benefits from the Great Revival. Bap-

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\*See Bacon: "His'tory of American Christianity," p. 237.

tists have always been noted for their tolerance of everyone—except for one another; had they, during the period immediately following the Revival of 1800-1, held together in Christian love, and had they concerned themselves more with the problem of the world's evangelization rather than that of seeking the best method of crowding one another to the wall in religious debate over non-essentials, for the most part, they would have established themselves on a firmer footing; and no doubt, would have rendered the phenomenal success of Alexander Campbell an impossibility. However, it is pertinent to remark just here that according to the best statistics obtainable, in recent years Baptists have forged ahead of all other evangelical bodies in Kentucky, for they now number more than all these bodies combined.

*Presbyterians.*

During the early stages of the Revival there sprang up in the Presbyterian church an anti-revival party. At first many of the educated clergy approved the work, but soon came to object to the disorderly methods used, and opposed the tendency toward Arminian views which were being preached by some of the revival party. Then, too, it seemed that the men of the schools were not always able to adapt themselves to the conditions of frontier life nor were they always agreeable to the tastes and ideals of the rugged frontiersman. As numbers increased in the church demands arose for more preachers. There were not enough educated ones to go round. The revival wing insisted on ordaining and calling as pastors those who were not educated according to Presbyterian standards. The conservatives objected to this method of procedure and hence contention waxed hotter until a division came, the new organization taking the name of "Cumberland Presbyterian Church." This body, numbering some two hundred thousand in the various

States, has recently returned to the parent church. While there was a large increase in numbers in the Presbyterian church, during the revival, it was offset by the division.

*Methodists.*

The Methodists in 1800 numbered 1,741 communicants and in 1803 it is seen that their ratio of increase was even greater than that of the Baptists. The Methodists reveled in their Revival of 1800-1 and came off with more laurels to their credit perhaps than any other religious body. Either from a lack of sense, or because of their abundance of it (and since wisdom is justified of her children we must acknowledge it was the latter) they kept hot on the track of religion and stayed together—at least until the War.

*New Sects Arise.*

“Doubtless there were many people truly converted by the means of the camp-meetings and sacramental occasions, conducted by the Presbyterians and Methodists, during the great revival. But it is equally certain that great evil resulted. Sectarianism among Christians is always an evil to be deplored by all good men. Before the revival, its effects were sufficiently pernicious in Kentucky, when the sects were few and comparatively friendly. But when the number of sects were augmented by the addition of three new ones, the evil was correspondingly increased. Two of these sects were born of the, great revival on the soil of Kentucky, and the third was invited to its territory by the extravagant enthusiasm gendered by the sacraments and camp-meetings.”\* The sect invited to Kentucky was that

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\*Spencer: “History of Kentucky Baptists,” p. 522.

of the *Shakers*, from New Lebanon, New York. They heard of the dancing and other extravagances growing out of the great revival and sent three of their number to investigate. They first came to Madison county, then to Bourbon county, where they were warmly received by Mr. Stone who allowed them to preach to his congregation. Two of his co-laborers joined the Shakers and a number of families embraced the faith. Mr. Stone seems to have become alarmed at this and began denouncing the Shakers in no mild terms. They afterward made their way to Mercer county, where they gained a considerable following.

The founding of the *Cumberland Presbyterian Church* has already been referred to in this discussion. It originated in the southwestern part of Kentucky and the adjoining portions of Tennessee, in what is known as the Cumberland district, hence the name "Cumberland." It was under the ministry of James McGready that the revival originated, but he cannot be looked upon as the founder of the Cumberland Presbyterian church as some have sought to prove. He remained in the Presbyterian church until the time of his death.

The other *sect* referred to in the above quotation was that inaugurated by *Barton W. Stone*, Presbyterian preacher in Bourbon county. He seems to have been somewhat shifting in his theological views. After the great Revival he became inclined to Socinian and Arian views and from time to time published his views. So "shocking" were his views on the Atonement that two of his associates, Thompson and Marshall, were driven back into the Presbyterian church after they had left it. Two of his former co-laborers, McNemar and Dunlavey, had joined the Quakers, so of the five fathers of "the Christian church" only Mr. Stone was left. Through the writings of Mr. Stone in "The Christian Messenger," and those of Alexander Campbell in "The Christian Baptist," the doctrinal views of the

two men were brought into comparison and a union of the "Stoneites" and "Campbellites" was effected about 1832. "The Christian church" is the name by which they have sought to be called, but other denominations have been slow to recognize their right and claim to this term, a term which has ever been considered the common property of every religious body which professes to be Christian.

