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THE METHODIST ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1784-1844: AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH FROM ITS FORMATION TO ITS DIVISION

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE METHODIST ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1784-1844: AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH FROM ITS FORMATION TO ITS DIVISION

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

JOHN MICHAEL CALDWELL

Norman, Oklahoma

1982

THE METHODIST ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1784-1844:

AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FROM ITS FORMATION TO ITS DIVISION

APPROVED BY

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DEDICATION

With respect, admiration, and affection,
this study is dedicated

to

Ralph D. Pierce

Who introduced me to academic geography,

John W. Morris

Who brought me to the University of Oklahoma

and

Richard L. Nostrand

Who will always be "The Professor"

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PREFACE

The idea of an historico-geographical study of Methodism first occurred to me during a 1975 lecture in a class on the Historical Geography of the United States. The study as originally conceived was to be a comparative analysis of the means by which both Methodist and Baptist bodies had occupied the American frontier. Not only would it be a worthy topic for a Ph.D. thesis, but it also appealed to a person with a personal background as a member of a Methodist family with an even stronger ancestry of Southern Baptists.

After some preliminary thought and research on this original choice of topics, however, I came to identify with W. W. Bennett:

> Soon after the writer of this volume entered the ministry now above twenty-five years, he conceived the purpose of writing a history of Methodism in Virginia. The field was large, and its exploration vastly more difficult than youthful ardor had imagined. But it was extremely inviting, and promised a rich reward to patient research.[1]

Reaching the conclusion that neither the Department of Geography, nor the Graduate College, nor even my committee, would agree to such a lengthy gestation period for even so worthy a topic, I abandoned the Baptists for (I hope) a later date.

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[1]William Wallace Bennett, Memorials of Methodism in Virginia from Its Introduction into the State, in the Year 1772, to the Year 1829 (Richmond: by the author, 1871), p. 3.

Even the Methodists have proved immeasurable in terms of possible sources. Nonetheless, I have persevered to the stage of understanding exemplified in the following pages. If the work does not meet with every reader's approval, I can only hope that it in some way will provide interesting reading among those who find the Geography of the People Called Methodists as interesting as I do.

The author would like to acknowledge with appreciation the help which he received from the members of his committee during the preparation of this study: to Professor Richard L. Nostrand, committee chairman, for his helpful suggestions and careful editing of the manuscript; and to Professors Theodore L. Agnew, John S. Ezell, John W. Morris, Ralph E. Olson, and James M. Goodman for their constructive comment and suggestions.

Finally, the author thanks the many members of his family for their aid in locating and providing material, for timely expressions of encouragement, and for just being there. To each of them he owes a great debt.

THE METHODIST ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES, 1784-1844: AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH FROM ITS FORMATION TO ITS DIVISION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Religion and Geography: A Review

Religion and geography in the Western World have been intermixed in various ways. According to Erich Isaac, Anaximander in the sixth century B.C. combined a concept of the divine with a view of space in his study of "apeiron" (the "Boundless").[1] Three centuries later Eratosthenes used the term "geographein" to describe his work. The term denotes the function of the geographer--"to discover the spatial order of the world as a whole."[2]

Although associated with the Greeks, the co-existence of the

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[1] Erich Isaac, "Religious Geography and the Geography of Religion," Man and the Earth, University of Colorado Studies, Series in Earth Sciences, No. 3 (July 1965): 2-3. Isaac traces the transition in Western thought in geography from religious geography ("what is basic is religion, and the land is thought or made to conform to it") to the geography of religion ("the impact of religion upon the landscape or the land from religion").

[2] Christiaan van Paassen, The Classical Tradition of Geography (Groningen: J. B. Walters, 1957), p. 45.

divine with the land was common to many cultures.[3] Glacken has chronicled the changing man-land-divine relationships in Western culture. In this massive work he states, "If we seek after the nature of God, we must consider the nature of man and the earth, and if we look at the earth, questions of divine purpose in its creation and of the role of mankind on it inevitably arise."[4]

As Christianity emerged as the accepted religion of the West, new emphases in the geography/religion connection were introduced. Among these were Biblical geography, which comprised not only place names but also reconstructions of the geography of the world as described in the Bible.[5] By the close of the Middle Ages, with the Church assuming secu-

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[3]For example, when the Hebrew prophet Elisha cured Naaman the Syrian warlord of his leprosy, the latter carried "two mules' burden of earth" from Israel back to Damascus so that whenever he would say his prayers to Yahweh, it would be while standing on soil from Yahweh's own land. See II Kings 5:1-19.

[4]Clarence J. Glacken, Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 35. Glacken's approach is to examine the works cited in light of three interrelated concepts: 1) the idea of a designed earth; 2) the idea of environmental influence; and 3) the idea of man as a geographic agent.

[5]Isaac, "Religious Geography," pp. 8-9. Isaac indicates that this type of reconstruction was an early appearance of historical geography as a separate field.

By and large, however, the result of this period in the West is the reduction of knowledge to fit within and reflect the existing theology. For example, the "T in O" maps, so-called because of their shape, which also placed Jerusalem at the center of the world, illustrate the influence which religion exerted on cartography at this time. For a discussion of the geography of this period see C. Raymond Beazley, The Dawn of Modern Geography: A History of Exploration and Geographical Science from the Conversion of the Roman Empire to A.D. 900, with an Account of the Achievements and Writings of the Early Christian, Arab, and Chinese Travellers and Students, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1897) and John Kirtland Wright, The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades: A Study in the History of Medieval Science and Tradition in

lar as well as spiritual power, the study of ecclesiastical geography developed as a separate field. Ecclesiastical geography is "the branch of study developed in combination with church history to study the spatial systems of religious institutions and their statistics, past and present."[6]

The development of the field since Medieval times has been marked by increased secularization. The study of religion per se has been de-emphasized, and new stress has been placed on its by-products, for example, social stability. The viewpoint emerged that religion was only a front for other forces functioning in the world, and this led to a search for its ultimate determinants, both physical and cultural.[7]

Today's field of the geography of religion--as opposed to religious geography--consists of several subfields. Not surprisingly, earlier efforts to explain religion as the product of the geographic environment have been abandoned. Isaac views the present main concern as the study of the part played by religion in the development of cultural landscapes. Other aspects include religion as a factor in innovation, the imprint of religion in specific culture regions, and the older practice of ecclesiastical geography, which he breaks down into mission geography, religious demography, and cartography.[8]

American geography has mirrored the overall trend in seculari-

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Western Europe, American Geographical Society Research Series, no. 15, ed. W. L. G. Joerg (New York: American Geographical Society, 1925).

[6] Isaac, "Religious Geography," p. 10.

[7] Ibid., p. 12.

[8] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

zation of religious studies, a metamorphosis chronicled by Wright.[9] Cotton Mather had predicted that the Reformation and the opening of America would lead to a new focus for geography when he stated

> The Church of God must no longer be wrapped up in Strabo's cloak; Geography must now find work for a Christiano-graphy in regions far enough beyond the bounds wherein the Church of God had, through all former ages, been circumscribed. Renowned Churches of Christ must be gathered where the Ancients once derided them that looked for any inhabitants.[10]

A century later, however, Jedidiah Morse, the first native American geographer, contented himself in his American Universal Geography with listing the religious affiliations of the people in general, and the denominational affiliations of the Christians in particular. Methodism, along with her sister denominations, received some general attention and was then discussed where appropriate in the state-by-state (territory-by-territory, etc.) approach used by Morse.[11]

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[9]John Kirtland Wright, "Notes on Early American Geopiety," in Human Nature and Geography: Fourteen Papers, 1925-1965 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 250-285. Wright says that one reason why many modern historians of geography fail to include "theogeography" is that they regard as important only those aspects of the field as have contributed to the present. As recent examples of the lack of widespread interest in the geography of religion (although most likely not due to the reason given by Wright above), there is no separate chapter on such in either Preston E. James and Clarence F. Jones, eds., American Geography: Inventory and Prospect (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1954) or in Griffith Taylor, ed., Geography in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Growths, Fields, Techniques, Aims, and Trends, 3rd ed. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957).

[10]Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana; or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England; from Its First Planting, in the Year 1620, unto the Year of Our Lord 1698. In Seven Books. 2 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967 (1852)), I:42. Italics are his.

[11]Jedidiah Morse, The American Universal Geography: Or a View of the Present State of All the Empires, Kingdoms, States and Republicks in the Known World, and of the United States of America in Particular, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Boston: J. T. Buckingham for Thomas and Andrews, 1805).

A selection of modern religio-geographical studies in the United States can be divided into three groups--general, denominational, and topical. The first discuss the nation or the field as a whole, and the national studies are most often concerned with patterns of affiliation. The second group study individual religious bodies, the most-often-studied of these being the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Fewer can be found exclusively in the third group; place-name studies constitute the greater portion of the examples cited below. Many of the articles which appear in denominational studies, however, could often just as easily be placed in the topical grouping, while many of the topical studies concentrate on one denomination.

Wilbur Zelinsky, David Sopher, and James Shortridge have all contributed to the general studies in the religious geography of the United States. Zelinsky reviewed the sources, methodologies, and limitations to the study of religion in the nation and mapped the important denominational groups of the country as of 1952 in an attempt to delimit overall cultural as well as religious regions.[12] Sopher's is the only English-language book in the field; it discusses religious systems in terms of three geographic characteristics--distribution (both geographical and social), structure in space, and the means by which a system grows numerically and territorially. He inter-relates these three themes in the United States as well as in other parts of the world. The book has four foci:

the significance of the environmental setting for the evolution

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[12]Wilbur Zelinsky, "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952," Annals, Association of American Geographers, LI, No. 1 (March 1961): 139-193.

> of religious systems and particular religious institutions, the way religious systems and institutions modify their environment, the different ways whereby religious systems occupy and organize segments of earth space, and the geographic distribution of religions and the way religious systems spread and interact with each other.[13]

Using more recent church-membership data Shortridge produced a series of distributions based on groups of denominations as well as their relative strengths.[14] He later produced a five-part regionalization of the nation based upon the distributions of his earlier study.[15]

Among denominational groups the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has received the greatest attention. This has been the case since the Mormons have maintained a distinctiveness, cohesiveness, and, to a lesser extent, a geographical isolation. Thus, they are much easier to generalize about than are older, less cohesive, or less distinctive groups. A further advantage to students of Mormon culture and distribution has been the availability, explained in part by the religion's recent origin, of records--both institutional and personal. Most denominations do not possess such a plethora of records, although the Methodists, because of John Wesley's example, are better documented than most.

Donald Meinig delimited a hierarchy of areas (core, domain, and

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[13]David E. Sopher, Geography of Religions, Prentice-Hall Series in Cultural Geography (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 2, 4. The religious regions of the United States produced by Sopher often combined denominations.

[14]James A. Shortridge, "Patterns of Religion in the United States," Geographical Review, LXVI, No. 4 (October 1976): 420-434.

[15]James A. Shortridge, "A New Regionalization of American Religion," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, XVI, No. 2 (June 1977): 143-153.

sphere) for the overall culture region of the Latter-Day Saints.[16] Francaviglia produced a set of similar, though generally more compact, "visual regions" (nucleus, orb, and fringe) for the Mormon West that was based upon a set of ten landscape features.[17] How Mormons view their own culture region and how they perceive the characteristics and boundaries of that region are addressed by Budge.[18] Gurgel examined the concept of religiously-motivated travel by studying the drawing power of two Mormon "shrines" in New York.[19]

Richard Jackson has published two articles that concern the Mormons' environmental perceptions of their Great Basin home. The first examines how the Saints approached human modifications of the land and expected Divine intervention to ameliorate what they could not change on their own.[20] The second illustrates the effect of these initial perceptions on the settlement patterns of the Great Basin.[21] With Robert

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[16]Donald W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Regions: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964," Annals, Association of American Geographers, LV, No. 2 (June 1965): 191-220.

[17]Richard V. Francaviglia, "The Mormon Landscape: Definition of an Image in the American West," Proceedings, Association of American Geographers, II (1970): 59-61.

[18]Seth Budge, "Perception of the Boundaries of the Mormon Culture Region," Great Plains-Rocky Mountain Geographical Journal, III (1974): 1-9.

[19]Klaus D. Gurgel, "Travel Patterns of Canadian Visitors to the Mormon Culture Hearth," Canadian Geographer, XX, No. 4 (Winter 1976): 405-418.

[20]Richard H. Jackson, "Righteousness and Environmental Change: The Mormons and the Environment of the West," Essays on the American West, Charles Redd Monographs in Western History, V (1975): 21-42.

[21]Richard H. Jackson, "Mormon Perception and Settlement," Annals, Association of American Geographers, LXVIII, No. 3 (September 1978): 317-334.

Layton, Jackson analyzed the layout of Mormon towns and questioned the belief that the towns' distinctiveness is based upon the City of Zion plan of 1833.[22] The two authors expanded this study in a later work on the idea of a typically Mormon landscape.[23]

Other denominations have received less attention from geographers. Shortridge dealt with American Catholicism and postulated its decreasing distinctiveness of pattern.[24] A Roman Catholic culture region centered on the Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota, was identified by Ingolf Vogeler, who examined it in terms of three geographic themes.[25] Judith Meyer studied the historical geography of an immigrant Protestant group--the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod--in terms of spatial diffusion and factors which influenced that spread.[26] Robert Mitchell used the expansion of Presbyterians in the late eighteenth century as a surrogate measure for the advancement of the Scotch-Irish frontier.[27]

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[22]Richard H. Jackson and Robert L. Layton, "The Mormon Village: Analysis of a Settlement Type," Professional Geographer, XXVIII, No. 2 (May 1976): 136-141.

[23]Robert L. Layton and Richard H. Jackson, "The Changing Mormon Landscape," Chapter V in Perceptions of Utah: A Field Guide, ed. Deon C. Greer (Ogden: Weber State College Printing Department for the Association of American Geographers, 1977), pp. 52-61.

[24]James C. Shortridge, "The Pattern of American Catholicism, 1971," Journal of Geography, LXXVII, No. 2 (February 1978): 56-60.

[25]Ingolf Vogeler, "The Roman Catholic Culture Region of Central Minnesota," Pioneer America, VIII, No. 2 (July 1976): 71-83. The three themes discussed are "1) the genesis and geographical distribution of religion, 2) the spatial organization of religions, and 3) the landscape expression of religious groups."

[26]Judith W. Meyer, "Ethnicity, Theology, and Immigrant Church Expansion," Geographical Review, LXV, No. 2 (April 1975): 180-197.

[27]Robert D. Mitchell, "The Presbyterian Church as an Indicator

The Hutterite migration/expansion into Alberta from its United States home is traced by William Laatsch.[28] Lawrence Anderson and Michael Engelhart examined the spatial patterns not only of all the Hutterite settlements but also of their internal form.[29] Heatwole studied the problems of defining a culture region--the Bible Belt--based not on religion itself but on the perception of the region's location.[30]

Place-name studies are common in the topical grouping. Brunn and Wheeler took a series of "religious names" for towns and examined the pattern of their occurrence across the United States.[31] Granger focused on the four earliest Mormon settlements in Arizona, but mentions other features as well, in a place-name study of that area.[32] Zelinsky used cemetery place-names in a work that examined the American perception of the hereafter.[33]

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of Westward Expansion in Eighteen-Century America," Professional Geographer, XVIII, No. 5 (September 1966): 293-299.

[28]William G. Laatsch, "Hutterite Colonization in Alberta," Journal of Geography, LXX, No. 6 (September 1971): 347-359.

[29]Lawrence C. Anderson and Michael Engelhart, "A Geographic Appraisal of the North American Hutterian Brethren," Geographical Survey (Blue Earth County Geographical Society), III, No. 1 (January 1974): 53-71.

[30]Charles A. Heatwole, "The Bible Belt: A Problem in Regional Definition," Journal of Geography, LXXVII, No. 2 (February 1978): 50-55.

[31]Stanley D. Brunn and James O. Wheeler, "Notes on the Geography of Religious Town Names in the United States," Names, XIV, No. 4 (December 1966): 197-202.

[32]Byrd H. Granger, "Early Mormon Place Names in Arizona," Western Folklore, XVI, No. 1 (January 1957): 43-47.

[33]Wilbur Zelinsky, "Unearthly Delights: Cemetery Names and the Map of the Changing American Afterworld," in Geographies of the Mind: Essays in Historical Geosophy in Honor of John Kirtland Wright, ed.

Erich Isaac has contributed to topical studies, too. In one article he discusses how different points of origin for religions produce different attitudes toward and modifications of the landscape.[34] He later examines the theological roots of human attitudes towards property and boundaries.[35]

Almost all of the dissertations in the geography of religion in general and of Methodism in particular have been historical in nature, and most of them have been written from a cultural viewpoint.[36] Shin-Yi Hsu focused on the development of the Chinese folk religion using multiple-regression techniques on fourteen socio-cultural factors, and Charles Edward Tatum viewed the "events and circumstances which precipitated the organization and spread of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in America from 1870 to 1970."[37] Russel Gerlach studied Ozark

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David Lowenthal and Martyn J. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 171-196.

[34]Erich Isaac, "The Act and the Covenant: The Impact of Religion on the Landscape," Landscape, XI, No. 2 (Winter 1961-62): 12-17.

[35]Erich Isaac, "God's Acre: Property in Land, a Sacred Origin?" Landscape, XIV, No. 2 (Winter 1964): 28-32.

[36]This group was arrived at by using the key words "religion" and "Methodism" (and related forms of each) in an examination of the geography sections of Comprehensive Dissertation Index, 1861-1972 (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilm, 1973) and the 1973 through 1980 supplements to that work. As such it is not a complete listing of all dissertations on the geography of religion, since only Methodism as a denomination was researched. Abstracts to all but the Hotchkiss dissertation were found in Dissertation Abstracts International.

[37]Shin-Yi Hsu, "A Multivariate Approach to the Analysis of the Cultural Geographic Factors of the Chinese Folk Religion" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of California, Los Angeles, 1967) and Charles Edward Tatum, "The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, with Emphasis on Negroes in Texas, 1870-1970: A Study in Historical-Cultural Geography" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1971).

ethnic and religious groups mainly in terms of landscape imprints, while Stephen W. Tweedie employed cluster and gradient analyses in an examination of spatio-temporal religious patterns in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and upstate New York.[38] Other dissertations have been concerned with urban patterns of religious institutions, the strategy development for institutional religion in new towns, the role religion plays in the genesis and continuation of cultural areas, and the economics of the peyote trade in south Texas.[39]

The Problem

This study examines the Methodist Episcopal Church in terms of David Sopher's three characteristics of religious systems: 1) distribution; 2) structure in space; and 3) means of numerical and territorial expansion.[40] Each of these foci is examined within the historical framework of the Methodist Episcopal Church's occupation of the Anglo-

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[38]Russel Lee Gerlach, "Rural Ethnic and Religious Groups as Cultural Islands in the Ozarks of Missouri: Their Emergence and Persistence" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Nebraska, 1974) and Stephen W. Tweedie, "The Geography of Religious Groups in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Upstate New York: Persistence and Change, 1890-1965" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1969).

[39]Wesley Akin Hotchkiss, Areal Patterns of Religious Institutions in Cincinnati, Research Paper No. 13 (Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1950); Edward Rush Carlton, "Institutional Religion's Strategy for New Towns" (D.E.D. dissertation, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University, 1972); Charles Alton Heatwole, "Religion in the Creation and Preservation of Sectarian Culture Areas: A Mennonite Example" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1974); and George Robert Morgan, "Man, Plant, and Religion: Peyote Trade on the Mustang Plains of Texas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1976).

[40]Sopher, Religions, p. 4. The social aspects of distribution will be noted only in passing.

American realm.[41] The temporal limits of the main body of the study are 1784 and 1844.

The two goals of this study concern the geography of religion and historical geography. The first goal is to examine the origin and development of the spatial structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church, including the methods used to expand its geographical organization of the continent. Secondly, through a series of maps the actual extension of that framework is chronicled for the 1784-1844 time period.

The particular dates of the study represent two turning points in American Methodist history. In 1784 the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States was founded as a separate body, and the denomination was split into its northern and southern branches in 1844.[42] Having only a precarious foothold in the new nation at the beginning of this time frame, by its close the Methodists were a powerful force in the direction of the nation.

Justification

This study was undertaken in part because of an absence of any

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[41]The territory under control by the Methodist Episcopal Church extended beyond the national boundaries of the United States for several decades. Only the continental areas of North America will be included in this study; missionary efforts in the Caribbean or in Africa will not be discussed except in passing, even though the Church was directly involved. Areas on the continental land-mass itself will be maintained within the study region only so long as they fall under the control of the General Conference and its predecessor bodies. Likewise, the Methodist Episcopal Church and its predecessor Wesleyan group will be the only Methodist bodies studied. Splinter groups will be mentioned, but their own individual structures and distributions lie outside the scope of this study.

[42]This split remained until 1939 when the Methodist Church was formed by the reunion of the Methodist Episcopal Church; the Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and the Methodist Protestant Church.

examination of the Methodist Episcopal Church by a geographer. Geographers have long recognized the importance of religion to any society, and historians likewise have demonstrated the influence which the Methodist denomination in particular exerted on the United States. What I propose is to analyze the Methodist Episcopal Church both in time and in space.