#### *Conclusion.*

In closing this discussion I should like to urge and commend a careful study of this period of religious history. It contains many valuable lessons for those who live now and for coming generations. In estimating the events and results of a period of history like this we must take things as they are and not as we would like to have them; not as we think they ought to have been, but as they were. Do we of today, want an old-time revival? Let us hope that there shall never be such spiritual declension as will call forth extreme means for awakening interest in religion. No right-thinking person, I think, would ever want to witness such excesses and extravagances as were manifest in the Revival of 1800-1. For if religion means anything it means self-control and not emotionalism running wild. The re-action will come, as it did come then, with its harmful results. When the emotions are unbridled and the restraints of inhibitive control thrown off some deleterious effects are inevitable. Then, too, let us hope that no religious movement shall ever become such a producer of sects as that of a hundred years ago which became a veritable hot-bed of sectarianism. So, my brethren, when we pray for an "old-fashioned" revival let us be sure that we know what we are praying for. Let us be sure to put in a few limiting clauses so that the Lord will know that we do not mean a revival like that of 1800, for I hardly



think we would want that again. We do need the old-time spirit and fiery zeal and earnestness, but not the excesses. Let us pray for a revival and let us be willing to accept the kind of revival the Lord is pleased to give.



# **The Laying On of Hands---A Forgotten Chapter in Baptist History**

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By W. J. McGLOTHLIN, D.D.

LOUISVILLE, KY.



# The Laying On of Hands---A Forgotten Chapter in Baptist History

By **W. J. McGLATHLIN, D.D.**  
Louisville, Ky.

Imposition of hands as a religious ceremony has been practiced in Christian history for three distinct purposes—on religious officers to set them apart for their special work, on the newly baptized for the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and on excluded members when restoring them to the fellowship of the church. Not all Christians have had all or even any of these practices, but they have all been practiced from early, if not the earliest days of Christianity. Let us see what the Scriptural basis for these practices is.

The ceremony of laying on of hands is very ancient. It appears first in Scripture when the people are commanded to put their hands upon the Levites and offer them as a wave offering to Jehovah. Moses is instructed by Jehovah to lay his hand upon Joshua as a part of the ceremony by which he was to be recognized as Moses' successor. Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9. This act was not, however, for the gift of the Spirit for he is said to be already "a man in whom is the Spirit." The exact significance of the act is not made clear. Neither of these instances was in any sense an ordination, nor was the imposition of hands a part of the ceremony for ordaining priests. The hands of the officiating priest were laid upon the head of the scape-goat and some other sacrifices before the animal was slain, thus trans-

fering the sins of the people to the sacrificial animal. These were the only uses of the ceremony of imposition of hands in the Old Testament.

When we come to the New Testament we find that Jesus often laid his hands upon the sick to heal them (Luke 4:40; Mark 6:5), and on little children in blessing them (Mt. 19:15). But so far as we know, he neither instituted, nor used, nor commanded his followers to practice any ceremony of laying on of hands for any purpose whatsoever. Such ceremonies had always been the special prerogatives of the priestly class and he did not belong to that family, nor assume any of its prerogatives, nor employ any of its ceremonies, so far as we know. Neither did he, as far as we know, transfer any of these things to or impose them upon his followers. So far as we know, he laid no hands upon the newly baptized for the gift of the Spirit, nor upon anybody in the way of ordination to the work of ministering, nor did he command his followers to do so.

However, his followers very soon after his death, began to use this ceremony of the imposition of hands. When the church at Jerusalem had chosen seven men to oversee the charitable work of the church, they were set before the apostles "and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them." Acts 6:6. This is the first instance of the use of the ceremony of the imposition of hands in Christian history, so far as we are informed. We are not informed as to the source and origin of the ceremony, nor of its significance. Was it the perpetuation of some ceremony practiced among the Jews? or was it the carrying out of a command of Jesus which has not been recorded? or was it a new ceremony instituted by themselves? None of these questions can be answered except by conjecture. Nor can we say whether it conferred grace, or symbolized the gift of grace from God, or was simply a solemn way of recognizing God's call of these men to a spiritual work. Further, we cannot say wheth-

er it gave any authority or power which they did not before possess. In short, we know that such a ceremony was used, but can say nothing more about it.

In Acts 13:3 we learn that the ceremony is again used, along with fasting and prayer, in sending forth Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey. Here it could hardly have been an ordination, since both men had been preaching and doing missionary work for several years. But here again we are not told its source or significance; we are merely informed that the Holy Spirit said to them, "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Acts 13: 2f. Here it would seem to be the ceremony of separating some missionaries to a special, new, difficult and dangerous undertaking, but its significance is again left unexplained.

In Tim. 4:14, Paul warns Timothy not to neglect the gracious gift (Charisma), "which," said he, "was given thee through prophecy with imposition of the hands of the presbytery." Here there is evidently reference to the ceremony of imposition of hands by which some spiritual gift was actually conferred upon Timothy. But here again, many questions remain unanswered. What was this gift? Was the ceremony at Timothy's baptism or in connection with an ordination, as we call it, at the beginning of his ministry as a Christian preacher? We do not know. Moreover, the gift was conferred through (by means of) prophecy along with the laying on of hands. In the parallel passage II. Tim. 1:6, Paul puts Timothy "in remembrance that thou stir up (stir into a flame) the gift (Charisma) of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands." Putting the two passages together we learn that "the gift of God" came to Timothy through the agency of prophecy and the imposition of the hands of the presbytery along with Paul. The

gift was actually imparted, not merely symbolized. What was this "gift of God"? With the exception of I Peter 4:10, this word is used in the New Testament exclusively by Paul. By it he certainly does not mean any ecclesiastical authority or power, but the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life, enabling him to manifest such powers as healing, gift of tongues, prophecy, power of teaching, etc. These gifts Timothy had received through prophecy and the imposition of hands.

The expression, "lay hands hastily on no man," (I. Tim. 5:22) is generally interpreted as referring to ordination, but Ellicott and other commentators, with more probability it seems to me, refer it to the imposition of hands at the restoration of excluded and now penitent members to renewed fellowship in the church. This interpretation accords with the context of the passage and with what is known to have been the custom of the early Christians.

So much for the passages bearing on the ceremony as used in ordinations. But there is still another use of the ceremony in the New Testament, viz., the gift of the Holy Spirit to ordinary believers. When Jesus wished the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." John 20:22. No sort of ceremony was interposed. Again, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came upon them without the interposition of any symbolic or other human action. Still again, as Peter preached to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, at Caesarea, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word," (Acts 10:44), even before baptism.

On the other hand during the mission of Philip at Samaria, many had believed and been baptized without receiving the Holy Spirit. Hearing that Samaria had received the Word of God, the apostles at Jerusalem sent unto them Peter and John, "who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen on none



of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then *laid they their hands* on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." Acts 8:14-17. Here a number of persons, some time after baptism, receive the Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands.

Ananias laid his hands upon Saul of Tarsus that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit, but in this case, before he was baptized. Acts 9:17.

An interesting case occurs in Acts 19. When Paul reached Ephesus on his third missionary journey he found that others had preceded him and had won some disciples. But they were very imperfectly taught. They had not only not received the Holy Spirit, but had not even heard "whether the Holy Spirit was" and had been baptized "into John's baptism." After some further instruction, "they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied." Acts 19:1-6. There are many things we should like to know about this incident, e. g. How did John's baptism differ from other baptism? Why had these men not received the Holy Spirit? and others. But for our purposes it is sufficient to notice that Paul laid his hands upon them after baptism for the gift of the Holy Spirit. As a result the Spirit was received, but the ceremony was without prayer, so far as the records inform us.