The importance of religion to culture can scarcely be overstated. Scholars have used the patterns of religious affiliation in their delineation of cultural regions within the United States. Zelinsky states: "When Americans categorize groups of people, the most important sets, beyond sex and age, are those taking into account race, religion, and ethnic group."[43] Similarly, religion is one of four themes receiving major status by Gastil in his work on cultural regionalization within the United States.[44]

It has been stated that if there is a "national" denomination in a geographical and statistical sense, it is the Methodists.[45] Ahlstrom, in his Religious History of the American People, states that Methodism was the prime force for evangelical Arminianism in the United States from its formation in 1784 through the nineteenth century. Its rate of growth would be greater than that of any other large Protestant Church. "By direct impact and negative reaction it would work large

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[43]Wilbur Zelinsky, The Cultural Geography of the United States, Prentice-Hall Series in Cultural Geography (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 96.

[44]Raymond D. Gastil, Cultural Regions of the United States (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).

[45]Zelinsky, "Religious Geography," p. 153.

effects on nearly every other denomination, until by degrees it imparted its energy and spirit to American Protestantism as a whole."[46] By the mid-nineteenth century, Methodism became the leading denomination in a majority of the states of the union.[47]

Moreover, Methodism is generally recognized as one of the two or three denominations which most greatly influenced the development of frontier America.[48] Sweet said that "no single force had more to do with bringing order out of frontier chaos than the Methodist circuit-rider."[49] The novelist and one-time itinerant Edward Eggleston in 1873 likened Methodism in the West to Puritanism in New England.[50]

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[46]Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 372.

[47]Edwin Scott Gaustad, A Religious History of America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 144.

[48]For example, see Edward Channing, A History of the United States, 6 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), V:72. The other denominations were the Baptists and the Presbyterians. This influence is all the more remarkable when one notes that the Baptists and the Methodists were among the weaker colonial sects at the close of the Revolution. Methodism in particular suffered due to John Wesley's total support of the British viewpoint once hostilities began.

[49]William Warren Sweet, The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials, Vol. IV: Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 3. Taking a page from Frederick Jackson Turner, Sweet noted that the early frontier (that between the Alleghany Mountains and the Mississippi River) was "the most significant, as far as the expansion of the American churches is concerned, in that methods were developed and types of work devised which were to be used again and again on the successive frontiers." See Sweet, The Baptists, 1783-1830: A Collection of Source Material, Vol. I: Religion on the American Frontier, 4 vols. (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1931), p. 3. Sweet had earlier labelled the Mississippi Valley as the heart of American Methodism in The Rise of Methodism in the West, being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811 (New York: The Methodist Book Concern and Smith and Lamar, 1920), p. 5.

[50]Edward Eggleston, The Circuit Rider: A Tale of the Heroic

Sources

Several source groups exist for this study, each of which is consulted. One group consists of official records of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Included within this category are conference reports at the various levels, church newspapers and magazines, and local, state, and regional church histories.

A second group is the biographical and autobiographical works of the ministers.[51] Within this category are included reminiscences of events, discussions of the component parts of the Methodist Episcopal hierarchy and their areal extent, and other materials useful in the planned reconstructions. Regional, state, and local histories constitute a third group. These will be used as collateral sources for ascertaining dates, locations, and other data.

Methodology

As there are two major goals to this study, so, too, are two methodologies employed. The first goal, the study of the Methodist Episcopal Church as an evolving religious system, is carried out in a two-part scheme. Part one is a component-by-component analysis of the various levels of the church hierarchy of control. Part two is concerned with the methods used in the expansion of this system. The spatial

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Age (New York: J. B. Ford and Company, 1874; reprint ed., Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 159.

[51]The wealth of material in this group has been ascribed to such factors as the ministers' following the example set by John Wesley and his associates, to the time made available by being able to use the same sermon several times on a circuit, and to the incentive of their ever-changing milieu of both acquaintances and experiences. See Sweet, The Methodists, pp. v-vi.

aspects of both the hierarchy and its expansionary tactics receive foremost attention.

The second goal of the study is the mapping of the actualization of the Methodist Episcopal Church's strategies for expansion and organization. A series of cross-sectional maps delimiting conferences as well as routes of expansion/intensification of control are given. These cross-sections are inter-connected by a narrative of the expansion process.

CHAPTER II

WESLEYAN METHODISM IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA: AN HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS, 1729-1784

Wesleyan Methodism in Britain

"Wesleyan Methodism" is herein used to designate the evangelical system which evolved under the leadership of John Wesley, a minister in the Church of England.[1] My primary concern with this system will be its internal structure--its component parts as related to the flows of supervision and information.[2] The particular designation "Wesleyan" is required to separate this movement not only from earlier groups which had first acquired the title, but also from contemporary movements of the eighteenth century evangelical movement whose theology and structure differed from the Wesleyan model.[3]

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[1]The name "Wesley" when used singly in this study will refer to John Wesley and not to any other member of the family, particularly his brother Charles, whose direct and indirect influence on the movement was important.

[2]Of only passing concern will be the theology of Wesleyan Methodism. Although of equal or greater importance to the success of its expansion and of supreme importance to the purpose of its existence, it is nonetheless outside the narrower scope of this study.

[3]"Methodist" was not a strictly Wesleyan term, nor was it new in the eighteenth century. David C. Shipley gives a short history of the use of the term in "The European Heritage" in History of American

Wesley's "Three Rises" of Methodism

John Wesley in his writings lists three "rises" of "the People called Methodists."[4] The first occurred in November, 1729, when he, his brother Charles, and two other students at Oxford University agreed to spend some time in religious study together. Their number increased and the original plan extended to include other activities, such as visits to the sick and to prisoners, etc.[5] It was this "Holy Club" which first attracted the name "Methodist," a derisive label used to signal their methodical habits.[6]

The second rise noted by Wesley occurred in April, 1736. Both John and Charles had been recruited to work in the new colony of Georgia. Charles was to act as secretary to James Oglethorpe, the British general who founded the colony, and John was to attend to the spiritual needs of the colonists. The latter writes of his work:

> I now advised the serious part of the congregation to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to instruct, exhort and reprove one another.

Methodism, 3 vols., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), I:15-16.

[4]John Wesley, "A Short History of the People Called Methodists," in The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols., ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958-59), XIII:303-381. This set is a reprint of an 1872 edition of the work. The editor tells us that this "Short History," compiled in 1781, "is, in the main, an abridgement of Mr. Wesley's Journal, with occasional remarks." The three rises are listed on page 307.

[5]Ibid., pp. 303-304.

[6]Wesley discusses the application of the term to the Holy Club in "The Character of a Methodist," Works, VIII:339, and in "A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Free," Works, VIII:506. On this and on other occasions Wesley turned his detractors' words around to suit his own purposes. He later defined a Methodist as "one that lives according to the method laid down in the Bible." See Works, XIV:234n.

> And out of these I selected a smaller number, for a more intimate union with each other.[7]

This was the basis of the "society" and "class" structure later formed by Wesley.

A sacramental squabble and John Wesley's personal feelings for a young woman led to his swift exit from Georgia in the winter of 1737-1738. He returned to England broken in spirit. Over much of the next year--influenced by many persons and groups, including his brother Charles and the Moravians, particularly Peter Boehler--Wesley came to develop the theology of Wesleyan Methodism. During that year, too, came the third rise of Methodism--the formation of a society in London. In the course of that same year Wesley's famous Aldersgate experience, where he felt his "heart strangely warmed," also occurred--one of the turning points in his own spiritual development.[8]

Baker has divided the development of Wesleyan Methodism into three stages: movement, society, and church.[9] Two of these three stages coincide with the first and third "rises" according to Wesley.[10] The "movement" began in 1729 with the formation at Oxford of the Holy Club, which became a "society" in 1739 after the formation of societies in

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[7]Wesley, "Short History," p. 305.

[8]Ibid., p. 307.

[9]Frank Baker, "The Beginnings of American Methodism," Methodist History, II, No. 1 (October 1963): 1-15. Frederick A. Norwood uses movement, connection, and denomination for these same stages in his The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 31.

[10]Baker combines the Holy Club at Oxford and the embryo society in Georgia within his "movement" category. Methodism became a "society" with the formation of the London and Bristol groups.

London and Bristol.[11] During both of these stages the Methodists remained, as Wesley wished, an association (or, as Wesley preferred, a "connection") within the structure of the Church of England. When, however, they became less and less dependent upon the parish priest and church for worship, and later, for the sacraments, the Methodists became increasingly a "church." This metamorphosis was slow, and the transition was gradual. Baker stated that Wesley's "implied Declaration of Independence" was made in 1784, when he assumed the episcopal function of ordaining preachers to perform the sacraments in America. In that year he also legally incorporated the British Annual Conference as a self-perpetuating body outside the Anglican structure, to be the overseer of the Methodist societies following the founder's death.[12]

The Structure of Wesleyan Methodism

The structure of control within Wesleyan Methodism grew in a rather haphazard way. Its development resulted from a rapid growth in the number of adherents to this segment of the "Methodist Revolution."[13]

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[11]Baker, "Beginnings," pp. 2-4. Baker notes that Wesley used the term "society" to describe the Holy Club. The former makes a distinction, however, between that group and the increasingly formalized structure beginning with the London and Bristol groups.

[12]Ibid., p. 4.

[13]It has long been asserted that England escaped a violent revolution parallel to that which occurred in France because of the evangelical movement begun by Wesley and others. This has been called the Halevy Thesis after Elie Halevy's work "La Naissance du Methodisme en Angleterre," Revue de Paris (August 1 and 15, 1906): 519-39, 841-67. The work was translated as The Birth of Methodism in England by Bernard Semmel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971). For a modern discussion of the thesis, which work also emphasizes the Wesleyan theology, see Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (New York: Basic Bocks, 1973).

Much of it arose as a means of meeting the needs of the new "People called Methodists," needs which could not be or were not being filled for the most part within the structure of the Church of England. Far from being premeditated, the evolution of the Wesleyan system resulted from John Wesley's instituting or accepting practices as the need for them arose. As he spoke of this development in 1748,

> They [the People called Methodists] had not the least expectation, at first, of anything like what has since followed, so they had no previous design or plan at all; but everything arose just as the occasion offered.[14]

The basic components of the Wesleyan structure--bands, classes, societies, and the annual conference--were initiated between 1738 and 1744. Each of these emigrated with varying degrees of success to the American colonies. Their place in the Methodist Episcopal Church is examined in the next chapter. Thus a few words as to their Wesleyan beginnings will suffice here.

Bands, Classes, and Societies

Bands, classes, and societies, as they were known in order of ascending size, were the groups within Wesleyan Methodism which were open to all those who professed "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins."[15] Each of these groups afforded the means for fellowship and mutual support among Wesley's followers. They

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[14]John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists in a Letter to the Reverend Mr. Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, in Kent, Written in the Year 1748," Works, VIII:248.

[15]John Wesley and Charles Wesley, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &C," Works, VIII:270. The Wesleys go on to list evidences of this desire.

were developed to meet needs which appeared at different points in the history of the Wesleyan movement.

Wesley later recalled that in his Georgia experience he had formed the rudiments of a "society."[16] When he first began to establish societies in England, the London group was gathered when "eight or ten" persons came to him "for guidance toward their redemption."[17] It was the society which became the bedrock group of the Wesleyan connectional structure.

Classes were subdivisions of the larger societies. They were first instituted in the Bristol society as a means of paying the debts of that group. The class then developed into a weekly meeting of a dozen or so members, headed by the Class Leader, for self-examination and mutual care.[18]

The band was a yet-still-smaller body of believers. Bands were composed of Methodists who were further along in their faith journey and who were at the same approximate stage of spiritual development. Division into bands of those Wesleyans so qualified was on the basis of both sex and marital status. Band groups, like classes, met weekly.[19]

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[16]Wesley, "Short History," p. 306.

[17]Wesley and Wesley, "United Societies," p. 269.

[18]Wesley, "Plain Account," pp. 252-253. This work goes on to list the duties of a Class Leader, the quarterly meeting instituted for Wesley's immediate supervision of believers, bands, Lay Assistants, Stewards, etc.

[19]Ibid., pp. 258-260. The format of the band meeting was considered by Wesley, who drew up "Rules of the Band-Societies Drawn Up December 25, 1738" and "Directions Given to the Band-Societies December 25, 1744." See Works, VIII:272-274.

Lay Preachers and the Itinerancy

One of the innovations instituted by Wesley was his use of lay preachers, unordained men who carried out all the functions of ministers except for the performing of the sacraments. These "assistants," because they were unordained, were viewed by the Anglican structure with some alarm.[20] Wesley persevered, however, to the point of sending his preachers (including himself) into the open air to preach when church doors were closed to them.

Many of these lay workers, along with the Wesleys and other ordained ministers, itinerated. They moved locally and regionally. John Wesley himself set the example, closely following a "Methodist Triangle" between London, Bristol, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He extended his travels with visits to Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. One purpose of the itinerancy was to personally supervise all members of the societies at least quarterly. Equal to that in importance, however, was the outreach program which moved the preachers of talent throughout the nation.[21]

The Conference and John Wesley

The British Annual Conference was the last level of the Wesleyan

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[20]Lay preachers were either "assistants" or "helpers." The former were the more experienced, themselves often assisted by the latter. Both, however, remained solely preachers, not ministers.

Wesley defended his use of lay preachers on several occasions. See "A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Walker," Works, XIII:193-196, and "A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Works, VIII:46-247, especially pp. 221-223.

[21]A sentence which perhaps seems trite from over-citation except that it so succinctly states Wesley's view of his mission was written to a former student in 1739: "I look upon all the world as my parish." See Works, I:200-202. Emphasis his. The student, unnamed in this work,

structure to be formed. Wesley called the first such conference in June, 1744. It was attended by six clergymen, including John and Charles Wesley, and four lay preachers. The minutes of the meeting were later printed in the form of a series of questions and answers. Both theological and organizational questions were included. Over the years the number of preachers in attendance increased, as did the length of a conference and the number of questions asked.[22]

Over the annual conference, and indeed over all the movement, lay the hand of John Wesley. Even his brother Charles deferred to him on most occasions when they did not agree. It was John who decided who among the lay preachers should be invited to attend the annual conferences. In 1784, in the Deed of Declaration, John organized a conference of one hundred which would constitute the legal and self-perpetuating conference after his death, and he named those who would initially comprise this group. To answer his critics who said that he exercised too much control, he outlined how he had come to obtain such powers, emphasizing that he came to this situation at the request of others over the years.[23] However, he did not deny that he had such powers, nor was he reluctant to exercise them for the good of the movement. He stated that "every Preacher and every member may leave me when he pleases. But

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is identified as James Hervey in The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, 8 vols., ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), I:286-287.

[22]The rules regulating the movement which arose from these meetings begun in 1744 were altered and enlarged thereafter. They are known as the "Large Minutes" and are contained in Wesley's works under the title "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others from the Year 1744, to the Year 1789," Works, VIII:299-338.

[23]Ibid., pp. 310-313.

while he chooses to stay, it is on the same terms that he joined me at first."[24]

Recapitulation

Figure 1 illustrates the Wesleyan order. Above all was John Wesley, founder of the movement and its chief itinerant. Beginning in 1744 he held conferences of invited preachers to advise him on the work of the expanding movement. These preachers were increasingly composed of laymen sent by Wesley to preach to the members in their own meeting places. Except for Wesley and a few others, they were as yet not ordained clergy who could administer the rites and sacraments of the Church of England. Wesleyan Methodism, then, was a reform movement that continued through Wesley's lifetime, and for some years after his death, within the bounds of the Anglican Church.

JOHN WESLEY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SOCIETY

CLASS

BAND

Figure 1: The Wesleyan Methodistic Hierarchy in Britain, 1744-1791

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[24] Ibid., p. 313.

Wesley and his assistants gathered his followers into societies. Large societies were subdivided into classes. Bands were a smaller subdivision which did not always exist, but which were much more frequent in Britain than in America. Each society and subdivision had its own leaders who were chosen to provide pastoral care to its members in the absence of Wesley or his assistants. This entire structure, whose rudimentary beginnings stemmed from the Holy Club at Oxford, essentially came into being between 1738 and 1744, and was used to organize the Wesleyan movement thereafter.

Wesleyan Methodism in America

Lay Beginnings

The introduction of Wesleyan Methodism into the British American colonies was carried out by laymen. This made it distinctive. Later, the young societies petitioned Wesley for his aid for and guidance over the New World groups.

John Wesley in his brief sojourn in Georgia did form a society of sorts, which group he characterized as one of the beginnings of Methodism.[25] This young group, however, did not last long after his return to England. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that in those original members and in the thousands of English colonists who immigrated in succeeding decades, Methodists of varying degrees of fervor existed in America.[26] Although there is no record of continuity in

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[25]See above, pages 18-19.

[26]For example, William L. Grissom quoted North Carolina colonial records indicating Methodists in that colony as early as 1760. See History of Methodism in North Carolina, from 1772 to the Present Time

any one area, some scholars believe that these informal Methodists formed a reservoir waiting to be tapped, first by local preachers and later by Wesley's official assistants.[27]

Both societies that claim to be first in America were formed by laymen--Wesleyan local preachers who had immigrated to America. Robert Strawbridge--an Irish lay preacher--had formed a society in Maryland at the Sam's Creek settlement by the mid-1760s.[28] Another immigrant local preacher, Philip Embury, who came via Ireland but originally from the Palatinate, founded a class in New York in 1766. Neither group has lacked champions for advancing its claim of being the first society in America.[29]

(Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1905), p. 29.

[27]For example, see Norwood, Story, p. 61 and Baker, "Beginnings," pp. 7-14.

[28]The Sam's Creek settlement site in Maryland is near present-day New Windsor.

[29]Among those who say Maryland's claim is stronger are John James Tigert, A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1908), p. 52; John Lednum, The Rise of Methodism in America, Containing Sketches of Methodist Itinerant Preachers from 1736 to 1785, Numbering One Hundred and Sixty or Seventy. Also a Short Account of Many Hundreds of the First Race of Lay Members, Male and Female, from New York to South Carolina, together with an Account of Many of the First Societies and Chapels (Philadelphia: by the author, 1859), p. 21; Francis Asbury, The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, in Three Volumes, ed. Elmer T. Clark, et al. (London: Epworth Press, 1958), II:294; and Norwood, Story, pp. 65-66.

New York's supporters include Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists, in the United States of America; Beginning in 1766, and Continued to 1809. To Which Is Prefixed, a Brief Account of Their Rise in England, in the Year 1729, &c. (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), pp. 24-25; John Atkinson, The Beginnings of the Wesleyan Movement in America and the Establishment Therein of Methodism (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1896), p. 23; and Charles Chaucer Goss, Statistical History of the First Century of American Methodism: With a Summary of the Origin

Other laymen, foremost among them one Captain Thomas Webb of the British Army, aided in this regenesis of organized Methodism. Meeting-houses, which ranged from log cabins to the brick St. George's Church in Philadelphia, were built to contain the growing numbers of active members.[30] Webb and Strawbridge undertook itinerating journeys through Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. The stage had been set for the arrival of John Wesley's missionaries.

Wesley's Assistants

Between 1769 and 1774, Wesley, in response to a request from New York, sent over four pairs of assistants.[31] These have been likened to missionaries sent to a new land, and indeed they were.[32] These assis-

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and Present Operations of Other Denominations (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1866), pp. 35-36.

Still others say the beginnings are simultaneous, and there is no way to determine which has precedence. See William Warren Sweet, The Methodists: A Collection of Source Materials, vol. IV: Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 4; Abel Stevens, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 4 vols. (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1864-1867), I:80; and J. Manning Potts, "Methodism in Colonial America," in History of American Methodism, I:74. The last author cited lists even a third contender, a meeting-house located near Leesburg, Virginia.

[30]In many locales, particularly at the time of introduction or on the frontier, there were no meeting-houses. Private dwellings, public buildings, other church buildings, and private businesses were used, as was the open air.

[31]The official missionary "assistants," and their years of arrival, were Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore (1769); Francis Asbury and Richard Wright (1771); Thomas Rankin and George Shadford (1773); and James Dempster and Martin Rodda (1774). Of these only Francis Asbury remained at the close of the Revolution. Other preachers who came without appointment were Robert Williams, John King, Joseph Yearby, and William Glendenning.

[32]See Wade C. Barclay, History of Methodist Missions, 2 vols.

tants, plus other Wesleyan preachers who came without official appointments from the British Conference, aided the local preachers and the new, native American preachers in spreading Methodism throughout the middle and southern colonies. Each of the men possessed varying amounts of talents, and not all were readily acceptable to the other assistants or to the Americans, particularly as the Revolution approached. In their terms of service in the New World, they nevertheless represented an extension of Wesley's connectional organization, and they personified in whole or in part his views.

The Wesleyan Structure in America

Although the Methodist movement in the colonies began and grew largely through the efforts of native talent, it now became an extension of the Wesleyan Methodist connection. Societies and classes were formed, but by-and-large they and their leaders were supervised by itinerant preachers who were assigned by the British Conference to work in America. Between 1769 and 1784, the years of control (real or stated) by the British Conference, the structure grew from one based on the old Wesleyan quarterly meetings through the beginning of an American annual conference to the appearance of a multiple-session annual conference system, with each session being considered a segment of the whole.