Finally, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, urges his readers to "leave the doctrine of the first principles of Christ," and press on to full growth; "not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Heb. 6:1f. Here the author is addressing all Christians, and the laying on of hands is classified with the first principles, the things that

should be known at the beginning of the Christian life. Imposition of hands would, therefore, seem to be a well established custom at that time, and to be immediately after baptism. Its purpose or significance is not stated, but judging from the previous passages we have studied, it seems probable that it was practiced on the newly baptized for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

To sum up the Biblical evidence for the practice of laying on of hands. In the Old Testament laying on of hands was not a part of the ceremony for setting apart the priests. When the tribe of Levi was originally set apart to God's service the people laid hands upon them and offered them as a wave offering to Jehovah, but not in ordination. Num. 8:10f. Moses laid hands upon Joshua, thus constituting him his successor. Num. 27:18-23. The priests laid their hands upon the head of many of the sacrifices before they were killed, transferring to the animal the sins of the individual or of the nation as the case might be. This was the extent of the use of the ceremony in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament Jesus often laid his hands upon people to heal them or in blessing, but never so far as we are informed either to confer the Holy Spirit after baptism, or in ordination. Nor did he command his followers so to do.

But the Christians soon began the practice. It is true that no apostle or preacher of the New Testament, with the possible exception of Timothy, nor any deacon, is known to have been ordained by the ceremony of laying on of hands. The seven at Jerusalem were inducted into the work of serving tables by prayer and the laying on of hands; but they are nowhere called deacons and seem to have disappeared from the church when the conditions which called the body into existence ceased. Nothing is said as to the ordination of deacons in passages where they are mentioned.

The two missionaries, Barnabas and Saul, were sent forth,

several years after they began to preach, to a new task by fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands, but this could hardly be called an ordination. Timothy had received an actual Charisma or spiritual gift through prophecy and the laying on of hands of the presbytery and of Paul; this was probably at the beginning of his ministry and might, it is probable, be justly called an ordination. But it must have been a very extraordinary one. This is all we know of the ceremony in ordinations.

We saw the ceremony twice used, once by Peter and John, and once by Paul, on the newly baptized for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We saw an indication in I. Tim. 5:22, according to the best commentators, that people excluded from the church, on repenting, were received back into fellowship by the laying on of hands. And finally we saw that the author of Hebrews regards the laying on of hands as one of the first principles of the Christian life.

Looking at all this we must be impressed with its indefiniteness and the narrow limits of our real knowledge of the practice of the New Testament churches. There is not a command in the New Testament, either by Jesus or the apostles, to lay hands on anybody for any purpose whatsoever, except Paul's warning to Timothy, "lay hands hastily on no man." As used in the case of Timothy it did not symbolize, but secured the "gift of God"; likewise after baptism it secured the gift of the Holy Spirit in the cases given. All the New Testament passages together do not tell us the source of the practice, nor its significance, nor whether it is binding on all Christians, nor whether the laying on of hands after baptism and for the restoration of excluded members to fellowship are as binding as in ordination. In short we have to interpret the *practice* rather than the *teachings* of the apostles, and our knowledge of their practices is very meager. Further, we have to determine whether their practice is binding on us.

Now in this state of our knowledge it is not surprising that people have differed in practice. What have the Christians actually done? Well, almost all Christians have used the ceremony of the imposition of hands in the ordination of most of their various officials; and they have usually supposed, that as in the case of Timothy, it actually conferred upon the recipients some grace or power which they did not before have. Further, the early Christians and the great majority of Christians down to the present time practice the imposition of the hands upon the baptized for the gift of the Holy Spirit as in the cases of Peter, and John, and Paul; and they believe that the Holy Spirit is thus imparted, as in those cases. In the case of infant baptism this ceremony is postponed for some years of instruction, but it always precedes communion. (Recently the pope has reduced the age from eleven to seven). Finally, most Christians throughout the history since the first century have restored to fellowship in the church through prayer and the laying on of hand.

But what has been the practice of the Baptists and especially the Kentucky Baptists in whom we are especially interested? It may be said that the Baptists have almost uniformly ordained both pastors and deacons by prayer and the laying on of hands, and in the old days fasting preceded the ceremony as in the case of Barnabas and Saul, several of our old confessions of faith prescribing fasting as a part of the ordination exercises. Crosby (IV. 156) tells us that a few Baptists of England in the 17th century refused to ordain by the laying on of hands and in 1729 the Philadelphia Association discussed the question as to whether they could receive baptisms performed by these men. Semple (p. 124f) informs us that the question as to whether ordination ought to be by imposition of hands or merely by call of the church was discussed for years in the bounds of the Dover Association in Virginia. The question was before

the Association in 1792 and in other years, it was investigated at different times and in different ways, and finally after years of discussion decided in favor of the imposition of hands. Baptists have usually practiced ordination by imposition of hands, but they have not been unanimous in believing in the practice. So far as I know Kentucky Baptists have uniformly ordained by the laying on of hands. If they ever fasted in connection with an ordination that fact is unknown to me, though it may have been done in the earlier years of their history.