From 1769 to 1773 the control exerted by the preachers over the Methodist societies was based on the quarterly meeting or conference.[33] This system was in use in Britain as a means "to inquire both

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(New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949-1950), I:24.

[33]Some historians use the term "quarterly conference," for

into the temporal and spiritual state of each society."[34] It seems to have been transferred bodily to the colonies.

Every traveling and local preacher, as well as other local leaders of each society, gathered with its membership every three months. Jesse Lee says that the earliest quarterly meetings were held on Tuesdays. The preachers gathered to conduct their business, to preach, then hold a love-feast and perhaps a watch-night.[35] A 1772 quarterly meeting in Maryland held by Francis Asbury shows in the question-and-answer format of Methodist conferences the business of such a meeting.

> 1. What are our collections? We found them sufficient to defray our expenses.

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example John Fletcher Hurst, The History of Methodism, 8 vols. (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902-1904, IV:91; William Warren Sweet, The Rise of Methodism in the West, being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811 (New York: The Methodist Book Concern and Smith and Lamar, 1920), p. 43; Nolan B. Harmon, Jr., The Organization of the Methodist Church, Historic Development and Present Working Structure (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 148; and James Leaton, History of Methodism in Illinois from 1793-1832 (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1883), pp. 20-21. Jesse Lee terms them "quarterly meetings" in his Short History, p. 2, as does Arthur Bruce Moss in "Methodism in Colonial America," in History of American Methodism, I:118-120. John Samuel Inskip uses both terms in Methodism Explained and Defended (Cincinnati: H. S. and J. Applegate, 1851), pp. 200-201. He seems to use "quarterly meeting" to mean the gathering of the people for the religious services and "quarterly conference" for the business conducted by the preachers. This is an apt distinction since power in the church throughout the period covered in this study lay in the hands of the preachers, and only the traveling ones at that.

[34]Wesley, "Minutes," p. 319.

[35]Lee, Short History, p. 42. Both the love-feast and the watch-night were group gatherings. The former originated among the bands. At the quarterly gathering bread and water were served, but it was more a time of spiritual nourishment. The latter sprang up spontaneously among several members, who "when they could spare the time, spent the greater part of the night in prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving." Wesley was informed of this practice, approved of it, and thereafter incorporated it into the Methodist practice. See "Plain Account," Works, VIII: 255-259.

> 2. How are the preachers stationed? Brother Strawbridge and brother Owings in Frederick county. Brother King, brother Webster, and Isaac Rollins, on the other side of the bay; and myself in Baltimore.
>
> 3. Shall we be strict in our society meetings, and not admit strangers? Agreed.
>
> 4. Shall we drop preaching in the day-time through the week? Not agreed to.
>
> 5. Will the people be contented without our administering the sacrament? John King was neuter; brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances; and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules. But Mr. Boardman had given them their way at the quarterly meeting held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace.
>
> 6. Shall we make our collections weekly, to pay the preachers' board and expenses? This was not agreed to. We then inquired into the moral characters of the preachers and exhorters. Only one exhorter was found any way doubtful, and we have great hopes of him. Brother Strawbridge received L8 quarterage; brother King and myself L6 each. Great love subsisted among us in this meeting, and we parted in peace.[36]

When Thomas Rankin arrived from England with George Shadford in 1773, he came cloaked with greater authority than his predecessors. Whereas they had come as Wesley's assistants, Rankin held the further title of "General Assistant." He was to act as Wesley's lieutenant over all other preachers in America.

It was Rankin who instituted the annual conference in the colonies. The annual conference was superimposed over the system of quarterly conferences, which were still held. It became the supreme body in Wesleyan Methodist polity in America and was to the itinerants in some way what the class was to the members in society.

The first such conference convened in Philadelphia in June, 1773. In the printed minutes of this conference the same question-and-answer format as used in the British Conference was employed. From the

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[36]Asbury, Journal, I:60.

records of this conference there is no doubt who was in authority. Entitled "Minutes of Some Conversations between the Preachers in Connection with the Rev. Mr. John Wesley," the first question directed to the itinerants was "Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley, and that Conference, to extend to the preachers and people in America as well as in Great Britain and Ireland? Ans. Yes."[37]

The minutes of this first annual conference, and each succeeding one, are valuable in that they chronicle not only the distribution of members but also the thoughts of the itinerants concerning their mission and their pastoral status. Each preacher agreed at this 1773 conference to avoid scheduling meetings that would interfere with the Anglican services. It was also agreed that no one would administer the sacraments either, that these should be sought at the hands of the Anglican clergy.[38]

This 1773 conference also gives us our first look at the number of members. A total of 1160 were in the various societies, over half of whom were in Maryland and Virginia.[39] The distribution is by state in this first year, whereas in succeeding years the numbers, when given, are stated by circuit.

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[37] Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1773-1828 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840), p. 5.

[38] Ibid. Both of these questions related to the status of the Methodist movement within the Church of England. That not all of the members and itinerants had followed either rule scrupulously is indicated by the note that the preachers were "to press the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute" regarding church attendance and receipt of sacraments there. Thomas Rankin had been sent to instill discipline in the young societies and to regularize their governance. The minutes show his endeavors in this regard.

[39] Ibid.

Between 1773 and 1778 only one conference session was held each year. During this period the Methodist membership multiplied, as did the number of preachers and circuits (Figures 2-4). There were problems, however. Because of the Wesleys' strong support of the British position in the American Revolution, all Methodists became suspect. Also, by 1778 all of the Wesleyan assistants, with the exception of Francis Asbury, had returned to England. Even Asbury was for a time forced into seclusion in Delaware.

The Methodist movement suffered also because of its ties to the Anglican Church. The Anglican clergy were suspected (often with good reason) of being Tories, and so, too, were the Methodists with whom they were associated. With the Revolution came also the loss of the Anglican establishment, which resulted in the return of many of the priests to England. This in turn deprived the Wesleyans of their source for the sacraments.

It was the question of the sacraments, and, in general, the relationship of the American Methodists to the British Conference, which brought about the first dual session in the annual conference of 1779.[40] The regularly appointed conference met in Virginia, at which time the preachers present decided on a self-ordination plan. This plan would elevate as many among them as were needed to administer the sacraments to their members. Prior to this session a "preparatory conference" had been held in Delaware (where Asbury was able to attend) by the northern

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[40]This question was not new, as will be remembered from the minutes of the first American conference cited above. However, the exodus of most of the Anglican clergy had created an even more pressing need for some new source for the sacraments.

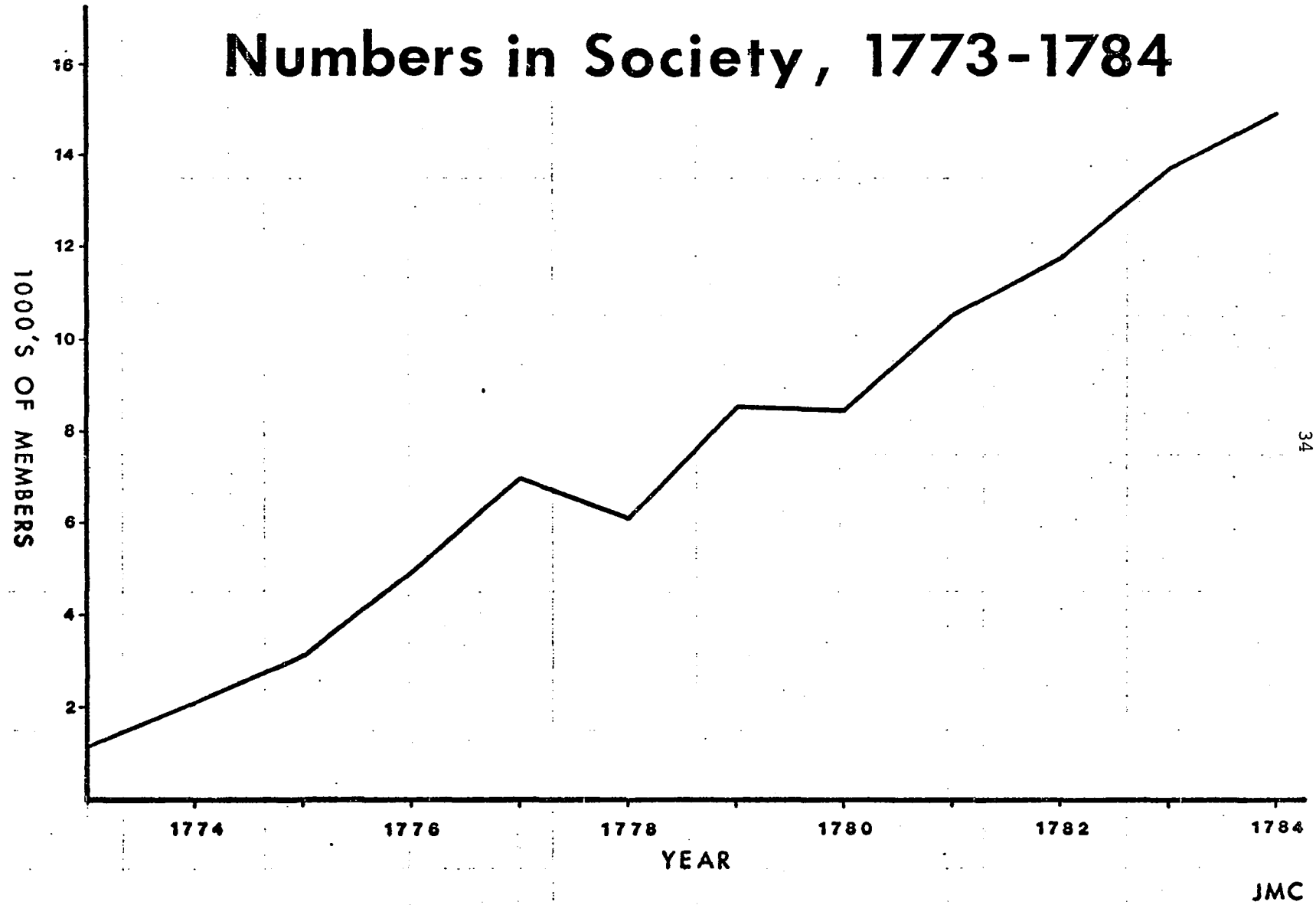
Numbers in Society, 1773-1784
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
1000'S OF MEMBERS
1774
1776
1778
1780
1782
1784
YEAR
JMC

Figure 2

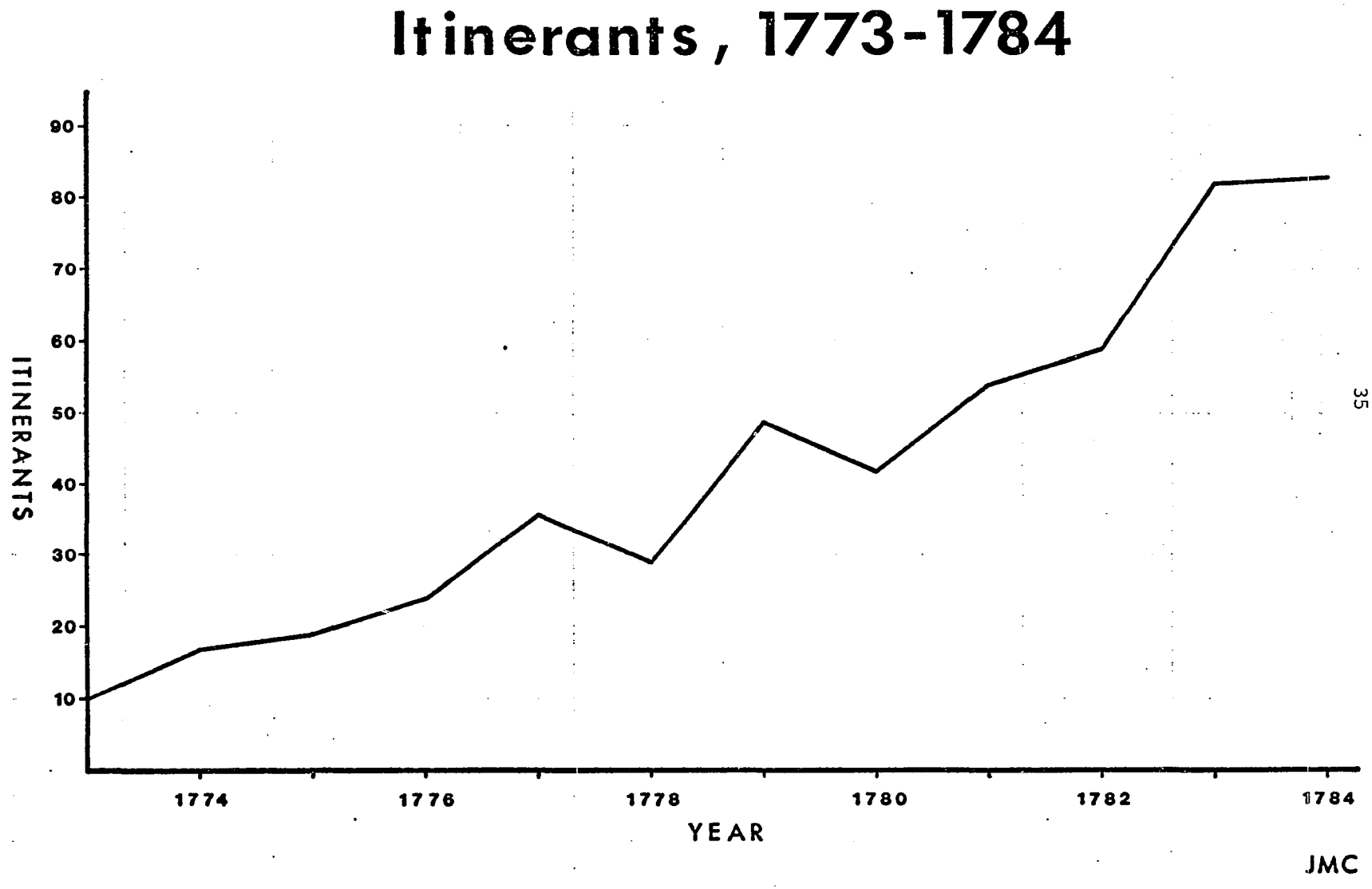
Itinerants, 1773-1784
ITINERANTS
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
1774
1776
1778
1780
1782
1784
YEAR
JMC

Figure 3

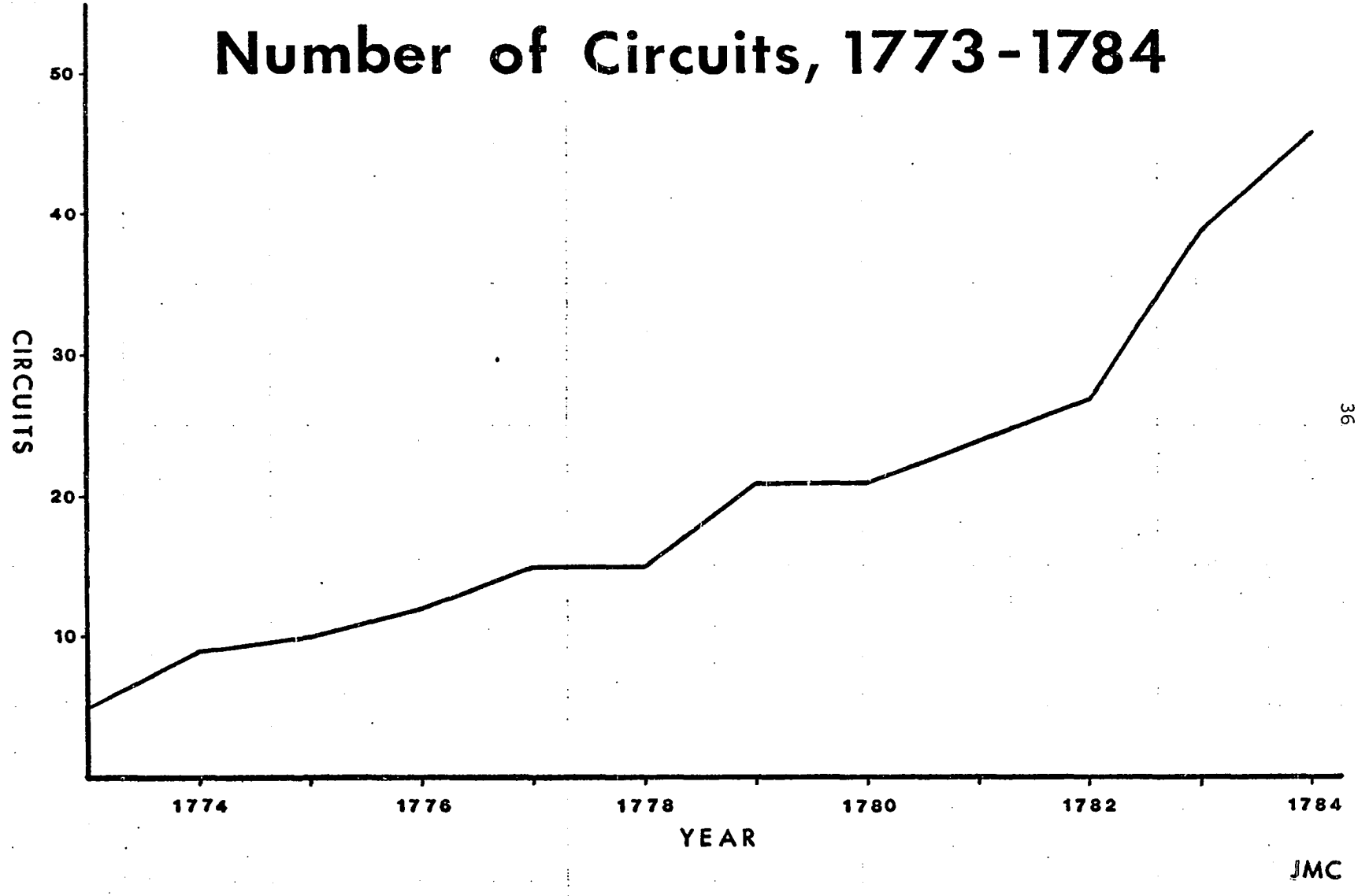
Number of Circuits, 1773-1784
CIRCUITS
50
40
30
20
10
1774
1776
1778
1780
1782
1784
YEAR
JMC

Figure 4

preachers.[41] This group agreed to postpone any question of the sacraments for one year, and they also elevated Francis Asbury to the position of General Assistant, a post officially vacant since the departure of Thomas Rankin.[42] A letter by Asbury to the conference of southern preachers to act in accordance with these ideas was rejected by that group.

The following year the northern preachers met again, and, with regard to the Virginia preachers, they agreed to "look upon them no longer as Methodists in connection with Mr. Wesley and with us till they come back."[43] A delegation was sent to the southern meeting, and a compromise was agreed to by which the administration of sacraments was suspended for one year. In the interim Wesley was to be consulted.

The 1781 conference saw Asbury and the northern preachers prevail.[44] A letter from Wesley had already arrived which supported the northern position. The preachers, assembled from both earlier camps, agreed to follow the old ways,

> to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline, as contained in the Notes, Sermons, and Minutes

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[41] As in many other questions of Methodist history, church historians have argued over the relative officiality of these conference sessions. The question became moot when the position of the northern preachers prevailed. Norwood seems to have summarized the question by stating "the early meeting was irregular . . . . The occasion of the Fluvanna [Virginia] Conference was regular; its action was highly irregular." See Norwood, History, p. 91. Emphasis his.

[42] Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 10. The minutes of each conference are listed separately.

[43] Ibid., p. 12. This year (and in succeeding years) the minutes are printed as one, although the Virginia assignments are listed later in the proceedings than are those for elsewhere in the nation. In the future, answers to each of the questions asked at the conference sessions were compiled together as if a single meeting had been held.

[44] Ibid., pp. 13-15.

> published by Mr. Wesley, so far as they respect both preachers and people, . . .; and firmly resolved to discountenance a separation among either preachers or people.[45]

This conference also addressed itself to the question of the multiple annual conference sessions. In typical Methodist fashion it asked why two had been held (now for the third consecutive year), then proceeded to explain such action by the precedent set by Wesley himself.[46] Multiple sessions of the annual conference made it easier for preachers to attend the sessions, although Asbury, as General Assistant, was obliged to itinerate through the country as a whole and to attend each separate session.

For the next three years the dual sessions of the annual conference continued.[47] The southern preachers met at Ellis' Preaching House in Sussex County, Virginia. After that meeting the conference adjourned to Baltimore. The printed minutes of each conference show changes each year in terms of members, preachers, and circuits.[48]

Although this was a time of general internal peace among the American Methodists, the problem of administering the sacraments remained. The dearth of Anglican priests to whom those in connection with Wesley could turn was not lessened by peace with Great Britain. Finally, in late 1784, Wesley decided to act.

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[45] Ibid., p. 13. Asbury further solidified his position as General Assistant, with the preachers agreeing to consult with him as much as possible on every question involving a vacancy or a suitable preaching place. See questions five and six on page fourteen.