With regard to the effect of ordination Baptists have not been agreed. Does it confer any "gift of God," as in the case of Timothy, any grace or power, not before possessed? Can a man do anything after ordination which he could not do before ordination? All Christians, Catholics and Protestants, who insist that it does confer powers which were not before possessed, agree that these powers are exercised in and through the church. As to what those powers are they are not agreed. Baptists are not agreed among themselves as to whether any powers are conferred. The question turns upon the administration of the ordinances among the Baptists. In the earliest Calvinistic Baptist Confession, that of 1644, ordination is provided for, but at the same time it is distinctly stated that the ordinances and worship of the church must be administered by others if no ordained man can be had. On the other hand the Philadelphia Confession drawn up in 1677, just thirty-three years later, distinctly and positively asserts that only ordained officials can administer the ordinances. That division of sentiment has continued to the present. I have been informed, reliably informed I think, that the English Baptists allow women to baptize on some mission fields, where social customs are thought to forbid its administration by a man. As it appears to me English and Northern Baptists incline to the view that ordination confers no grace or powers, but that it is desirable as a means of keeping unworthy

men out of the ministry, while Southern and possibly Canadian Baptists incline to the view that it does confer some additional power not before possessed, and consequently most of them do not permit an unordained man to administer the ordinances.

On this question Kentucky Baptists have also been divided, but I judge that at present an overwhelming majority of them believe that ordination confers power not before possessed, and they do not, therefore, permit unordained men to administer the ordinances.

But what has been the practice of Baptists in the matter of laying on of hands after baptism, corresponding to Catholic and Episcopal confirmations? Here we have some very interesting history. The practice, so far as known, first appeared among the Arminian or General Baptists of England, about 1646. It was based upon Hebrews 6:2, where laying on of hands is one of the six principles or first things of the Christian life there mentioned. They insisted that all these six first principles must be observed, and hence soon come to be known as "The Six Principle Baptists." Imposition of hands upon the newly baptized for the gift of the Spirit, found place in their confessions of faith, and before long was generally if not universally held and practiced among them. The great majority made the question a term of communion and suffered nobody to come to the Lord's table until hands had been laid upon him.

The English Calvinistic or Particular Baptists, were never so widely or deeply affected by the practice; and yet, as was to be expected, some of them adopted the custom and strenuously insisted upon it as a condition of church membership and a term of communion. Among those who held this view, Benjamin and Elias Keach, father and son, were prominent and leading representatives. They were both pastors in London and in 1697 drew up a joint confession of faith for their churches. One of the articles in this confession required the laying on of hands

as a Baptist doctrine, though none of the generally received confessions of the English Particular Baptists had any article on the subject.

On the other hand the Welsh Calvinistic Baptists seem to have very generally insisted on the laying on of hands, and it was through the Welsh Baptists, the General Baptists and Keach's Confession that the practice was so widely introduced among the Baptists of America.

The General Baptists in America preached it, of course, since they were introduced here directly from England. The Calvinistic Baptists in and around Providence, R. I., were soon led to adopt the practice through the influence of Arminians, some of whom joined the first church at Providence.

The beginnings of the practice among Calvinistic Baptists of the middle colonies, in so far as we are informed, was among the Welsh Baptists of New Jersey. The Welsh Tract church made the laying on of hands a term of communion in 1701, refusing to commune with the Baptist churches in the neighborhood because they did not at that time practice laying on of hands. Records Welsh Tract church, I. 7p. In 1706 the Welsh Tract, Philadelphia and Pennepeck churches agreed on what was called "transient communion," that is communion for a short period of the members of one party at the meetings of another. The Welsh people were very active and aggressive in the propagation of their views as to imposition of hands, and in 1709 they note with pleasure, that all the ministers and many of the members of the English speaking churches in that region, had submitted to the ordinance. Two years before this time, i. e., in 1707 these English churches had been organized into the Philadelphia Association, and the laying on of hands was thus given organized support by the largest, most intelligent and aggressive body of Baptists in America. It was, at this time and for sixty years the only association in America, and it