[46] Ibid., p. 13.

[47] Ibid., pp. 15-21.

[48] See above, figures 2-4.

Wesley sent Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey to America with written instructions. Coke had been ordained by Wesley; he and Asbury were to act as joint superintendents over the North American Methodists. Whatcoat and Vasey were ordained to act as Elders, with Coke and Asbury to have power to administer the sacraments. Wesley also sent over a liturgy to be used by the Americans. In a "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America," Wesley outlined how the "very uncommon train of occurrences" had led him to his current action, justified that action, and advised all to "stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free."[49]

Geographical Spread and Concentration, 1766-1784

In 1766 Wesleyan Methodism in the American colonies consisted of the two societies in New York City and Maryland. By the close of 1784 and the formative Christmas Conference there were forty-six circuits in eight states, each circuit composed of several societies.[50] From a dozen or so organized members in the two 1766 societies, the Wesleyan connection had grown to include 14,988 members reported at the 1784 Annual Conference.[51]

Table 1 shows the distribution of the Methodist membership by colony (state) as contained in the Annual Conference minutes.[52] There

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[49]John Wesley, "Letter to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America," Works, XIII:252.

[50]Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 19-20.

[51]Ibid., p. 20.

[52]Ibid., pp. 5-9, 11, 13-16, 18, 20. Where figures are given by circuit (as is the case after 1773), these numbers are assigned to the state in which the circuit was located. The fact that circuits often

were also Methodists in other states and territories, too; however, they were as yet not officially contained with the numbers reported at the annual conferences. In some cases no organized circuit existed to incorporate them into the official structure of the Church. In other cases these members lay just over state boundaries. These numbers are contained within the figures assigned to the states in whose territory the circuit was principally located. Also contained at the lower portion of the table is the percentage of total membership located in the Southern states, i.e., Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

The most striking aspect of the distribution table is the preponderance of Southern membership. Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, and later the Carolinas, together constituted a majority of the Methodists for each year of the period. This dominance resulted both from large increases in members reported from these colonies and from decreases in members reported from elsewhere in the connection. The former trend, however, would seem the more important in accounting for the increasing Southern majority.

Three factors influenced this developing distribution of members. Most closely tied to the Wesleyans themselves was the distribution of Anglicans in the colonies. Beyond Methodist control, but also important, were religious revivalism and the American Revolution. Each of these factors aided in the Southern dominance.

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crossed state boundaries makes these assignments approximations only. The problem of assignment of membership is most acute in the Maryland Eastern Shore-Delaware region. There the same circuit has been assigned by different authors to both Maryland and Delaware for the same period. I have therefore combined the membership figures for these two states in the compilation of this table, with apologies to anyone from either of these states who takes offense at such action.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERSHIP, BY STATE, 1773-1784

State	1773	1774	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781	1782	1783	1784
New York	180	222	200	132	96	----	----	----	------	------	------	84
Pennsylvania	180	240	264	241	232	-----	179	190	361	527	595	560
New Jersey	200	257	300	150	160	----	140	196	512	657	1,028	963
Maryland/Delaware	500	1,063	1,429	1,259	2,101	----	2,668	2,539	4,434	5,741	6,139	6,290
Virginia	100	291	955	2,456	3,449	----	4,123	3,928	3,829	3,168	3,699	3,721
North Carolina	---	---	---	683	930	----	1,467	1,411	1,393	1,251	2,279	3,271
South Carolina	---	---	---	---	---	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	99
Total Membership	1,160	2,073	3,148	4,921	6,968	----[a]	8,577	8,264[b]	10,539	11,785	13,740	14,988
Percent Southern	51.7	65.3	75.7	89.4	93.0	----	96.3	95.3	91.7	90.0	88.2	89.3

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences.

[a] Only a total number of members was reported this year, with no division by circuit.

[b] The total membership reported was 8,504, but the sum of the membership-by-circuit was 8,264.

The areal correlation of Methodists to Anglicans has two interrelated aspects. Officially the People Called Methodists who followed Wesley's instruction were a part of the Church of England, "the best constituted national Church in the world."[53] As such the Wesleyan Methodists were to seek the sacraments from the Anglican clergy, thus enforcing the Church of England connection. These two features, of necessity, promoted the growth of Methodist societies in areas where Anglican parishes existed.

Gaustad mapped the 1750 distribution of Anglican churches in the colonies.[54] Half of these were located in Virginia and Maryland; there were more in Maryland than in all of New England, and more than twice as many were in Virginia. Almost two-thirds were in the Southern colonies.

The evangelical Anglican clergyman, Devereux Jarratt, was a major factor in Methodism's successful spread in colonial Virginia. Other Anglican ministers were more circumspect in their support, particularly when the Methodist itinerants began administering the sacraments. For the most part toleration, if not cordiality, marked the Anglican-Methodist relationship.[55]

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[53]Wesley, "Letter to Dr. Coke," p. 252.

[54]Edwin Scott Gaustad, Historical Atlas of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 7.

[55]See Arthur Bruce Moss, "Methodism in Colonial America," History of American Methodism, I:142-144. Jarratt's autobiography, The Life of the Reverend Devereux Jarratt, Rector of Bath Parish, Dinwiddie County, Virginia. Written by Himself, in a Series of Letters Addressed to the Rev. John Coleman, One of the Ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Maryland (Baltimore: Warner and Hanna, 1806; reprint ed., New York: Arno Books, 1969), is also a good source for the changing relationship in Virginia.

Operating on this overlapping Methodist-Anglican distribution were the forces of religious revival and of political revolution. Sweet has characterized Methodism's introduction into the colonies as "the last phase of the great colonial awakenings."[56] This was particularly true in Virginia in the mid-1770s when a revival broke out which quickly spread throughout the state. Between 1774 and 1779 Virginia reported an increase from a total of 291 members and two circuits in the former year to 4123 members and eleven circuits in the latter.[57] In 1776, 1777, and 1779 Virginia accounted for almost half the total membership of the American Methodists.[58]

The last factor working to produce the Southern preponderance reported in the Minutes was the American Revolution. As the theater of war spread over the Middle Colonies, ties to the rest of the connection were broken. Classes and circuits suffered and were often omitted from the printed Minutes when no information was received.

Wesley's support of the British cause after war was declared cast suspicion on the Methodists, too. The actions of some of his missionary-itinerants increased this suspicion, and there was persecution in many areas. Although this suspicion did not completely disappear, it did temper as Methodist moral and other support for the colonials' goals became known.

With the Revolution, too, came the disestablishment of the

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[56]William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942; reprint ed., New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), p. 306.

[57]Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 6, 11.

[58]Ibid., pp. 7-8, 11.

Church of England in the former colonies. Most of the parishes were deserted, and the Methodists were left without anyone from whom to seek the sacraments. This, as discussed above, led cautiously but directly to the Christmas Conference of 1784 and the setting up of the Methodist Episcopal Church as a separate denomination.[59]

The triple forces of Anglican distribution, revivalism, and revolution led to the Methodist distribution shown numerically in Table 1 above and illustrated in Figure 5. In 1784 forty-six circuits, which stretched from New York to the Carolinas, were assigned preachers. The Methodists, upon their formal organization, were ready to expand their denomination to new areas and to increase their membership in areas already occupied.

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[59]Coen G. Pierson discusses this period in "Methodism and the Revolution," History of American Methodism, I:145-184.

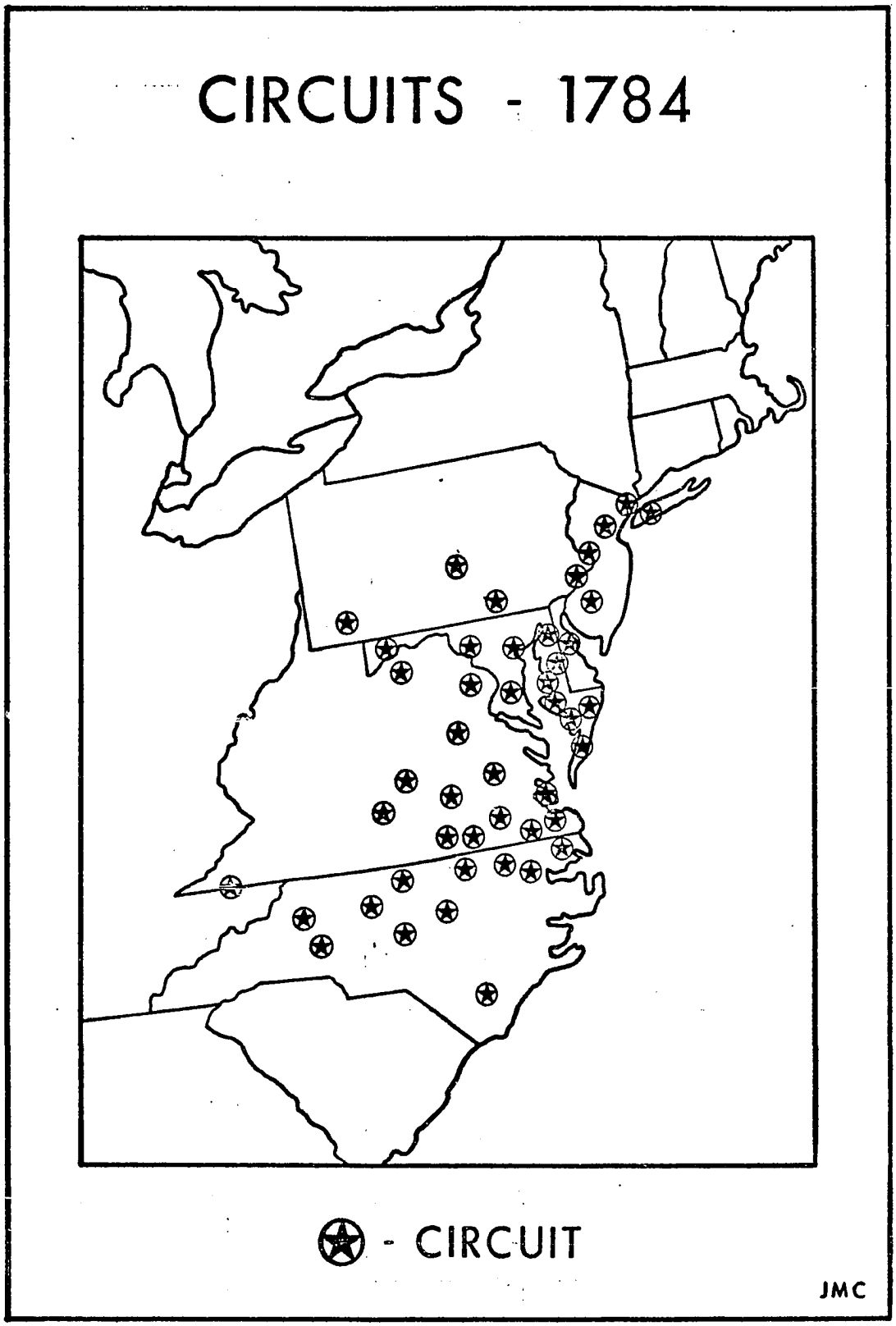

Figure 5

CHAPTER III

THE EVOLVING STRUCTURE OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Introduction

At the time of the Christmas Conference in 1784 the basic components of the Methodist structure were in place. These were the conference, the circuit, and the society, with the last often subdivided into classes, and, much less frequently (in America), into bands. During the study period only one additional component--the Council--was tried, and it was soon discontinued.

There were changes which did occur, however, and these came in conjunction with the conference. The Wesleyan structure of control in America evolved from the early quarterly conference system to a general annual conference (1773).[1] The latter then became dual in nature (1779) as a convenience to preachers as the work expanded. Between 1784 and 1792 the dual-session system became multiple, with increasing difficulty of management. It led at last to a dual level of General and Annual conferences, each with specific types of authority and control. At the same time the quarterly conference continued with its own duties.

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[1]Although spoken of as the annual conference, this form should not be confused with the term as used after 1792. The earlier group combined in one the authority later divided among the General and Annual conferences.

The Society, Classes, and Bands

When the new "church" was created in 1784, it did not suddenly change in scope or function. The Methodists in American remained a connection of societies scattered for the most part over the middle and southern states. The society remained the basic component by which adherents were gathered into and nurtured by the new denomination.

As in Britain, each society in America could be divided into classes. Where the number of members was small, society and class were synonymous. If the membership increased to a practicable number, however, a division of the local society into two or more classes was carried out. The average number of members in each class was twelve, one of whom was designated as the "class leader" by the itinerant preacher who served that particular area.[2]

Where multiple classes existed within a society, the division was made in one of various ways. The most common division was by sex. Separation on the basis of race was also frequently used. Otherwise, all ages were joined together, as were people at different stages of religious development.

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[2]The figure of twelve was of course carried over from the Wesleyan form, regularized by John and Charles Wesley in "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, &c," from The Works of John Wesley, 14 vols., ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958-1959), VIII:269-271. These regulations were agreed to by the colonial preachers on behalf of all the American Wesleyan Methodists at the first American annual conference in 1773. See Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1773-1828 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840), p. 5. They were printed in the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church (the body of regulations for the denomination) beginning in 1789. See Robert Emory, History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Revised, and Brought Down to 1856, by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), p. 196. This last work is not

The regulations affecting classes were aimed at the membership qualifications. Tickets were given (or withheld) to members at each quarterly conference; this enabled the itinerant on his periodic visits to each society to identify legitimate members of the group. In 1784 the first Discipline gave two months as a probationary period for those who sought permanent membership. This trial period was extended to six months in 1789. Later, in 1836, baptism was added to the list of membership requirements. In 1840 the "willingness to observe and keep the rules of the church" was made a further prerequisite for church membership.[3]

The Class Leader was appointed by the circuit-rider and could be changed by him at any quarterly conference. Further, the itinerants were urged to let leaders--particularly those who showed the greatest talent--meet one another's classes.[4] Class leaders could come from any background; Peter Cartwright remembered one of his as being "a great powder-maker."[5]

It was the Leader's job to "carefully inquire how every soul in his class prospers; not only how each person observes the outward rules,

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only a history of the Discipline but also a comparison of the wording of its contents among the various editions.

[3]Emory, Discipline, p. 198.

[4]Ibid., p. 29. This is from the 1784 Discipline.

[5]Peter Cartwright, Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, n.d.), p. 26. John Atkinson mentioned a mechanic who led a class of eighty in The Class Leader: His Work and How to Do It, with Illustrations of Principles, Needs, Methods, and Results (New York: Nelson and Phillips, 1874), p. 287.

The reminiscences of both Peter Cartwright and Jacob Young, early-day itinerants in the West, will be quoted frequently in this study. Their experiences are not claimed to be universal; neither, however, were they unique.

but how he grows in the knowledge and love of God"[6] Classes were met once each week, and individual members were questioned by the leader. The class meeting provided a social function but, more importantly, was the means of pastoral oversight between visits of the circuit preacher.

The historian Posey tells us that "the class furnished the militant spirit which looked after the welfare of the church during the time that elapsed from one visit of the travelling preacher to another."[7] Another has stated, "Often a faithful leader, with sound judgment and piety, has accomplished as much in holding together and building up an infant society as the pastor himself."[8] Peter Cartwright, the itinerant who participated in much of Methodism's expansion into the West, commented in his autobiography on the value of the class meeting:

> Class meetings have been owned and blessed of God in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and from more than fifty years' experience, I doubt whether any one means of grace has proved as successful in building up the Methodist Church as this blessed privilege. For many years we kept them with closed doors, and suffered none to remain in class meeting more than twice or thrice unless they signified a desire to join the Church. In these class meetings the weak have been made strong; the bowed down have been raised up; the tempted have found delivering grace; the doubting mind has had all its doubts and fears removed, and the whole class have found that this was "none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Here the hard heart has been tendered, the cold heart warmed with holy fire; here the dark mind, beclouded with trial and

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[6]Emory, Discipline, p. 29. This is from the 1789 Discipline.

[7]Walter Brownlow Posey, The Development of Methodism in the Old Southwest, 1783-1824 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1933), p. 118.

[8]George Peck, Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828: Or, the First Forty Years of Wesleyan Evangelism in Northern Pennsylvania, Central and Western New York, and Canada. Containing Sketches of Interesting Localities, Exciting Scenes, and Prominent Actors (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1860), p. 362, quoting George Harmon, a Methodist circuit-rider.

> temptation, has had every cloud rolled away, and the Sun of righteousness has risen with resplendent glory, "with healing in his wings;" and in these class meetings many seekers of religion have found them the spiritual birthplace of their souls into the heavenly family, and their dead souls made alive to God.[9]

The band was a feature of Wesleyan Methodism which did not gain much popularity in America. It was not until 1791 that rules regarding bands were added to the Discipline.[10] Their lack of development may be explained in part by the situation of early Methodism in this country: On the frontier and in areas where resistance to the new church was strong, early class/societies were not always of sufficient size to be broken down into smaller groups. Nor were their members in the state of spiritual development usually associated with band members.[11]

One writer has suggested that the absence of bands was due to the vague distinctions made between class and band by early itinerants, resulting in the class combining the purposes of both.[12] Another has cited the emphasis on confession in the band agenda as being counterproductive.[13] Whatever the reason or reasons, by 1844 bands had practically

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[9]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 519.

[10]As with the society rules, the band rules were taken largely from Wesley's own rules for the bands in England. See "Rules of the Band Societies Drawn Up December 25, 1738," Works, VIII:272-273. Emory noted the alterations in Discipline, pp. 202-203.

[11]A band in 1791 was to be composed of from two to four "true believers." In addition, the members were to be all women or all men, all married or all single. See Emory, Discipline, p. 202.

[12]Leland Scott, "The Message of Early American Methodism," in History of American Methodism, 3 vols., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), I:311-312.

[13]Wade C. Barclay, History of American Missions, 2 vols. (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949-1950), II:342. Barclay said this emphasis tended to false humility and an apprehension of appearing Roman Catholic.

disappeared.[14] The Discipline reflected this fact by striking all materails relating to them in its 1856 edition.[15]

The Circuit

The field of geography can be considered as the study of points, lines, and areas. In the geography of Methodism the society and/or class were the points, and the circuit was the line which bound all the individual points together into a denomination network. Each circuit, moreover, drew members from its own tributary area, and these areas were compounded to form the regions administered by each level of Methodist conference.

Indeed, in early Methodism, the circuit was the key to the system. Only the traveling preachers (circuit-riders, itinerants) held true power in the church, and along with that power rested the ability to change church policy. Neither the individual members nor the local preachers (those situated in one locale for one society, often former traveling preachers) held real power. It was the circuit-rider who formed the decision-making groups, those groups being the various conferences within the church structure.

As with the other features of early American Methodism, circuits were a direct carryover from the Wesleyan Methodist system. The earliest American circuits were formed by Robert Strawbridge in Maryland about 1769.[16] Barclay states that the next were those formed in and around the city of New York by Francis Asbury in 1771-1772.[17] By 1773 six circuits

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Emory, Discipline, p. 203.

[16] Barclay, American Missions, II:288.

[17] Ibid.

were listed; this grew to forty-six listed at the Annual Conference for 1784, the year in which the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed.[18]

The early-day circuits, particularly those in frontier areas, were rather indefinite in terms of boundaries. The itinerant selected preaching places at those cabins, inns, etc., most receptive to his message. In comparing the extent and location of three early Louisiana circuits, McTyeire said, "Opelousas is a wide, undefined region . . ., lying above Attakapas, and reaching to Red River; and all above the river is Ouachita."[19] Writing of a comparable period in Methodism's occupation of Wisconsin, Bennett tells us that "the preachers in those days were not confined within exact boundaries. They went to 'the regions beyond,' and won territory by conquest."[20]

Rivers and other stream courses were often the natural foci for a circuit-rider's work. He followed the expanding line of settlement up one side of the river. Upon reaching the farthest inhabited spot, he would then cross over to the opposite bank and preach his way downstream to his point of origin.[21]

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[18] Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 5,20. The growth in circuits from 1773 to 1784 is graphed in chapter two above.

[19] Holland M. McTyeire, A History of Methodism: Comprising a View of the Rise of This Revival of Spiritual Religion in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century, and of the Principal Agents by Whom It Was Promoted in Europe and America; with Some Account of the Doctrine and Polity of Episcopal Methodism in the United States, and the Means and Manner of Its Extension down to A.D. 1884 (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), p. 549.

[20] P. S. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1890), p. 64.

[21] William Warren Sweet, The Rise of Methodism in the West, Being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811 (New York: The Methodist Book Concern and Smith and Lamar, 1920), pp. 40-41.