eventually included churches in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey and New York, and sent its missionaries throughout the colonies. Its beliefs and practices were therefore sure to be widely if not universally accepted. It was now completely converted to the laying on of hands and propagated that faith everywhere. For some years it had been using the confession drawn up in 1677 in England and approved by the first General Assembly of the English Particular Baptists in 1689; in 1742 it ordered the printing of a new edition in America and added two articles, one favoring singing in public worship and the other enforcing laying on of hands on the newly baptized. They were both taken from Keach's Confession and the one on laying of hands is as follows: "We believe that laying on of hands, with prayer, upon baptized believers, as such, is an ordinance of Christ, and ought to be submitted unto by all such persons that are admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper, and that the end of this ordinance is not for the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, but for a farther reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, or for the addition of the graces of the Spirit, and the influences thereof; to confirm, strengthen, and comfort them in Christ Jesus; it being ratified and established by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in the primitive times, to abide in the church as meeting together on the first day of the week was, Acts 2:1, that being the day of worship, or Christian Sabbath, under the gospel; and as preaching the Word was, Acts 10:44, and as baptism was, Matt. 3:16, and prayer was, Acts 4:31, and singing psalms, etc., was, Acts 16:25, 26, so this of laying on of hands was, Acts 8 and 19, for as the whole gospel was confirmed by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost in general, so was every ordinance in like manner confirmed in particular."

The importance ascribed by our fathers to this ceremony is thus seen to be very great. It is an ordinance of Christ, a con-



dition of communion; it is for the further reception of the Holy Spirit or the addition of the graces and influences of the Spirit, to confirm, strengthen and comfort Christians in Christ Jesus; it was established at first by the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit as the Sabbath, baptism, prayer, etc. It was regarded equally as sacred and important as baptism or communion.

Following the lead of the Philadelphia Association the Ketocton in Virginia, the Kehukee in North Carolina, and the Charleston in South Carolina and other Associations as they were organized, adopted the Philadelphia Confession making laying on of hands a term of communion. Semple says that for more than twenty years after its organization in 1766 the Ketocton Association made laying on of hands a term of communion. Page 389. Naturally the custom was transferred to Kentucky by the Baptists who migrated to that fair land. The Elkhorn and Salem and probably other Associations adopted the Philadelphia Confession and the practice of laying on of hands. However, toward the end of the 18th century, it began to be neglected by preachers and churches. This caused sharp discussions in many Associations, since numbers of the brethren still regarded it as one of the New Testament ordinances, instituted by Christ, of perpetual obligation and great value. In response to a query in 1783 the Philadelphia Association say: "Imposition of hands on baptized persons has been the general practice of the churches in union with this Association, and is still used by most of them; but it was never considered by the Association as a bar of communion. [In this statement they were mistaken]. Resolved, That any person scrupling to submit thereto. may be admitted to the fellowship of the church without it." Mins. 1783. In 1789 the question became a subject of contention in Kentucky. The Salem Association received this query from one of the churches:

“Whether any of the churches of this Association practicing or not practicing the laying on of hands on church members will be a bar to fellowship?” The Association answered in the negative. Spencer I. 181. From this time on the practice rapidly declined all over the country and completely disappeared in the early years of the 19th century. The Baptists of the country thus gave up in a period of some twenty-five years what they had regarded for a century and a quarter as a cardinal article of their faith and practice, of divine appointment, perpetual obligation and great value to the Christian life. They had put it into their creed, fought for it, divided churches and communities over it; but there blew a breath of new life in upon the Baptist body and lo! it was gone, leaving behind only an inoperative article in their Confession of faith. How are we to explain so strange and startling a phenomenon? In 1789-90 a great revival began among the Baptists of the whole country; in 1800-1 there came another and soon the great foreign mission movement began to stir the slumbering powers of the demoniation. It had more important things to do, and so first quit disturbing the peace over the imposition of hands, leaving each church to do as it chose, and soon all of them chose to quit a practice which obviously neither accomplished nor symbolized the gift of the Spirit as it had been supposed to do. One more cause of division and strife, was out of the way, leaving the field a little clearer for the business of Christians, the true work of the denomination, the bringing of the world to Christ.