Peter Cartwright used much the same description when reviewing his work on the Marietta Circuit in 1807:

> I was sent to Marietta circuit . . . . Marietta was at the mouth of the Muskingum river, where it emptied into the Ohio. The circuit extended along the north bank of the Ohio, one hundred and fifty miles, crossed over the Ohio river at the mouth of the Little Kanawha, and up that stream to Hughes river, then east to Middle Island. I suppose it was three hundred miles round. I had to cross the Ohio river four times every round.[22]

Barnabas McHenry recalled the layout of the Cumberland Circuit in 1791:

> The Circuit was a four-weeks' circuit. Clarksville, near the mouth of Red River, was the lower extremity of the circuit, and of the settlement. . . . The upper end of the circuit was the eastern extremity of the settlement near Bledsoe's Lick. The population for some miles down consisted of a narrow string between the river and the ridge. Indeed, there was then no population on the south side of the Cumberland River, Nashville and a very small part of the adjacent country excepted. There were four regular preaching-places on that side of the river.[23]

And T. M. Fullerton described the Muscoda Circuit on the Wisconsin frontier of 1841 as including "all settlements both sides of Wisconsin River, from Muscoda to Baraboo, once in three weeks. Blue Mounds were on the east line, and all out-doors west."[24]

As a result of their organization, many of the early frontier circuits were rather elongated in shape. Jacob Young, on contemplating the plan for the Clinch Circuit in 1803, found it to be "an odd-shaped concern, lying between two mountains--Clynch and Cumberland--upward of a hundred and fifty miles in length, and not more than twenty-five in

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[22]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 98. The Annual Conference records for this year place Cartwright on the Muskingum Circuit and reflect the habit of naming circuits for water courses. See Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 149. The circuit, however, is obviously the same one referred to as Marietta by Cartwright.

[23]Quoted in McTyeire, History, p. 444.

[24]Quoted in Bennett, Wisconsin, p. 68.

breadth."[25] Three years later Young and Samuel Sellers were traveling the Limestone Circuit together. Young wrote that "we formed our circuit like the figure 8; and met every two weeks."[26] As Sweet said, the circuits "were as broad and as long as the settlements."[27]

The early-day Western circuits were generally four-week, five-week, or six-week networks in their temporal bounds. Each preaching-place was visited once per round. The lack of preachers as well as the scattered nature of the frontier population explained the existence of these large circuits. Too, itinerants at this time were still primarily preachers. Pastoral duties which would have caused a constricting of the size of the circuit were mainly the duty of the class leader. By the late 1820s, however, the average size of circuits had dropped to two or three weeks.[28]

One result of the size of the circuits was that the preachers were kept busy almost every day. Monday was a day of rest, when it could be spared--which on the frontier was often not possible. Cartwright on the Waynesville Circuit in 1804 said, "In the four weeks that it took us to go round the circuit, we had but two days' rest, and often we preached every day and every night."[29]

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[25]Jacob Young, Autobiography of a Pioneer; Or, the Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young; with Incidents, Observations, and Reflections (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, n.d.), p. 113.

[26]Ibid., p. 168.

[27]Sweet, Rise, p. 38.

[28]William Warren Sweet, Circuit Rider Days in Indiana (Indianapolis: W. K. Stewart Company, 1916), p. 46.

[29]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 64.

The names of the circuits were prompted by various sources. In the early days, however, the circuit name was commonly derived from the stream along whose banks the circuit ran.[30] All but two of the circuits in Indiana prior to 1816 were named after streams.[31] This practice was true in most states both east and west of the Appalachians.[32]

> At the Illinois Conference of 1839 Bishop Morris announced that he was going to organize Iowa into a presiding elder's district. When he was told that there were only a few people there, Morris replied: "Still I shall form a district, and one of you young men will have charge of it. For I have passed people enough between this and Cincinnati, bound for Iowa to form a district, and I am resolved to have it. Give me the names of creeks, groves, prairies, settlements, or anything suitable to designate the localities of the new comers."[33]

In time, however, the practice of naming the circuits after streams was changed. This came about apparently in an attempt to ascertain more easily the location of a circuit. As the number of circuits grew, particularly when multiple circuits lay along the same stream, the need to be more specific developed. At the Mississippi Annual Conference opening in November, 1833,

> The names of several districts and circuits were changed without any essential change in the form of the work. This was done by the suggestion of Bishop Emory, who advised to give the pastoral charges geographical names, such as post towns, county towns, cities, etc., so that their location could be found by

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[30]Sweet, Rise, pp. 40-41.

[31]Sweet, Circuit-Rider Days, p. 24. The two exceptions were Vincennes and Lawrenceburg.

[32]See A. M. Chreitzberg, Early Methodism in the Carolinas (Nashville: Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Publishing House, 1897), p. 39; James Leaton, History of Methodism in Illinois, from 1793-1832 (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1883), p. 157; and Paul Neff Garber, The Romance of American Methodism (Greensboro, North Carolina: Piedmont Press, 1931), p. 65.

[33]Garber, Romance, p. 65.

> consulting an ordinary gazetteer or on the maps of the country. This would be an accommodation to persons desiring to write to the pastors, and also to future historians.[34]

The first circuit in Illinois to be named after a chief town was the Mt. Carmel Circuit in 1819.[35] The policy of naming circuits after towns or post offices was adopted at the Georgia Conference of 1825.[36]

The circuit was traveled by the circuit-rider, who was appointed at each annual conference to travel a particular circuit. On the frontier the time between visits by the itinerant preachers was so long that their appearance had special meaning:

> Preaching appointments were generally for twelve o'clock, noon, on all days except the Sabbath. The reason for this perhaps was that on a clear day everybody could tell by the sun when it was noon, for there were few clocks and fewer watches in a frontier community. The circuit-rider, as a rule, preached at least once every day, and his advent in the community was the signal for a general turn-out of all Methodist families. Many others also attended the meeting, even on week-days, for all were always welcome. It was not an uncommon thing for men and women to walk five or six miles to attend class meeting, and at night the same distance to attend prayer meeting, lighting their way through the woods with blazing hickory bark.[37]

Although the itinerants were appointed to particular circuits at the time of each annual conference, they did not always go to the appointed round. Moreover, they might change during the interim between

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[34]John Griffing Jones, A Complete History of Methodism as Connected with the Mississippi Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 2 vols. (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1887, 1908), II:308.

[35]Leaton, Illinois, pp. 157, 161.

[36]Edmund Jordan Hammond, The Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia: Being a Brief History of the Two Georgia Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church together with a Summary of the Causes of Major Methodist Divisions in the United States and the Problems Confronting Methodist Union (N.P.: 1935), p. 50.

[37]Sweet, Rise, p. 42.

conferences. Illness or death of an appointee, expansion of the church, or other reasons often mandated that an itinerant move from his original appointment. For example, after traveling with Ralph Lotspeich one quarter on the Red River Circuit, in October, 1803, Peter Cartwright was moved to the Waynesville Circuit because of the poor health of the preacher there.[38] In 1806 Cartwright was appointed with James Quinn to the Scioto Circuit; again, the failing health of another itinerant caused Cartwright's reassignment to the Hockhocking Circuit during that conference year.[39]

Wesley's original thoughts on the regular movement of itinerants among the British circuits were that the preachers should change every six or eight weeks.[40] The records of the American annual conferences show that the rotation here was less frequent, however. The first annual conference (1773) noted some changes of assignments to be made every four months.[41] In 1774 some itinerants were to change in three months, and "all the preachers to change at the end of six months."[42] The 1775 minutes list both three- and six-month changes, as well as two assignments for which the preachers appointed to them were "to change as the assistant

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[38]Cartwright, Autobiography, pp. 63-64.

[39]Ibid., pp. 84, 87-88.

[40]Wesley, The Journal of John Wesley, Works, IV:273. Wesley's views on the subject were that it was not possible for the itinerant to "find matter for preaching every morning and evening, nor will the people come to hear him. Hence he grows cold by lying in bed, and so do the people. Whereas, if he never stays more than a fortnight together in one place, he may find matter enough, and the people will gladly hear him."

[41]Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 5.

[42]Ibid., p. 6.

thinks proper."[43] Barclay states that six months soon became the general rule for the exchange of riders between circuits.[44]

There were no formal regulations in the new church regarding the exchange of circuit riders until the General Conference of 1804, however. Before that time the bishop (or, in his absence, the presiding elder) could, at his discretion, alter the assignment and limit the time a preacher could spend on any one circuit. At the General Conference of 1804, however, a rule was made that prohibited the stationing of a preacher at the same place more than two years in succession.[45]

These of course were the limits (and exemptions) of a preacher's residence at any circuit or station. On the frontier the exchange of preachers due to death, expansion of the charge, or talents (or lack thereof) among the various preachers was often frequent. William Burke in the Western Conference tells of being on three different circuits in both 1792 and 1794.[46]

The circuit-riding system effectively served a scattered member-

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[43] Ibid., p. 7.

[44] Barclay, American Missions, II:287-288.

[45] Emory, Discipline, p. 126. There were exceptions to this general rule, however. In 1804, "the presiding elders, the editor and general book steward, the assistant editor and general book steward, the supernumerary, superannuated, and worn-out preachers" were exempted. These categories were increased in 1820 to include "missionaries among the Indians and the president, principals, or teachers of seminaries of learning, which are or may be under our superintendence." Other offices were added or deleted, at the discretion of the General Conference. Emory listed the changes made in these categories through the time period of this study on pages 126-127.

[46] Burke's autobiography is printed in James B. Finley, Sketches of Western Methodism, Biographical, Historical, and Miscellaneous, Illustrative of Pioneer Life (Cincinnati: Printed at the Methodist Book Concern for the author, 1854), pp. 33-34, 41-42.

ship ministered to by a small number of preachers. As the number of adherents grew, particularly in the cities, and as the supply of preachers also increased, there arose more and more "stations." A station was a single locale to which a preacher was assigned.

The station developed when the sizable numbers of urban Methodists began to desire attention commensurate to their membership. By assigning a preacher or preachers to an urban area, the church was able to provide a more accessible and a more frequent ministry to these groups. Stations began to appear in the lists of assignments given at the annual conference.

As the nineteenth century wore on, more and more stations were developed, and the size of the circuits diminished. Although the station involved some itineration among the Methodist groups within the city, there was not the more extensive movement associated with a rural circuit. This changing of the old ways did not meet with universal approval. Peter Cartwright, when speaking of the increasing numbers of ministers employed in the non-traveling work, said,

> Is it not manifest that the employing [of] so many of our preachers in these agencies and professorships is one of the great causes why we have such a scarcity of preachers to fill the regular work? Moreover, these presidents, professors, agents, and editors get a greater amount of pay, and get it more certainly, too, than a traveling preacher, who has to breast every storm, and often falls very far short of his disciplinary allowance. Here is a great temptation to those who are qualified to fill those high offices to seek them, and give up the regular work of preaching and trying to save souls. And is it not manifest to every candid observer that very few of those young men who believe they were called of God to preach the Gospel, and are persuaded to go to a college or a Biblical institute, the better to qualify them for the great work of the ministry, ever go into the regular traveling ministry? The reason is plainly this: having quieted their consciences with the flattering unction of obtaining a sanctified education, while they have neglected the duty of regularly preaching Jesus

> to dying sinners, their moral sensibilities are blunted, and they see an opening prospect of getting better pay as teachers in high schools or other institutions of learning, and from the prospect of gain they are easily persuaded that they can meet their moral obligations in disseminating sanctified learning. Thus, as sure as a leaden ball tends to earth in obedience to the laws of gravity, just so sure our present modus operandi tends to a congregational ministry. And if this course is pursued a little longer, the Methodist Church will bid a long, long farewell to her beloved itinerancy, to which, we, under God, owe almost every thing that is intrinsically valuable in Methodism.[47]

Jacob Young, another long-time circuit-rider, echoed Cartwright:

> Now the great argument in favor of reducing the districts and circuits, was to give the preachers an opportunity to make more pastoral visits--but it is thought that they do not visit near as much now as they did in former days, when there were from twenty-five to thirty preaching-places on a circuit, and the preacher was accustomed to preach as many sermons every round, meet twenty or thirty classes, and hold some prayer meetings, and then visit ten or fifteen families every round, and over and above all this take in, or turn out members every day, and then reprove, advise with all long-suffering and doctrine. This was the way the fathers in the ministry lived, and this is the example they set to the generations that were to follow them. The presiding elder's district contained nearly half the territory there is now in the bounds of some of the annual conferences. Yet the elder traveled through the whole work four times a year--not only holding quarterly meetings, but often preaching in the evening, and holding other meetings.[48]

On the other hand, Jones, in discussing the Mississippi Conference of 1840, stated

> The whole territory was covered with a network of pastoral charges, the churches and the number of the ministers had increased, the circuits were made smaller, so that preaching was confined more to the Sabbath day, with fewer week-day congregations. This gave the preachers more time for study, for pastoral visiting, attention to Sabbath schools, etc., which most of them improved to both their own good and the advancement of the Church.[49]

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[47] Cartwright, Autobiography, pp. 81-82.

[48] Young, Autobiography, pp. 525-526.

[49] Jones, Mississippi Conference, II:451.

And Holliday, in writing the history of Indiana Methodism, told that

> The relinquishment of week-day preaching involved the breaking up of the large circuits, and the abandoning of many small societies. Our early circuit system, while it was admirably adapted to carry the Gospel to the whole people, multiplied preaching-places needlessly, and established societies so close together that they must necessarily remain feeble. In many instances they were unwilling to consolidate and unite on some common center of population, where a strong society could be built up; and, as a consequence, during this transition period, many members were lost to the Church. And it is possible that, in some cases, circuits were needlessly reduced, and week-day preaching abandoned sooner than it should have been. But it is an unwise administration that allows churches in the country to be built nearer than four or five miles of each other. With the facilities for getting to church, possessed by our farming population, a mile or two, more or less, in the distance to church, is no object; while, if churches are built closer together, they can not, in the very nature of the case, command congregations of sufficient size to sustain Sabbath preaching, without making church expenses burdensome, or failing to give the ministry an adequate support.[50]

The Quarterly Conference

A group of circuits and stations was combined under the supervision of one of the elders of the Church. The elder was the highest order in the new denomination. He was charged with regulating the work of all the traveling preachers as well as the local officials in the circuits under his care. He was called an "elder" in this role from 1785 to 1796, except for 1789, when he was termed the "presiding elder." In 1797 and afterwards he was once again called a "presiding elder."[51] Beginning in 1801 the areas controlled by the presiding elder were

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[50] F. C. Holliday, Indiana Methodism: Being an Account of the Introduction, Progress and Present Position of Methodism in the State; and also a History of the Literary Institutions under the Care of the Church, with Sketches of the Principal Methodist Educators in the State, down to 1872 (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1873), p. 138.

[51] Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 21-77.

entitled "districts," and each had its own name.[52] It was within each of these districts that we find the first level of the conference hierarchy.

The conference was the means by which increasingly larger bodies of church leaders came together to discuss and decide the increasingly more important and all-encompassing matters of the Church. It is the areal unit of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In ascending order of size and descending age, these are the quarterly, annual, and general conferences.

The quarterly conference was, of course, the highest level of control of the Wesleyan Methodist groups in the colonies between 1769, when the first of the Wesleyan missionaries arrived, and 1773, when the annual conference was established.[53] Essentially a meeting of the local leaders and the itinerants with the General Assistant, the quarterly conference was ideally suited for ministerial oversight for a small scattered population--as the Methodists were in that period. With increasing size and spread, as well as increasingly broader questions covering the entire connectional structure, the annual conference was established to concentrate legislative control in the hands of the preachers (as happened in Wesleyan Britain) while leaving local control of the local matters of each circuit to the quarterly conference.

Thus, the quarterly conference continued to be held, meeting four times a year as is denoted in its name. As the Wesleyan Methodists became, in fact as well as in name, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the

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[52] Ibid., pp. 99-101.

[53] See above, pp. 29-31.

quarterly conference became more regularized. The Minutes and Disciplines of the Church treat its authority and functions as they do all official elements of the Church structure.

Although the earliest quarterly conferences in America were held on Tuesdays, the Annual Conference of 1780 suggested that such meetings should be held on Saturdays and Sundays when convenient.[54] The first Discipline of the Church generally followed the rules of Wesley's Large Minutes. Such activities as the meeting of bands, the admission of new members, communion, membership tickets, and fasts, as were associated with the quarterly meeting, were covered.[55]

When the office of presiding elder was created, many of the regulations regarding the quarterly conference fell to him, as he was the director of the work within the district to which he was assigned.[56] The conference was still called a quarterly meeting in 1792, but the separate existence of a "quarterly meeting conference" is made clear in 1804.[57] Membership at the quarterly meeting conference remains the same as in 1792--"all the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of the circuit"--but the words "and none else" are added in

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[54] Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 12. Jesse Lee stated that there were several reasons for the change: many slaves were not allowed to attend except on the Sabbath; wealthier individuals could not be troubled to attend on any other day; and many of the poor could not get time or transport except on Sundays. See A Short History of the Methodists, in the United States of America; beginning in 1766, and continued to 1809. To Which Is Prefixed, a Brief Account of Their Rise in England, in the Year 1729, &c (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), p. 42.

[55] Emory, Discipline, pp. 30, 36, 45, 55, and 68.

[56] Ibid., p. 129. Emory here discusses the origin of the office and its existence before being formally named.

[57] Ibid., pp. 131-132.

1804 to make this more certain.[58] The 1804 Discipline also mandated that a secretary be named at the quarterly meeting conference whose duty it would be "to take down the proceedings of the quarterly meeting conference, in a book kept by one of the stewards for that purpose."[59]

The first duties of the quarterly meeting in the Church were taken bodily in 1784 from Wesley's Large Minutes--"to inquire both into the temporal and spiritual state of each society."[60] Specific duties of the presiding elder "to hear complaints, and to receive appeals" at the conference were added in 1792.[61] The elder in 1804 received the further power "to try" appeals at the conference, and in 1840 he was "to decide all questions of law in a quarterly meeting conference, subject to an appeal to the president of the next annual conference."[62] Thus, the quarterly conference was a sort of local court of original jurisdiction in church matters.

Another duty of the quarterly conference was to examine and, annually, to license the district's local preachers, those nontraveling preachers who ministered in the absence of the itinerant but who were a step lower in the church hierarchy. Until 1796 such licensing had been at the hands of the assistant. In that year it was ruled that "No local preacher shall receive a license to preach till he has been examined and approved at the quarterly meeting of his circuit;" such preachers were

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., p. 132.

[60] Ibid., p. 55.

[61] Ibid., p. 131.

[62] Ibid., pp. 132-133.

already to have received their local society's recommendation in writing.[63] This duty was expanded in 1816.[64]

From 1820 to 1836 there was the provision for a "district conference" of all the local preachers who had held licenses for two years. This conference, created to meet the insistence for more lay and local control, was to hold the power to license local preachers.[65] If the district conference did not meet, the quarterly meeting conference remained as a back-up source for such licensing.[66] That the whole idea of the district conference had failed was recognized in 1836, and the quarterly meeting conference received again its old powers. In addition, after 1836 the quarterly meeting conference could recommend local preachers for admission-on-trial in the traveling connection, and could "try, suspend, expel, or acquit any local preacher in the circuit or station against whom charges may be brought."[67]

The quarterly conference was also responsible for the financial needs of the traveling preachers in the district. Itinerants in 1782 were instructed to examine, at each quarterly meeting, their income for that period, the difference to be made up as much as possible by collections from throughout the Church.[68] In 1816 the quarterly meeting conference was instructed to form a committee to raise money for the purchase

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[63] Ibid., pp. 179-180.

[64] Ibid., p. 180.

[65] Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[66] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

[67] Ibid., p. 182.

[68] Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 16.

or rental of a house for the itinerant on the charge, as well as for a portion of the expenses of the presiding elder.[69]

Further duties devolving on the quarterly conference involved children and missionary work. In 1840 the quarterly meeting conference was instructed to act as a "board of managers" for the Sunday Schools and Sunday-school societies within the district. The itinerants were to present at each quarterly conference a written report on the number of Sunday Schools within their jurisdiction and the state of such groups.[70] In 1844 the responsibility of organizing a "Committee on Missions" to take charge of all missionary societies and their activities within the district was added.[71]

From 1784 to 1844 the quarterly conference was the means of local control within the limits of the workings of the Methodist Episcopal Church. As the programs of the church grew, new responsibilites were given to the quarterly conference. Likewise, as the struggle for more local and lay control of church matters continued in the nineteenth century, more powers were also granted to this local gathering.

The Annual Conference

The conference-of-control for American Methodism became annual in 1773. It remained, in theory, an advisory conference subject to the control of Wesley, but this control was increasingly nominal. Thomas Rankin, the newly-appointed General Assistant, called the preachers

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[69] Emory, Discipline, pp. 281-282.

[70] Ibid., p. 157.

[71] Ibid., pp. 288-289.

together in Philadelphia in June. For the next twenty years the Annual Conference was to be the chief body of, first, the Wesleyan Methodists, then afterwards, the Methodist Episcopal Church. Even after it was superseded in supremacy by the General Conference, it remained a vital part of the Methodist economy with assigned duties of its own.

The Annual Conference, 1785-1792

After the formation of the new denomination, the Annual Conference retained its old patterns.[72] For years during the Revolution it had, for all practical purposes, been autonomous of Wesley's control. Following Wesley's rules, but also their own thoughts, the conference evolved.

Because of the increasing areal scope of the work, the Annual Conference had instituted dual sessions in 1781.[73] Beginning in 1785 the dual sessions became multiple. Three sessions were appointed for each of the annual conferences of 1785-1787.[74] Six were appointed for 1788, and the number grew to seventeen sessions for 1792, the year of the first General Conference.[75] It should be noted that the number and site of the sessions appointed in the previous conference year did not always prove true for the ensuing sessions.[76] Both the time and the

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[72]The Annual Conference prior to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church is discussed in Chapter II above.

[73]Two annual conference sessions had also been held in 1779, the regular one at Fluvanna and an earlier one for the convenience of Asbury. No regularly appointed dual sessions existed, however, until 1781.

[74]Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 21, 24, 26.

[75]Ibid., pp. 29, 32, 35, 39, 43. There were eleven sessions in 1789, fourteen in 1790, and thirteen in 1791.

[76]Lee listed seven meeting places for the sessions for 1788,

site were the choice of the bishop(s), and events sometimes dictated a change in the original plan.

From 1787 to 1791 the order of session meetings was from south to north. Beginning in the latter year the appointed times began in Virginia, ran to the south, and then turned north again. The 1791 sessions, too, began the practice of starting the sessions late in one calendar year and completing them in the next. All the sessions were considered a part of a single conference year and took the date of the year in which the last sessions were held.

As yet the annual conference was a single entity; each of its constituent sessions was considered as merely a part of the whole. The multiple meeting sites, some being geographically close together, were chosen for the convenience of the preachers who had to travel to conference. There were no definite boundaries for tributary areas to each session; the itinerant attended (if it was possible for him to do so) the session nearest to his appointment for the previous year.

The membership of the conference was composed of the traveling preachers. Presiding at each of the sessions was one of the bishops--Francis Asbury or Thomas Coke, usually the former. Sessions were frequently held in private homes, as the number of attendees was usually small, and the Methodists as yet had no large number of meeting-houses of their own.

The order of business in each of the sessions of the Annual Conference followed the order as set forth in the Large Minutes, reprinted

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for example. Two of these sites were changed from those appointed, and a seventh was added which was not on the scheduled list. See Short History, pp. 134-135.

almost verbatim in the first Discipline (1784).[77] Questions fell into the categories of (1) preachers, their status in the Church, an examination of their character, and their assignment for the coming year; (2) societies, their location and the number of members in each; (3) expenses, contributions toward and disbursements for; and (4) plans for the next conference.[78] In addition, as the supreme conference for the Methodists, the Annual Conference considered the larger questions of programs and policy. Thus, in 1787, the Conference asked itself questions relating not only to "the promotion of the spiritual welfare of the coloured people," but also the spiritual care of children in the Church.[79]

The Annual Conference, 1793-1844

After the creation of the General Conference in 1792, the annual conference was relegated to a second level within the church conference hierarchy. It was thereafter subject to the General Conference for the rules regarding its existence. Beginning almost immediately, the General Conference revised its authority to better manage the annual meetings.

For a while the Annual Conference remained a single body of multiple sessions scattered across the nation. Twenty sessions were appointed for 1793 and fourteen for 1794.[80] This multiplicity of sessions, and its cumbersome method of reaching decisions affecting the entire church, was indeed a major factor in the development of the General

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[77]These are compared and contrasted in Emory, Discipline, pp. 64-65.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Minutes, Annual Conferences, pp. 28-29.

[80]Ibid., pp. 47, 52.

Conference. Although the bishops had the power to appoint the sessions, they did not reduce their number until the 1795 conference year, when seven sessions were held.[81] The General Conference addressed the size of what it at that time called "District Conferences" in 1792, when it set the size of each to be constituted of not less than three nor more than twelve circuits.[82]

Further action was taken at the General Conference of 1796, when the previously unified Annual Conference was divided in space as well as in time. Each of the new conferences was given boundaries set at the General Conference. Thus, the annual conferences became geographical entities. Six were established at the General Conference of 1796: New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, South Carolina, and Western.[83] By 1844 there would be forty such conferences.[84]

Within the new structure of annual conferences the bishops retained the right to appoint the time of the meeting. This power had been established in 1792. They were required to allow the sessions to

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[81] Ibid., p. 58.

[82] The General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church from 1792 to 1896 (Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1900), p. 8. This action was rescinded in 1796. The name "district" was changed to "yearly" in 1796 and then to "annual" in 1816. Each term refers to the same entity. Particularly, however, the name "district conference" as used here should not be confused with the "district conference" idea for local preachers tried out in the 1820-1836 period.

[83] Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:11. The General Conference here and at succeeding sessions gave the bishop "the authority to appoint other yearly conferences in the interval of the General Conference, if a sufficiency of new circuits be anywhere formed for that purpose."

[84] Ibid., II:91-96.

sit at least a week, beginning with the Discipline of 1804, at which time it was further decided that each annual conference could determine its meeting place.[85]

The General Conference also addressed the membership requirements for the annual conferences. The 1792 Discipline limited admission to only those traveling preachers "in full connection."[86] Those who did not itinerate and those who had been admitted or were being continued "on trial" were not to be allowed membership. Beginning in 1796 those who were to be received into full connection at the annual conference were also allowed membership in the body.[87]

Finally, the annual conference order of business was addressed. The usual order of business (questions and answers listed in succession) was printed in the Discipline and revised on occasion.[88] In general, after 1792 the work of these conferences, in the words of Coke and Asbury, was

> the admission of preachers on trial and into full connection, the ordination of elders and deacons, the examination of the characters of the ministers and preachers, and the stationing of them all, as well as the management of the fund for superannuated preachers, &c.[89]

Thus, the Annual Conference in the period of 1784 to 1844 saw its supremacy overshadowed by that of the General Conference. Its powers

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[85]Emory, Discipline, p. 115.

[86]Ibid., p. 114.

[87]Ibid., p. 115.

[88]These are discussed in Emory, Discipline, pp. 115-119.

[89]These duties were in the notes appended to the Discipline of 1796 by the two bishops and reprinted in Emory, Discipline, pp. 335-393. This particular reference is on page 337.

and duties became more regulated as larger questions of denominational policy were left to the quadrennial general conference. The Annual Conference also metamorphosed from a single conference of multiple sessions into a set of multiple conferences, each with prescribed boundaries and exerting control, within defined limits, over its segment of American Methodist geography.

The Council

The Council was a nonconference-type attempt to solve the problem of church government developing in the 1780s. American Methodism then consisted of a single annual conference of increasingly-multiple sessions stretching over much of the nation and requiring twelve months to complete. Any legislation which was needed for the entire denomination had to be proposed at each session of the conference, and a decision might not be clear for almost a year.

Bishop Francis Asbury, the single most powerful individual in the church, was the originator of the idea of the Council. The plan, as approved by the annual conference, called for a Council composed of the bishops and the presiding elders. The membership had to be nine or greater. The powers given to this group were several:

> These shall have authority to mature everything that they shall judge expedient: (1) To preserve the general union. (2) To render and preserve the external form of worship similar to all our societies through the continent. (3) To preserve the essentials of the Methodist doctrines and discipline pure and uncorrupted. (4) To correct all abuses and disorders, and, lastly, they are authorized to mature everything they may see necessary for the good of the Church, and for the promoting and improving our colleges and plan of education.
>
> Provided, nevertheless, that nothing shall be received as the resolution of the Council, unless it be assented to unanimously by the Council; and nothing so assented to by the Council shall be binding in any district till it has been agreed

upon by a majority of the Conference which is held for that district.[90]

Norwood has pointed out three major defects that doomed the Council from its inception. The unanimity requirement forestalled legislation with any hint of controversy and gave Asbury (indeed, any member) veto power over any measure. Also, almost every member of the Council was directly a creation of Asbury, who, as bishop, had the power to appoint all presiding elders.[91] Finally, that each annual conference session gave separate approval or disapproval of the Council's action, and that this process still required almost a year, prevented any exercise of overall authority and furthered the regionalization of control within the church.[92] Thus, the Council was a subordinate body; the multiple-session Annual Conference remained effectively supreme.

At its first meeting the Council devised a constitution to meet some of the criticism leveled against it.[93] However, questions still remained, as did opposition to the whole idea. The Council met only twice, in December of both 1789 and 1790. Its decision to meet in 1792 was abandoned, and the general conference of that year was its substitute.

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[90]Taken from the original pamphlet minutes of the Council in 1789 and reprinted in Jonathan J. Tigert, A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1904), pp. 243-244.

[91]The second bishop, Thomas Coke, was in and out of the country and therefore not likely to be in attendance at the sessions.

[92]Frederick A. Norwood, "The Church Takes Shape," in History of American Methodism, I:429-430. It should be remembered that as yet the areas of control for each session of the annual conference were fluid in nature, dependent upon the site and the number of sessions appointed. Which geographical areas were therefore to be bound by vote of each session were of dubious exactitude.

[93]See Norwood, "Church Takes Shape," pp. 430-431.

Norwood suggested that the Council was an attempt by Asbury to forestall the development of the General Conference and to preserve his own power in the church.[94] Perhaps Asbury was attempting to assume the same powers he had seen Wesley enjoy in Britain. Tigert suggested that Asbury acted with the good of the connection in mind.[95] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Council was a failure, and there is no mention of it in the official records of the church.

The General Conference

The last and highest legislative body created by the Methodist connection in America was the General Conference. Established in 1792, the General Conference held supreme power in the church.[96] From 1792 to 1808 it had the power to change any item in the organizational structure of the Church. However, in 1808 it created a delegated General Conference primarily to provide an equitable distribution of power among the members of each of the several annual conferences.

The formation of a General Conference was a response to the burdensome situation which had developed in American Methodism. The multiple-session annual conference system was becoming increasingly

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[94]Frederick A. Norwood, The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 124, and Norwood, "Church Takes Shape," pp. 429-432.

[95]Tigert, Constitutional History, pp. 247, 254.

[96]Some denominational historians have argued over whether or not the Christmas Conference of 1784 was a general conference, with that of 1792 the second. The numbering of the general conferences is of little importance here. Moreover, although the Christmas Conference was a general conference of the Methodist itinerants, it made no plans for a successor body. The 1792 conference did so, and thus begins the regular appointment of such quadrennial meetings.

unwieldy. The first of the annual conference sessions for 1792 had been held in December of 1791, and the last (the seventeenth) in August of 1792.[97] Distance in time was equalled by distance in space. The conference opened in central Virginia, moved south to Georgia, then turned west and north through Kentucky and Tennessee, on to Baltimore, and beyond to New York and New England.[98]

Even prior to the experiment of the Council, there was agitation among the circuit riders for a "general" conference for all those traveling in the Church. Norwood named three men who were the most instrumental in the development of this proposal: Thomas Coke, Jesse Lee, and James O'Kelly.[99] These and the traveling preachers at large were responsible for the call of a general conference to meet in Baltimore on November 1, 1792.

The General Conference of 1792, like all its successors in the study period, was restricted in membership to the traveling ministers only. "All the travelling preachers who shall be in full connection at the time of holding the conference" were entitled to membership.[100] Because of increasing numbers of circuit preachers, this membership was restricted in 1800 to those "who have travelled four years."[101] It was further refined in 1804, with the four years of itinerating experience

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[97] Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 43.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Norwood, Story, p. 124, and Norwood, "Church Takes Shape," pp. 434-435.

[100] Emory, Discipline, p. 111.

[101] Ibid.

to date "from the time that they were received on trial by an annual conference."[102]

A delegated General Conference came into existence in 1808 in response not only to increasing numbers of members, but also to ensure proportional representation at the conference. The ratio was fixed at one delegate for every five itinerants in each annual conference, to be chosen by seniority or at the discretion of the annual conference. The choice of method was left to the individual annual conferences to decide.[103] The existing restriction as to time in the itinerancy was to remain in force as well. The burgeoning numbers in the Church during the first half of the nineteenth century brought about a change in the ratio to one for every seven members in 1816 and then one for every twenty-one in 1836.[104]

The powers of the General Conference were absolute and unlimited. Whatever was decided by the itinerants in attendance was the law for all--itinerants, local preachers, laymen, etc. There were no checks upon its authority, and the situation was unchanged until 1808.

All of the first five quadrennial general conferences met in Baltimore. Under the existing rules any itinerant who met the traveling requirement was eligible for membership. However, this eligibility was tempered by the existence (or its lack) of a transportation system which gave equal access to the meeting from all areas of the connection. The members of the Philadelphia and Baltimore annual conferences came to

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid., p. 112.

[104] Ibid., p. 113.

dominate the General Conference by sheer numbers. Although little if any criticism was aimed at the actions of the conference, or its individual members questioned for the representativeness of their opinions, it was obvious that some democratization of the situation was needed.

An additional reason for a change in the church structure was the absolute authority of the General Conference. Its powers were unlimited. Juxtaposed to its all-encompassing authority was the second fixture of the denomination--the episcopacy. This was personified in the increasingly frail form of Francis Asbury. Many felt that the episcopacy had grown too weak as a result of the powers of the General Conference and that a curbing of the latter was in order.[105]

The solution reached was the establishment of a delegated General Conference in 1808. Its membership ratio has already been discussed. The new delegated General Conference retained all its previous powers except where now specified in six "Restrictive Rules." These rules prevented almost any change in the Articles of Religion, the General Rules of the United Societies, the itinerant general superintendency, the ratio of membership in the General Conference, the privileges of the itinerants to trial or appeal, and the allocation of funds in the Book Concern and the Chartered Fund.[106]

The Restrictive Rules could be changed, but any motion to do so by one General Conference required the unanimous approval of all the annual conferences as well as a two-thirds' majority of the succeeding

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[105] Norwood, "Church Takes Shape," p. 475.

[106] Journals of the General Conference, pp. 82-83, 89.

[107] Ibid., p. 83.

General Conference. In 1832 a procedure was approved that substituted a three-fourths' majority vote for the previous unanimity of the annual conferences.[108]

It was among the powers of the General Conference to create new bishops as needed. The General Conference also regulated the division of the church into its constituent annual conferences; in 1796 it provided the first definite boundaries of these annual meetings. The General Conference was the supreme body of the Church and the court of last resort for appeals and problems of the annual conferences and their members.

Thus, General Conference Methodism, the structure which still exists today, was created by the itinerants in 1792. Its creation and the development of its authority led to the refinement of the powers and duties of the annual conferences. The distinction could now be made between the General Conference, with its powers and responsibilities for church-wide matters, and the array of interlocking annual conferences, each responsible for specific regional and ministerial affairs.[109] Similarly, Sweet noted the increased stability which the 1808 constitution brought to the Methodist Episcopal Church. "From this time forward," he stated, "Methodism becomes more and more 'like a drilled army ready for the charge.'"[110]

The Developing Connectional Structure

Increasing size--both in number of members and in territorial

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[108] Ibid., pp. 377-378, 382-383.

[109] Norwood, "Church Takes Shape," p. 456.

[110] William Warren Sweet, Methodism in American History (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1933), p. 142.

extent--characterized the Methodists in America. This burgeoning was met by the adoption of higher and higher levels of church government. Local government which was appropriate to the scattered societies of the colonies was superseded by national bodies as the denomination expanded to cover the continent. The process was not one of substitution, however. Each new level was simply added to the existing structure.

The basic building blocks in the Wesleyan Methodist economy in America were the class and the circuit. Classes were connected by the route traveled by an itinerant preacher to form the network known as the circuit.[111] Extensive circuits were the order of the day in early American Methodism. Still, there existed other circuits that concentrated on classes in urban areas. These urban circuits became known as stations, and their percentage of the total number of itinerant assignments grew during the nineteenth century. Increasing, too, were the number of church buildings owned by the Methodists; these superseded the former meeting places of home, inn, courthouse, glen, etc. Both circuit and station are represented in Figure 6.

Control of the scattered circuits and their classes in Colonial America was administered by the quarterly conference and its ministerial counterpart, the Wesleyan assistant. This system, shown graphically in Figure 7, existed from the arrival of the first Wesleyan assistants in 1769 until the calling of the first American annual conference in 1773. All questions were decided at the quarterly conference. The society and

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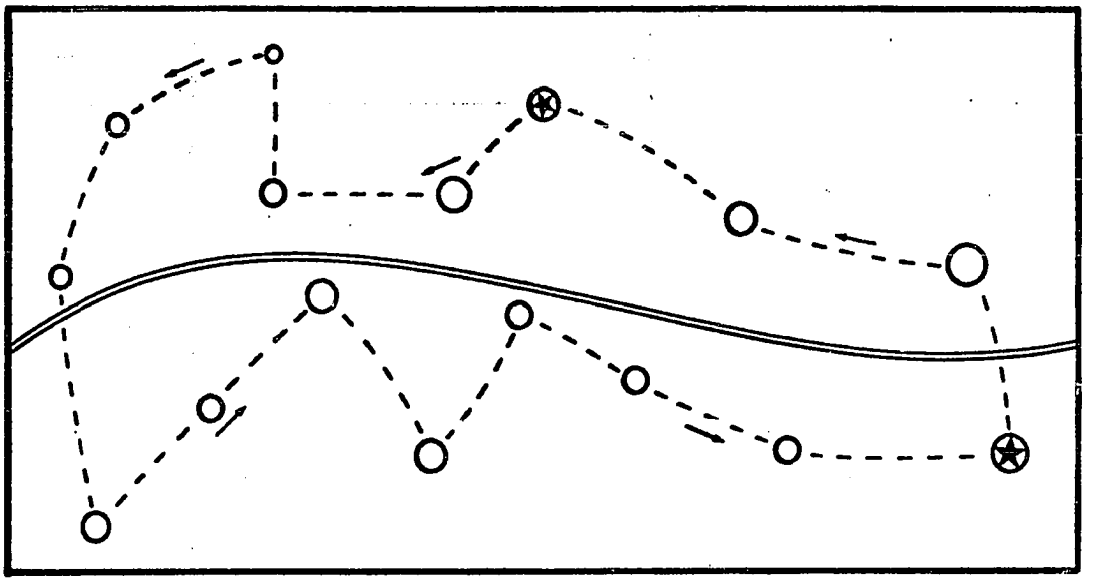
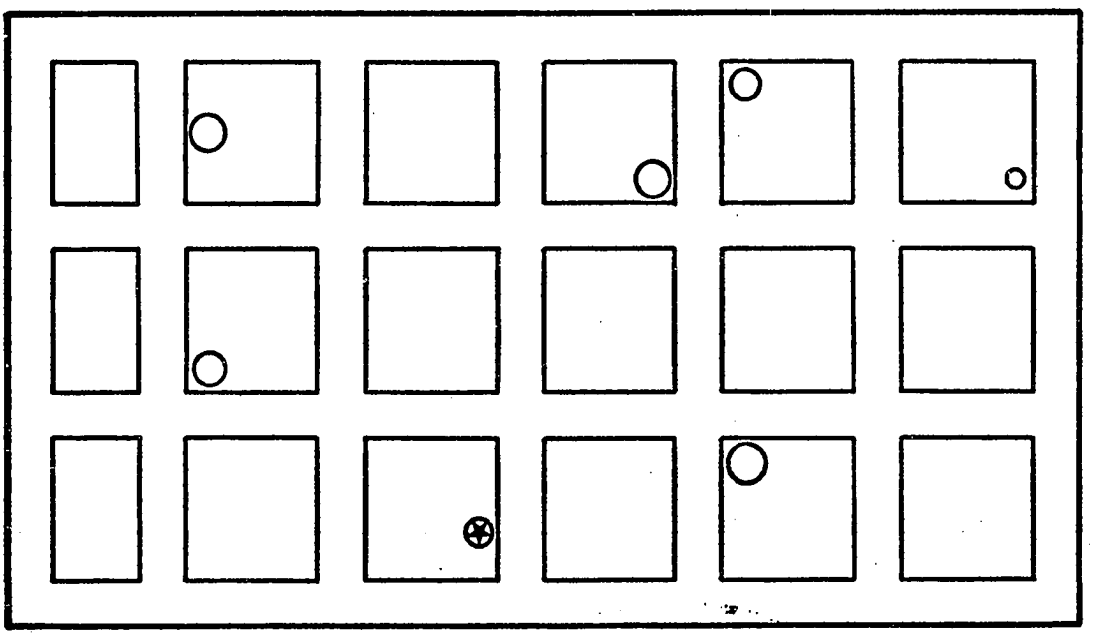
[111]Because of their fluid nature, few circuits have actually been mapped. One example of such mapping, however, is the Redstone Circuit of 1786. John Marinus Versteeg used Robert Ayres' journal to reconstruct the circuit in his work Methodism: Ohio Area (1812-1862) (Cincinnati: Ohio Area Sesquicentennial Committee, 1962), p. 50.