It may be of some interest to know just how the ordinance was administered. It must be done by an ordained minister to be valid, just as confirmation in the Catholic and other Episcopal churches must be administered by an ordained bishop, else it is not valid. Moreover validity in both cases meant the conferring of real benefits, grace; if not conferred by an ordained bishop it had no validity and was useless or worse. In fact it

was a case of pure ecclesiasticism. After baptism the minister laid his hands upon the head of each candidate and prayed. If more than one preacher was present they laid their hands upon the head of each candidate and one of them prayed. Sometimes this took place on the bank of the stream immediately after baptism, at other times the candidates were allowed to dress and assemble at the church for this ceremony. But in no case were they considered members of the church or admitted to communion until they had "passed under hands," as it was called.

John Taylor in his "History of Ten Churches," p. 10, describes the ordinance as he had seen it administered on the occasion of a notable baptizing in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. He says:

"I think fifty-three were baptized on that day, several young ministers came with [Samuel] Harris, as Elijah Craig, John Waller, with a number of others. The rite of laying on of hands, on the newly baptized, was practiced by the Baptists in those days; this practice was performed as follows: Those upwards of fifty [in number], stood up in one solemn line, on the bank of the river, taking up about as many yards as there were individuals—the males first in the line, about four ministers went together, each one laid his right hand on the head of the dedicated person, and one prayed for him, and after praying for three or four of them, another proceeded till they went through. It would appear as if that solemn dedication might be some barrier to future apostacy; for the prayers were with great solemnity and fervour, and for that particular person according to their age and circumstances." p. 10.

On less notable occasions it was probably administered in a more simple way, but the essential things of prayer and the laying on of hands were always there. So far as I know, the custom has disappeared completely from among English and

American Baptists; but I noticed in a recent letter concerning the Russian Baptists, that they practice the ceremony as a solemn and binding ordinance, and it is entirely possible that they would not accept us Kentucky Baptists as orthodox enough to commune with them.

With regard to the third use of laying on of hands, that is in the restoration of excluded members to fellowship, there is little to say. It has been practiced by a great part of the Christian world throughout history, but if English or American Baptists have ever used it with any regularity I do not know it. No literature referring to it has ever come under my eyes. nor have I ever met with it in my experience.





## Doctrinal Position of Some Kentucky Baptist Associations---Original Confessions.

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The following documents are reproduced as nearly as possible as they appear in the original minutes with inconsistencies of spelling, punctuation, etc. They reveal the great influence of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith in the early history of Kentucky Baptists, but at the same time the freedom they felt in modifying this venerable document so as to bring it into harmony with their actual beliefs and practices. Incidentally is revealed their attitude toward the imposition of hands upon the newly baptized as a required ordinance and of the lawfulness of the oath, so long debated questions among the Baptists. At first imposition of hands is required, then freedom is granted and finally the practice disappears.

### *Elkhorn*

Is the oldest Association west of the Alleghenies. The original minute has been lost, but the action was copied into a later minute and according to that copy the action was as follows:

A Baptist Conference was held at South Elkhorn church in Woodford county, June 25, 1785, when it was "agreed that the Philadelphia Confession of Faith be strictly adhered to as the rule of our communion" in forming the body. This "Conference" resulted in the organization of an Association at Clear Creek church, September 30, 1785, when the following action was taken as to their doctrinal basis, viz.:

## “CONSTITUTION.”

“Being assembled together and taking into our serious consideration what might be the most advantageous for the glory of God, the advancement of the kingdom of our Dear Redeemer and the mutual comfort and happiness of the Churches of Christ, having unanimously agreed to unite in the strongest bonds of Christian fellowship and love, and in order to support and keep that union, do hereby adopt the Baptist Confession of Faith first put forth in the name of the Seven Congregations met together in London in the year 1643 [1644], containing a system of the Evangelical doctrines agreeable to the Gospel of Christ, which we do hereby believe in and receive, but something in the third and fifth chapters in said book we do except if construed in that light which makes God the cause or author of sin; but we do acknowledge and believe God to be an Almighty Sovereign, wisely to govern and direct all things so as to promote his own glory.

“Also in chapter 31 concerning the laying on of hands on persons baptized as essential in their reception into the church, it is agreed on by us that the using or not using of that practice shall not affect our fellowship to each other, and as there are a number of Christian professors in the country under the Baptist name in order to distinguish ourselves from them, we are of opinion that no appellation is more suitable to our profession than that of ‘Regular Baptist,’ which name we profess.”

In the above statement the brethren are mistaken as to the confession to which they are referring. The English Confession of 1644, or 1643 as they have it, makes no references to laying on of hands. They are actually referring to the Philadelphia Confession, which is the American edition of the English Baptist Confession, published by the Assembly, in 1689, and which was a Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession.



Their attitude towards this confession is further defined in 1793 when negotiating for a union with the South Kentucky Association. This document follows:

“Monday, October 14, 1793.

Terms of union with the South Kentucky Association:

We agree to receive the Regular Baptist Confession of Faith, but to prevent its usurping a tyrannical power over the conscience of any, we do not mean that every person is to be bound to the strict observance of every thing therein contained, yet that it holds forth the essential truths of the Gospel and that we do believe in those doctrines relative to the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the sacred authority of the Scriptures, the universal depravity of human nature, the total inability of man to help himself without the aid of divine grace, the necessity of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the justification of our persons entirely by the imputed righteousness of Christ, believers baptism by immersion only and self-denial. And that the Supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and, all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest can be no other than the Holy Scriptures, delivered by the Spirit, unto which Scripture so delivered our fathers finally resolved.”

#### *Salem Association*

Was constituted of four Regular Baptist Churches, met at Cox's Creek, in Nelson county, Saturday, October 29, 1785. The original records of this meeting have been lost, but a summary of the action then taken was copied into a later book by the Clerk of the Association. According to this summary the Association made the following statement as the doctrinal position of that body:

“4th. The report of the several delegates being read [on Monday, October 31], and attended to; Resolved, That the Churches have adopted the Philadelphia Confession of Faith and treatise of discipline thereto annexed and hold ourselves in full fellowship with the Philadelphia, Ketocton and Monongahela Associations, and proper measures be endeavored to obtain assistance from and correspondence with the same.”—Minutes Salem Association.

*Long Run Association.*

Was constituted at Long Run meeting-house, September 16, 1803, with twenty-four churches and 1,619 members. With regard to their doctrinal basis it was

“Agreed unanimously, that this Association be Constituted, on the Philadelphia Baptist Confession of Faith, Excepting Something Contained in the third and fifth Articles; if construed so as to make God the author of Sin. Also, in the Thirty-first article, respecting laying Hands on newly Baptized persons; that the using, or not using that Ceremony be no bar to fellowship. And that an Oath Before a Magistrate Be not considered a part of Religious Worship, as contained in the Twenty-fourth Article of the Same.”—Minutes Long Run Association.

*North Bend Association*

Was constituted of nine Churches at Dry Creek Church, in Campbell county, on Friday, July 29, 1803. The first article of the constitution was upon the doctrinal position of the newly organized body and is as follows:

“1st. We do agree to unite and Constitute upon the Scriptures of the Old and new Testaments as the only infallible criterion of faith and practice and (in general) upon the Philadelphia baptist confession of faith, except the third and fifth

chapters, if so construed as to make God the Author of sin, and a clause in the twenty-third chapter respecting legal oaths being part of Religious worship.”

*Middle District Association*

Was organized on Friday before the fourth Sunday in July 1837, at Mount Moriah Church, in Shelby county, and was composed of five churches. They adopted a constitution, of which the seventh article is their confession of faith. It reads as follows:

“7. We believe in the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, of the old and New Testaments, as the complete and Infallible rule of Faith and practice, and that they teach the Unity of God, and the Existance of three equal persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; these three are one, equal in Glory, Dignity, Eternity and power: The total depravity of all mankind, in consequence of the fall of Adam, and their consequent Just condemnation. We believe in the Doctrine of Election, as held forth in the Scriptures: Atonement for sin, by the Death of Jesus Christ, and its Special relation to the sins of the Elect; Effectual calling and Regeneration, by the Immediate Influence of the Holy Spirit; Justification by the Righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, received by Faith; Christian Baptism, that is, the Immersion of Believers only, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; the Divine obligation to strictly observe the Lord’s day, and to maintain the Worship of God in Public, and in private; the perseverance of the Saints, the Resurrection of the body, and General Judgment. The endless happiness of the Righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked, and the obligation of every rational Intelligent person to love God supremely, to Believe what God says, and practise what God commands.”