a. Circuit



b. Station

O - CLASS ⊛ - CHURCH BUILDING

JMC

Figure 6

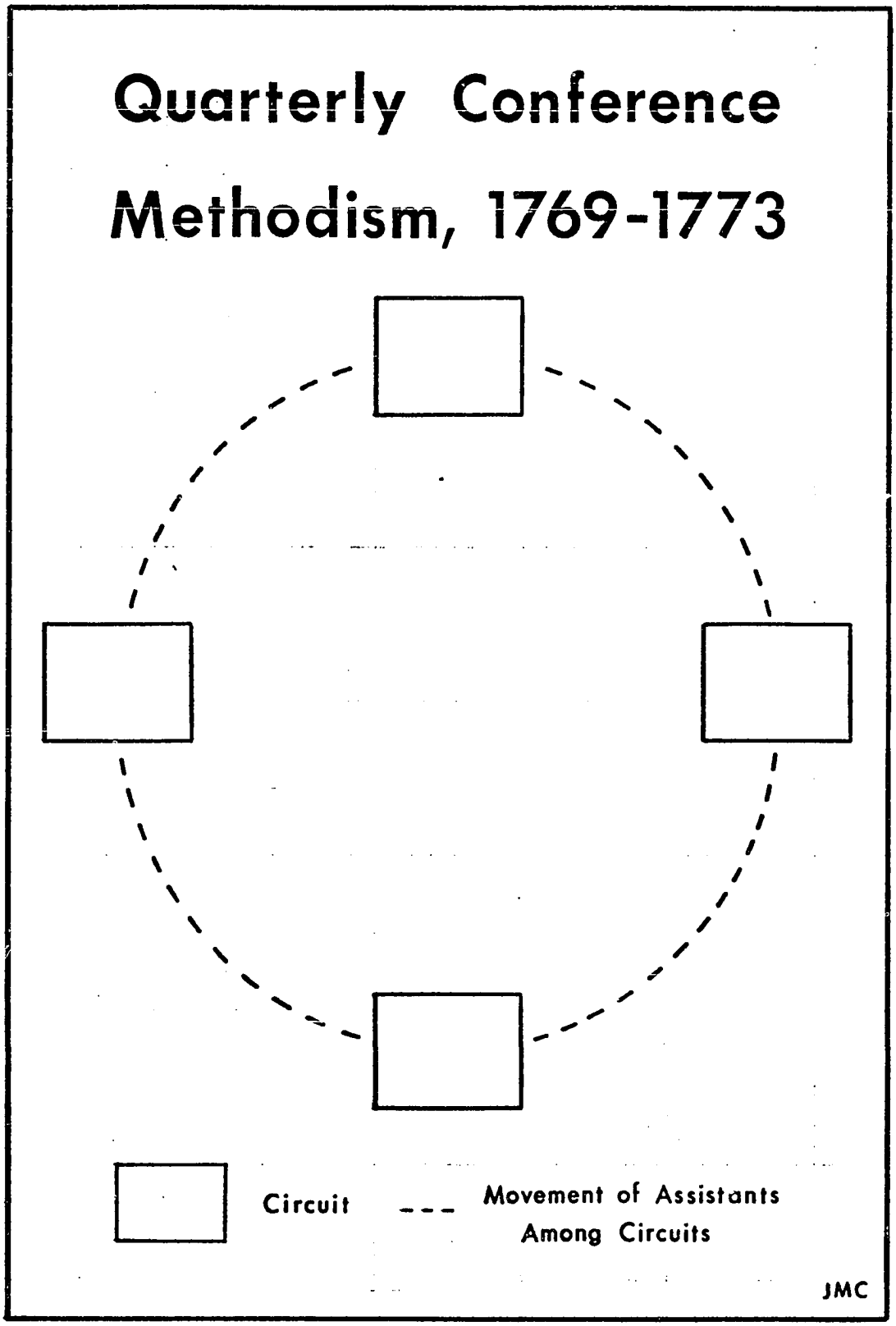

Quarterly Conference
Methodism, 1769-1773
Circuit
Movement of Assistants
Among Circuits
JMC

Figure 7

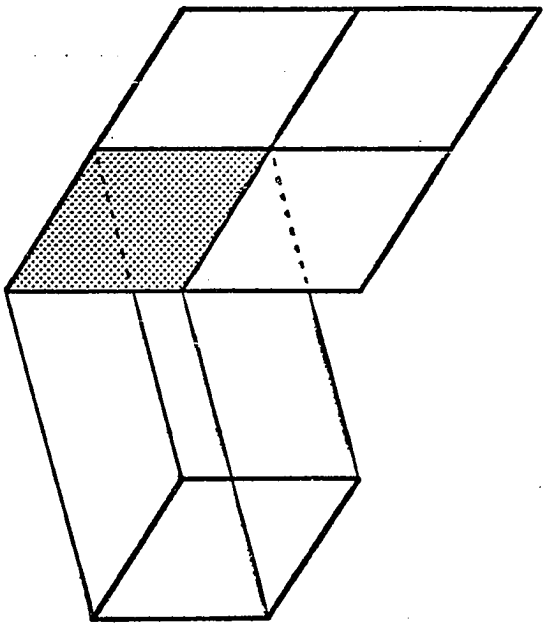
circuits were relatively autonomous units with allegiance to Wesley, who was in England, and bound to each other on this side of the Atlantic by the travels of Wesley's lieutenants.

With increasing territorial spread, the Annual Conference was transplanted from Britain to America where it considered larger questions of church-wide importance. It remained subject to Wesley and the British Annual Conference until 1784, when, with the formation of an independent denomination, it became the supreme Methodist Episcopal Church body. It remained so until 1792, when General Conference Methodism appeared. The General Assistant was at the head of the Annual Conference in America until 1784, when the new denominational superintendents (later bishops) exercised supervisory powers over all the church. Still, the quarterly conference continued to exist, considering matters of importance to each local group. This connectional situation is illustrated in Figure 8.

An additional level of supervision was added at the Christmas Conference of 1784. At that time groups of circuits were gathered under the general guidance of one of the elders of the church. These groups became known as districts and were given specific names in 1801. The elder was later given the title of presiding elder to differentiate the supervisory position from the more-widely-held office of elder. The presiding elder was the agent of the bishop in the latter's absence. The connectional structure of the denomination with this added feature is shown in Figure 9.

With the territorial spread of the church and the increasing number of multiple sessions of the single Annual Conference, a new body was deemed necessary. This need led to the formation of first, the

Annual Conference Methodism, 1773-1784



Annual Conference Circuit

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Figure 8

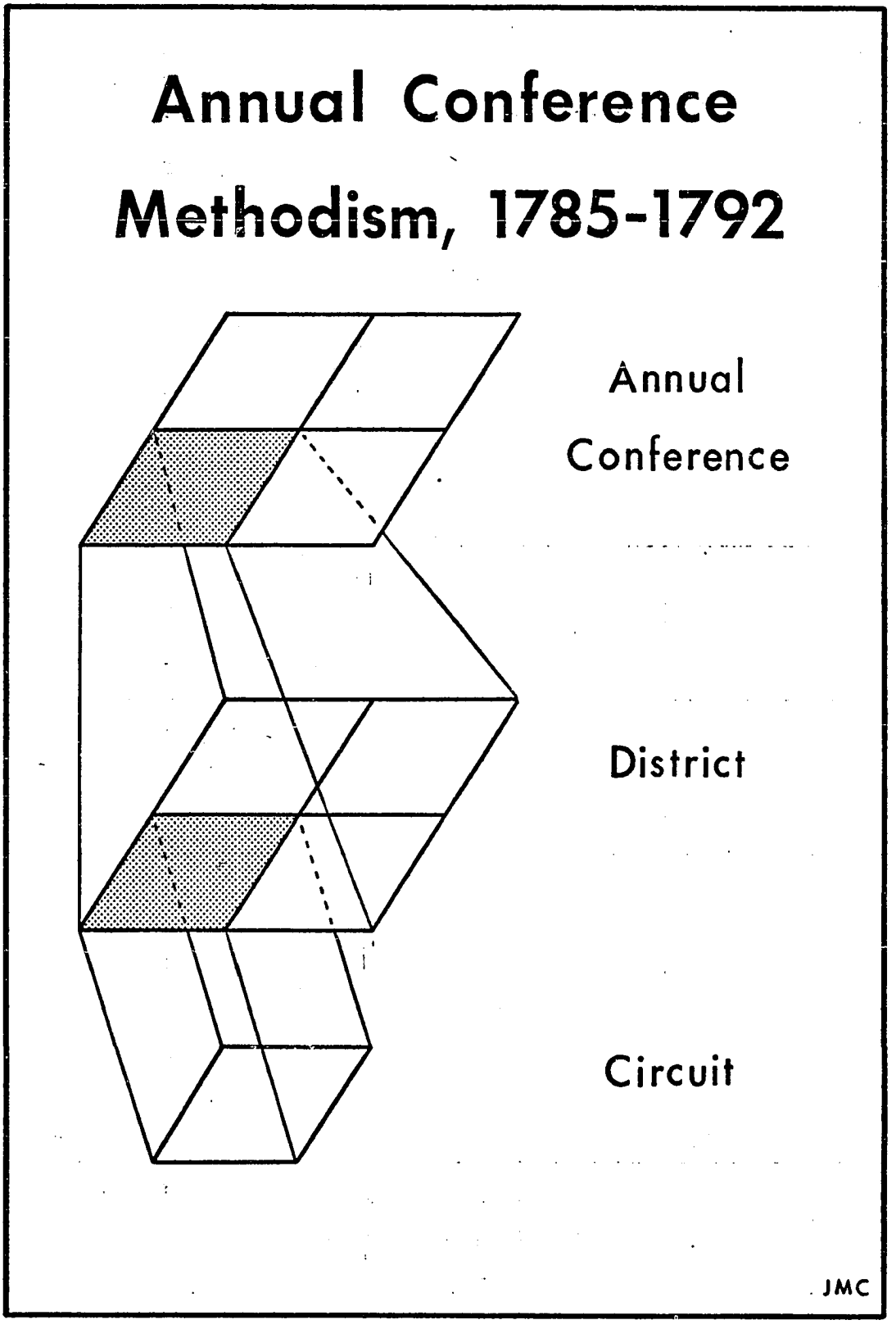
Annual Conference
Methodism, 1785-1792
Annual
Conference
District
Circuit
JMC

Figure 9

Council, and, after its failure, the General Conference in 1792. The General Conference, meeting every four years, would be the forum for denomination questions. The more frequent functions of assignments, enumeration, examination of candidates for the ministry, etc., were left to the Annual Conference (See Figure 10.).

The final change in the connectional structure was made in 1796. Before that time the Annual Conference, although characterized by multiple sessions scattered over the nation, remained geographically co-extensive with the General Conference. In 1796 the General Conference began the practice of giving stated boundaries to the separate annual conferences. Thereafter, with increasing powers of conference government came increasingly greater territorial control. Classes were gathered into circuit assignments which in turn were governed by the quarterly conference. The circuit-rider was the denominational agent for the work on a circuit or station, while he in turn was supervised by a presiding elder who controlled a district. Annual conferences met yearly to collect money, account for membership, receive new preachers, and make assignments for the traveling ministers. Presiding at each annual conference and at the General Conference was one of the bishops. The bishop was the supreme executive officer of the Church, as the General Conference was the supreme legislative body. It was at this level that laws for the entire denomination were made. This structure is diagrammed in Figure 11.

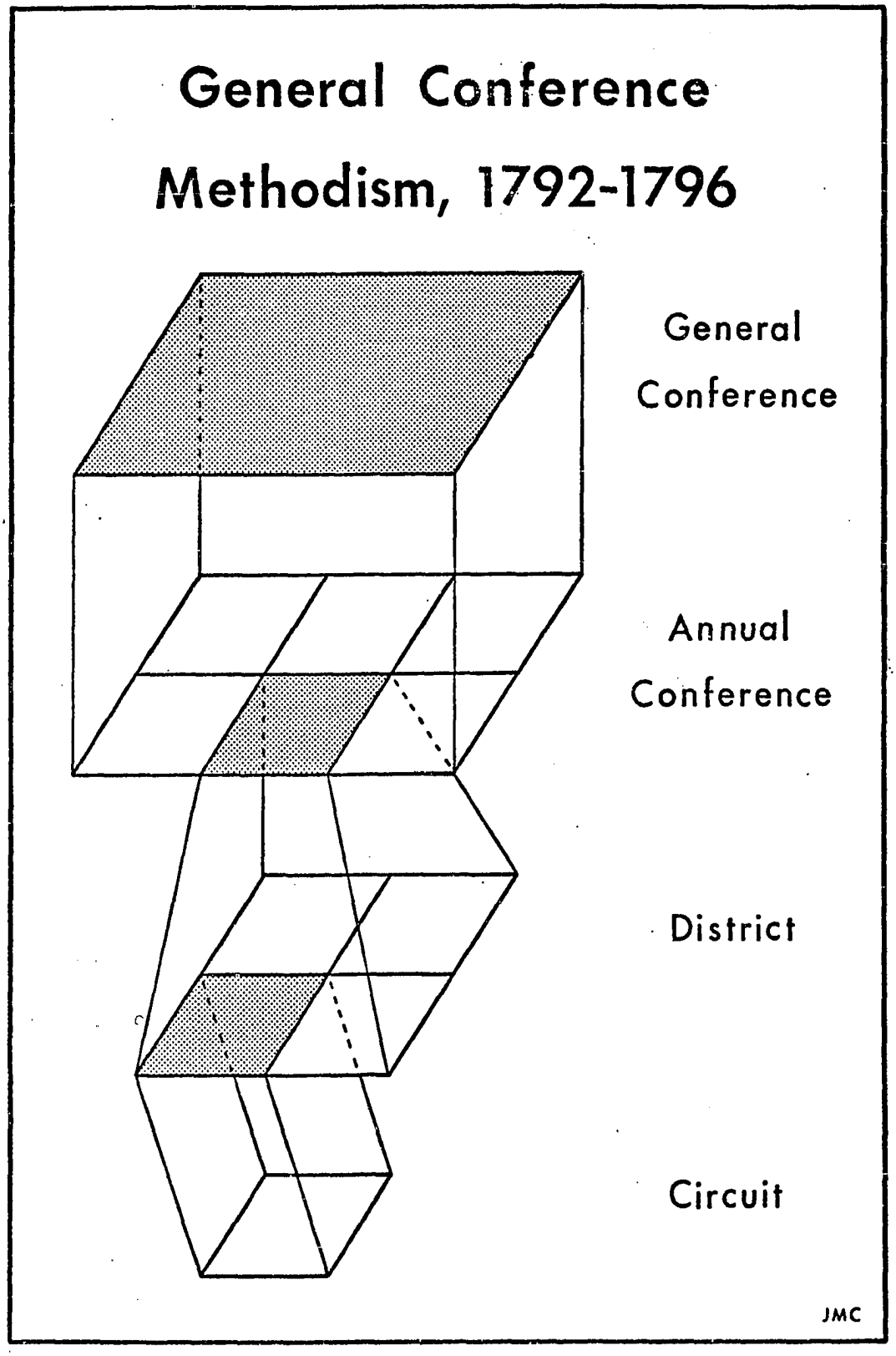
General Conference
Methodism, 1792-1796
General
Conference
Annual
Conference
District
Circuit
JMC

Figure 10

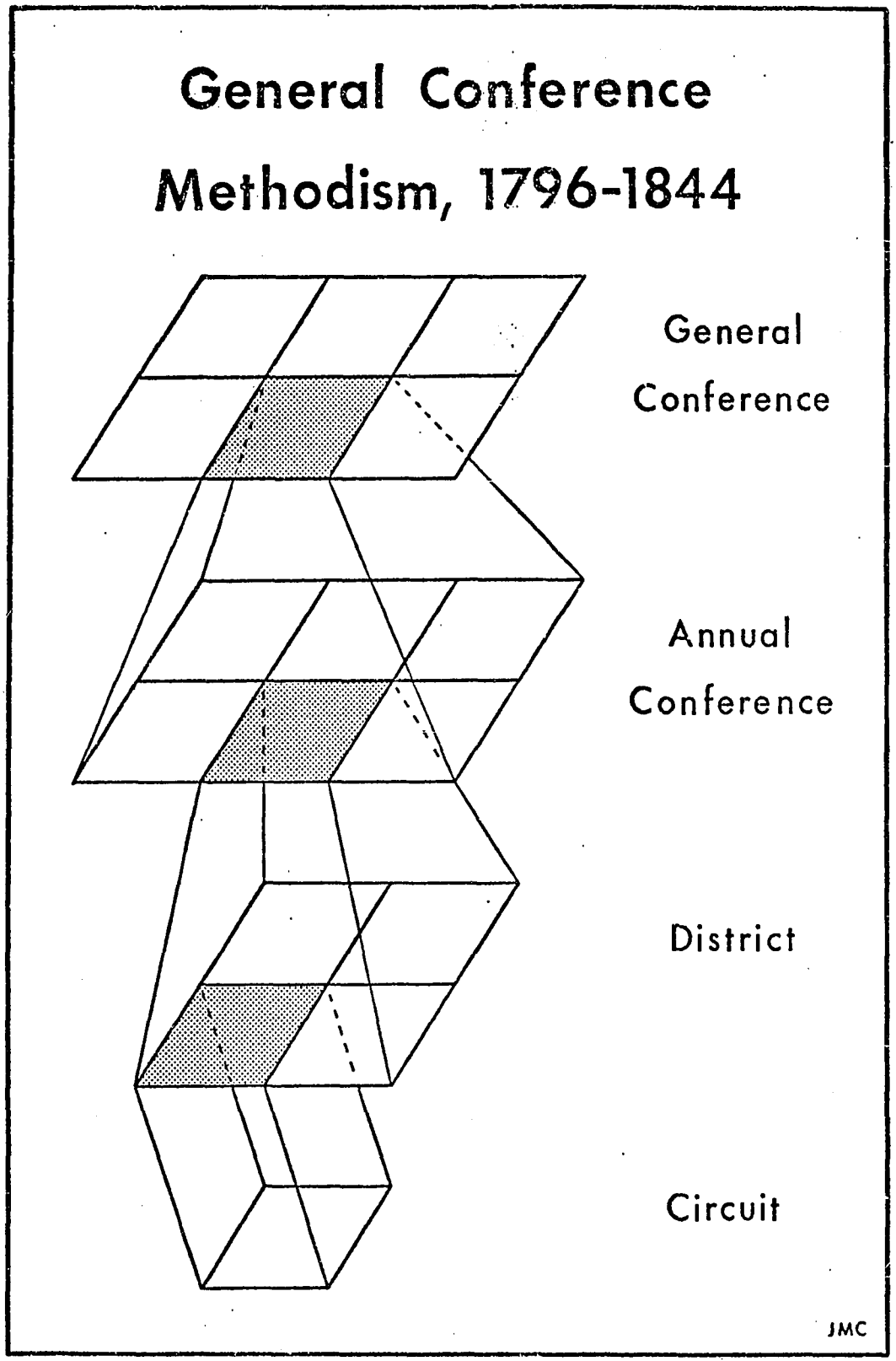
General Conference
Methodism, 1796-1844
General
Conference
Annual
Conference
District
Circuit
JMC

Figure 11

CHAPTER IV

EXPANSIONARY TACTICS

Introduction

The nested components of the Methodist Episcopal Church's organizational structure spread over the North American continent through several methods. This expansion was represented by both territorial expansion and territorial concentration. In the former new areas were taken within the Methodist sphere of control.[1] Territorial concentration, on the other hand, resulted from the gathering of new members in existing segments of the structure.

Methods of expansion can be divided into official and unofficial as well as into Methodist Episcopal and cross-denominational (Figure 12). Official Methodist Episcopal expansion was accomplished through the work of both the traveling and local ministry. Unofficial Methodist Episcopal spread was achieved through the work of the laity, chiefly among their family and friends, who converted non-believers. The migration of the membership to new areas of the nation was also a vehicle for expansion.

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[1]When such a sphere of control is mentioned, it is not in terms of absolute domination. Not only were there co-existing spheres for other Protestant groups, but also there were the developing Catholic, Jewish, and other structures. All of these spheres extended over many regions where religious adherents were a minority within the population.

	Methodist	Cross-Denominational
Official	Local Preachers and other local leaders Itinerants	----------
Unofficial	General Membership	Camp Meetings Religious Revivals Natural Phenomena

Figure 12: Means of Religious Expansion/Concentration

Unofficial techniques which aided church expansion in general were the periodic religious revivals which sprang up throughout the period and also the use of camp-meetings. To all of these human devices--if we may stretch the definition of such to include spontaneous religious revivalism--must be added attendance and some conversions attributed to the experience of natural phenomena.

In a consideration of a denomination as a whole, as in the case of this study, it is impossible to isolate in time and in space the factors involved in its growth. Some methods occur at given periods in different areas, but each seldom acted alone. The itinerant might well have preached on the subject, using as his text, "All things work together for good to them that love God."[2]

The growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church is recorded in two sets of information reported each year at the Annual Conference. These sets were the responses to the questions, "What numbers are in Society?"

[2]Romans 8:28.

and "How [or Where] are the preachers stationed this year."[3] Changes in the membership of discrete circuits are helpful in determining areas of growth and decline. Additional circuits, whether resulting from advancement on the Methodist frontier or from division of existing circuitry (or sometimes both), generally denoted expansion on the one hand and concentration on the other.

Expansion within the Methodist Family

The Local Preacher

Local preachers, along with exhorters and class leaders, comprised the localized (i. e., nonitinerating) ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. To them fell the care of the church members between the visits of the circuit rider. The local preacher preached, the exhorter expounded on a sermon or text, and the class leader met the local groups.

The local preacher was subordinate in position to the traveling preacher. As early as 1779 the Annual Conference mandated "every exhorter and local preacher to go by the directions of the assistants [itinerants] where, and only where, they shall appoint."[4] The Conference of

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[3] Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1773-1828 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840), passim. Not all the members of the denomination were necessarily included in these statistics. Reports of such by the itinerants were not always available. Too, on the frontier, Methodist immigrants often moved beyond the reach of the circuits and thus were outside the connection, if no less Methodist. Cautious use of the early records has been advised by many historians in any case. The records, however, if not always absolutely correct, do provide relative information which can be used to gauge the growth of the Church.

[4] Ibid., p. 10.

1780 directed the assistant's examination of each local preacher and exhorter "with respect to his life, his qualifications, and reception" before the latter could speak officially for the Church.[5] Other aspects of the local ministry were also examined at this and at succeeding annual conferences.[6]

Although remaining as a class subordinate to the itinerant, during the nineteenth century the local preacher gradually improved his position. The licensing of local preachers by the assistant, and later, by the quarterly conference, has already been discussed.[7] Beginning in 1789 the bishop could appoint, under certain conditions, local preachers to the order of deacon.[8] The local preacher could be further elevated to the order of elder beginning in 1816.[9] To quiet further the agitation for more dispersed powers, at the time of the creation of the local

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[5] Ibid., p. 12.

[6] A list of the local preachers on a circuit was among the items an itinerant was supposed to pass on to his successor on the charge. What to do about disorderly local preachers (as well as disorderly traveling preachers) and slave-holding by local preachers was also discussed by the Annual Conference. Ibid., pp. 14, 16, 20.

[7] See above, pp. 64-65.

[8] The conditions in 1789 were "provided they obtain a testimonial from the society to which they belong, and from the stewards of the circuit, signed by three travelling preachers, three deacons, and three elders, (one of them being a presiding elder;) the names of those nominated being read in the conference prior to their ordination." By 1792 the reading of the names clause had been omitted, the testimonial to be signed now by "three elders, three deacons, and three travelling preachers." Four years of licensed regular preaching was required beginning in 1796. In succeeding years other modifications were made, such as who should be required to sign the testimonial. See Robert Emory, History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Revised, and Brought Down to 1856, by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), pp. 183-184.

[9] Ibid., pp. 184-185. Stipulated conditions had to be met before such elevation could be carried out.

preachers' district conference (1820), the power to recommend local preachers for the orders of deacon and elder (in the local ministry), as well as for "admission on trial in the travelling connection" was granted to this conference.[10]

The orders of deacon and elder allowed the local preacher to administer the sacraments. This enhanced his position, but unless he was one of those who were advanced to the traveling ranks, he remained outside the legislative powers of the Church. Only the traveling ministers in this period were allowed to be members of the annual and general conferences.[11]

There were always many more local preachers than itinerants in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Lee estimated that in 1798 there were 850 local preachers as compared to 263 traveling preachers.[12] Stevens said that Lee's estimate "was doubtless much short of the truth."[13] In 1844 the church had on record 7,730 local preachers and 3,988 itinerants.[14]

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[10] Ibid., p. 181. After the abandonment of this district conference, such powers were returned to the local quarterly conference, which had served (in this regard) as a back-up to the district conference between 1820 and 1836. See also above, pp. 64-65.

[11] There were other requirements placed on the local preachers by the Discipline. These related primarily to class meetings and transfer of status when emigrating beyond the bounds of the licensing conference. See Emory, Discipline, pp. 185-190. The trying of local preachers accused of wrongdoing is also covered in this section.

[12] Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists, in the United States of America; Beginning in 1766, and Continued to 1809. To Which Is Prefixed, a Brief Account of Their Rise in England, in the Year 1829, &c. (Baltimore: Magill and Clime, 1810), p. 255.

[13] Abel Stevens, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 4 vols. (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1864-1867), IV:186.

[14] William Warren Sweet, The Methodists: A Collection of Source

The local preachers were of varied backgrounds and talents. Because they were not traveling ministers, they were, for the most part, unpaid.[15] Some were former itinerants. "Worn-out" and "superannuated" itinerants, who for reasons of health and/or age left the traveling ranks temporarily or permanently, often became local preachers. Too, itinerants were often forced to "locate" for financial reasons, particularly when they married.

Denominational historians are seemingly unanimous in their recognition of the importance of local preachers in spreading Methodism. The beginning of American Methodism had been the work of two local preachers--Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge. McAnally said

> In South-western Virginia, as, indeed, in most other places in the West and South-west, Methodism was introduced by a local preacher. . . .[i]n perhaps four cases out of five, if not, indeed, nine out of every ten, when Methodism was first introduced into a particular section of any considerable extent, it was through the instrumentality of local preachers.[16]

Leaton stated that for the first ten years of Methodism in Illinois (1793-1803), local preachers provided the only control.[17] Jacob Young, in forming the Wayne Circuit in 1802, found four or five local preachers who had preceded him into the territory.[18]

Materials, Vol. IV of Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840, 4 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 45-46.

[15]When local preachers substituted for the itinerants during conference or were called on to fill their vacancies, they were paid for this work out of the yearly collections.

[16]David Rice McAnally, Life and Times of Rev. William Patton, and Annals of the Missouri Conference (St. Louis: Methodist Book Depository, 1858), p. 22.

[17]James Leaton, History of Methodism in Illinois, from 1793-1832 (Cincinnati: Walden and Stowe, 1883), pp. 19-20.

[18]Jacob Young, Autobiography of a Pioneer; or, the Nativity,

The local preachers emigrated as did much of the population. After locating in new areas they would then begin to preach and to form classes. Once this had occurred, a request would be sent to the bishop or the conference for the area to be formed or taken into a circuit.[19] In this manner the work became officially a part of the denomination.

In addition to expansion the local preacher also aided in the concentration of Methodism in existing areas. When present, local preachers exhorted and delivered sermons between the itinerant's visits, and they acted as full-time pastors to the membership. William Burke in Kentucky in the 1790s lamented the absence of local preachers in the area of his circuit, comparing their presence to angels' visits--few and far between.[20] At the other end of the spectrum, while traveling on the Nashville Circuit in 1806, Jacob Young found forty local preachers, many of them former itinerants, within its bounds.[21]

The Itinerating Ministry

When one thinks of an itinerant, one thinks of the circuit-rider. However, there were also the itinerating presiding elder and bishop. The presiding elder had the charge of the circuit-riders in a particular area known as the district, while the bishop exercised supervisory authority

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Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young; with Incidents, Observations, and Reflections (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, n.d.), pp. 84-99.

[19]McAnally, Life of Patton, p. 23.

[20]Burke's autobiography is contained in James B. Finley, Sketches of Western Methodism, Biographical, Historical, and Miscellaneous, Illustrative of Pioneer Life (Cincinnati: Printed at the Methodist Book Concern for the Author, 1854), p. 58.

[21]Young, Autobiography, pp. 186-187.

over the entire denomination. The itinerating presiding elder and bishop represented the executive counterpart to the legislative body of the conference.

Itinerancy was looked upon by the early Methodists as a practice important almost to the point of being sacred. John Wesley, of course, had set the example in his travels through Britain, and he was planning yet another tour just the month before his death in his eighty-eighth year.[22] Francis Asbury, Wesley's early American equivalent, was on his way to the 1816 General Conference when he died at nearly seventy-one.[23]

The importance of the itinerancy as exemplified in the lives of Wesley and Asbury was closely followed by the circuit preachers themselves. Peter Cartwright viewed the itinerancy as a holy gift "to which we, under God, owe almost every thing that is intrinsically valuable in Methodism."[24] To travel was to answer the call of the Church. Hence, only those who traveled were allowed membership in the annual and general conferences. Those who were unable or unwilling to share in the tribulations of an itinerant's life were not to share in the governance of the church.

The tribulations endured by the itinerants were myriad. Among

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[22]Albert C. Outler, ed., John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 26.

[23]During his last tour through the connection, Asbury lamented the fact that he had not visited the work in Mississippi. See The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, in Three Volumes, ed. Elmer T. Clark, et al. (London: Epworth Press, 1958), I:793. In the same work see also Elmer T. Clark, "Asbury's Last Journey," I:804-807.

[24]Peter Cartwright, Autobiography of Peter Cartwright, the Backwoods Preacher, ed. W. P. Strickland (Cincinnati: Cranston and Curts, n.d.), p. 82.

the worst was exposure to the elements. William Colbert, expressing the view of the itinerants, said, "No weather a man can live in ought to stop him."[25] The regularity of their travel in all types of weather led to the following description of a particularly cold period--"There is nothing out today but crows and Methodist preachers."[26]

Transportation in the early days was almost always by horseback. Most roads were rough and often impassable in bad weather. Frontier trails were mere pathways through which the itinerants pressed on their rounds. On the frontier, too, were the deprivations of ordinary life, which the itinerant shared with the circuit members. Hostile Indians as well as highwaymen of various backgrounds did not make itinerating easier.

The itinerant endured these hardships for an annual salary set in 1774 at "six pounds, Pennsylvania currency, per quarter, and his travelling charges besides."[27] This sum was to be, in part, collected by the itinerant, and any difference was to be made up, if possible, from the yearly collections taken over all the circuits.[28] The "quarterage"

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[25]Quoted in John Atkinson, Centennial History of American Methodism, Inclusive of Its Ecclesiastical Organization in 1784 and Its Subsequent Development under the Superintendency of Francis Asbury. With Sketches of the Character and History of All the Preachers Known to Have Been Members of the Christmas Conference; also, an Appendix, Showing the Numerical Position of the Methodist Episcopal Church as Compared with the Other Leading Evangelical Denominations in the Cities of the United States; and the Condition of the Educational Work of the Church (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1884), p. 158.

[26]Ibid., citing George A. Raybold, Annals of Methodism; or, Sketches of the Origin and Progress of Methodism in Various Portions of West Jersey, Derived from the Most Authentic Sources (Philadelphia: Stokes, 1847).

[27]Minutes, Annual Conferences, p. 6.

[28]Ibid., p. 7.

was raised in 1778 to eight pounds, Virginia currency.[29] An equal provision was to be given to wives, "if they stand in need," beginning in 1780.[30] This was the first allowance for wives; children were covered beginning with the first Discipline.[31] Salaries rose gradually, the last change during the study period being made at the General Conference of 1836, when the allowance for married traveling preachers was set at two hundred dollars and for the unmarried at one hundred dollars, each to receive traveling expenses as well.[32]

Even such low salaries were often unable to be raised. Some preachers were scorned as preaching only for money. Support for wives and children was also begrudged. Celibacy among the itinerants was urged, even by the bishops, though not only for financial reasons.[33] Married traveling preachers were often forced to leave the itinerancy, either temporarily or permanently.

One result of these physical and economic hardships was that the average life span of a frontier preacher was less than seven years.[34]

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[29] Ibid., p. 9. There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, that even when economic conditions were good, many people interpreted "quarterage" as setting the tithe at twenty-five cents.

[30] Ibid., p. 12.

[31] Emory, Discipline, p. 42.

[32] Ibid., p. 275.

[33] Garber stated that when George A. Bain was appointed to Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1828, the stewards complained to Bishop Joshua Soule. They claimed an inability to support a married man. See Paul Neff Garber, The Romance of American Methodism (Greensboro, North Carolina: Piedmont Press, 1931), p. 95.

[34] William Erastus Arnold, A History of Methodism in Kentucky, 2 vols. (Louisville: Pentacostal Publishing Company, 1935-1936), I:31.

Location or death terminated the itinerants' service. In 1799 ninety percent of the Methodist itinerants were under forty. By 1847 almost half of the deaths recorded were for those under thirty-five; two-thirds died with twelve years or less of itinerant service.[35]

Candidates for the itinerancy were first "admitted on trial" before being taken "into full connection." Each was examined every year at the Annual Conference, and some were dismissed for various theological and personal reasons. After examination and approval, each was assigned a "charge," either a circuit or a station. Itinerants frequently traveled in pairs, a novice with a more experienced preacher as his guide.

The work of the itinerant was, in the words of Peter Cartwright, "to preach, meet the classes, visit the society and the sick, then to . . . books and study."[36] In addition to theological duties, the circuit-rider was often a source of information to frontier dwellers. Methodists were great book-sellers, too, and each itinerant carried a supply of tracts and volumes to be sold along his circuit.

It was left to the circuit-rider to unite new areas officially to the church. This was done in response either to a request from some new area or to the command of the elder or bishop. As a junior preacher on the Salt River Circuit at the turn of the nineteenth century, Jacob Young's role was as follows:

> It fell to my lot to keep up the regular appointments. I received a letter of instruction from my colleague almost every day. He still continued to take in new preaching-places. When we closed our labors here we had about fifty-eight appoint-

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[35]Garber, Romance, p. 77.

[36]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 78. Among the books recommended for study by the itinerants was Jedidiah Morse's Geography.

> ments. These I endeavored to fill regularly, beside preaching often at night, holding prayer meetings, and visiting and comforting mourners.[37]

A few years later he was assigned to form a new circuit.

> I found myself at a very great loss to know how to form a circuit, in that vast wilderness, and had no one to instruct me. I preached, on Sabbath day, in father Lasley's house, and set off, on Monday, on my great and important enterprise. I concluded to travel five miles, as nearly as I could guess, then stop, reconnoiter the neighborhood, and find some kind person who would let me preach in his log-cabin, and so on till I had performed the entire round.[38]
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> . . .
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> I had been gone three weeks, and had formed a full four-weeks' circuit. Not having one resting day in the whole plan, I sat down, wrote out my plan, and, having reviewed and corrected it several times, felt well satisfied. I compared myself to a man settled in the wilderness, who had built his cabin, surveyed his land, and was preparing to clear his farm.[39]

The result was the establishment of the Wayne Circuit in the Cumberland District.

In addition to this expansion of existing circuits and the formation of new circuits along the Methodist frontier, there was the division and recombination of extant charges. Peter Cartwright recalled the Christian Circuit in 1811 as "a four weeks' circuit, most of it parts and fragments of other circuits."[40] The New River Circuit, formed in 1785 in North Carolina, was divided into the Trent and Goshen circuits in 1785.[41] Jesse Lee's narrative history of 1811 is full of examples

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[37] Young, Autobiography, pp. 77-78.

[38] Ibid., p. 84.

[39] Ibid., p. 99.

[40] Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 118.

[41] William L. Grissom, History of Methodism in North Carolina,

of the divisions of circuits in the early days of the Methodist Episcopal Church.[42]

As Methodism occupied an area, the work was gradually subdivided among more people as the membership increased. Several itinerants would be necessary to serve where one had served before. Peter Cartwright, who remembered traveling the Sangamon Circuit in Indiana in 1824 ("My mode of travelling, with few exceptions, was to go from point to point of timber, through the high grass of the prairie."[43]), later recalled what this original area had begotten:

> It may be gratifying to some to see what has grown out of what was within the bounds of the old Sangamon circuit in 1824-25. There is Beardstown station, Virginia circuit, Havana circuit, Delavan mission, East and West charges in Bloomington, Randolph's Grove circuit, Waynesville circuit, Mount Pleasant circuit, Clinton, Honey Creek, Mount Pulaski, Decatur station and circuit, Taylorsville, Sulphur Spring, Virden Island Grove, and Springfield station. Thus the old hive has sent forth twenty swarms, and still retains its old name Sangamon.[44]

In addition to preaching on his rounds about his assigned circuit, the itinerant preacher had other means of gathering members. The Methodist hymns, beginning with those of Charles Wesley, were a means of introducing Methodist tenets. With a scarcity of hymnals, the itinerant (as well as the local preacher) would read the lines to the congregation, and all would sing the line in response. The itinerant also served as a traveling book-dealer for the products of the Methodist

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from 1772 to the Present Time (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1905), p. 165.

[42]Lee, Short History, passim.

[43]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 250.

[44]Ibid., pp. 257-258.

Episcopal Publishing House. This practice also came from the Wesleys.[45] Books, magazines, and newspapers spread the Methodist point-of-view in the absence of the preacher.[46]

Itinerancy was the fundamental key to the Methodist organization both theologically and geographically. By it preachers were called not only to travel the course of their assignment during the year but also to itinerate around the country from year to year. Through this movement the talents of the church were spread. And by this means as well the church expanded and intensified its sphere of influence on the North American continent.

Lay Activities

The most massive apparatus for expansion within the Methodist Episcopal Church was its own membership.[47] Even more so than in the case of the local ministry, however, the results of the local membership in this work are unrecorded or mentioned in passing by most early historians of the denomination. Yet their influence was great and contributed both to territorial concentration and to areal expansion.

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[45]Cartwright wrote, "It has often been a question that I shall never be able to answer on earth, whether I have done the most good by preaching or distributing religious books." See Autobiography, p. 279.

[46]For a discussion of these means of church expansion, see Wesley M. Gewehr, "Some Factors in the Expansion of Frontier Methodism, 1800-1811," Journal of Religion, VIII, No. 1 (January 1928): 98-120. Both Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), pp. 96-122, and Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), pp. 192-207, treat the importance of hymns to the camp meeting movement in particular. Peter Cartwright, in praise of the frontier Methodists, said, "They could, nearly every soul of them, sing our hymns and spiritual songs." See Autobiography, p. 75.

[47]Stevens, History, I:180.

Conversion of new members and the strengthening of new converts were the means of territorial concentration exercised by the laity. Once one member of a family joined the Methodists, it was frequently the case that he or she began to work on the other members of the family. The memoirs of circuit-riders speak in many cases of how parents or siblings changed a youthful love of frivolity into a serious minister of the gospel.[48]

Almost as commonplace as these efforts in concentration was the territorial expansion brought about by the emigration of Methodist families. When Jedidiah Morse was discussing Michigan Territory in 1811, he noted the many Methodists "among the lower orders of people."[49] D. R. McAnally noted this situation, too, but called it providential in that these were "the classes most given to migrations from place to place" and "most likely to be first in the occupancy of new countries."[50]

Lee noted this emigration "through fear, necessity, or choice" during the Revolution.[51] To be repeated again and again, the process consisted of emigration, formation of a new Methodist class or society, and the call back for a preacher to be sent. Local preachers were often in this migration, as were groups or families. All that remained was

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[48]For example, see Peter Cartwright's account of his conversion in Autobiography, pp. 34-38. Others became Methodists despite their parents' objections. Jacob Young's father opposed his conversion; later the entire family became Methodists. See Autobiography, pp. 43-49.

[49]Jedidiah Morse, Geography Made Easy: Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography. To Which Are Prefixed Elements of Geography. Sixteenth ed.; fourth ed. of new abridgement (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1813), p. 176.

[50]McAnally, Life of Patton, p. 97.

[51]Lee, Short History, p. 84.

for the "new" group to be added to an existing circuit or to be contained as part of a new charge.

Migrations also tended to deplete existing circuits. McAnally noted in Missouri that these migrations tended to occur in the fall. Between visits by the itinerant a church left in a prosperous condition might be found to remain with perhaps only half its previous membership.[52] Hence the migration process constituted the proverbial two-edged sword, cutting members out of the existing Methodist sphere as it was carving out additions to that domain.

Cross-Denominational Expansion

Revivals

Methodism was no stranger to religious revivals. It was itself a revival movement within the Church of England. John Wesley's belief was that the "Preachers called Methodists" had been raised up "not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."[53] In America for some time after its official transformation into a denomination at the Christmas Conference, the Methodist Episcopal Church retained characteristics of both movement and church.

America from the middle-eighteenth to the early nineteenth

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[52]David Rice McAnally, History of Methodism in Missouri; from the Date of Its Introduction, in 1806, down to the Present Day; with an Appendix, Containing Full and Accurate Statistical Information, Etc. (St. Louis: Advocate Publishing House, 1881), pp. 148-149.

[53]John Wesley, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others from the Year 1744, to the Year 1789," in The Works of John Wesley, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958-1959), VIII:299. Emphasis mine.

centuries experienced two great periods of spontaneous religious revival. These were the Great Awakening and the Second Awakening (or the Great Revival). Both were periods which stressed the role of the individual (outside the institution of the Church) in seeking after and securing salvation. Wesleyan Methodism's early success in the Southern colonies was a part of the close of the first period, while the great success in expansion of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the American frontier was tied closely to the second.

The Great Awakening

Sweet divided the Great Awakening into three phases: the Middle Colony Revival, the New England Awakenings, and the Southern Awakenings.[54] The chief factor in this revival of religion was the growth of pietism in which "the immediate, personal, subject experiences of religion were central," affording "an intimate relationship with the divine."[55] The infusion of pietism into the colonial religious scene provided the means of reaching out to the great body of nonchurch-members in the colonies.

The Middle Colony Revival began with the preaching of the Dutch Reformed minister Theodore J. Frelinghuysen in New Jersey. This revival reached a peak in 1726 and was joined by a revival among the Scotch-Irish

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[54]William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942; reprint ed., New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), pp. 271-318. See also Clifton E. Olmstead, History of Religion in the United States (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1960), pp. 155-178 and Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 280-329.

[55]Edwin Scott Gaustad, A Religious History of America (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 145.

Presbyterians. This latter revival spread through the 1730s and was aided by the arrival and preaching of the itinerant Anglican evangelist George Whitefield.[56] Both movements were successful in gathering in new members, but both also resulted in religious schisms in the two groups affected by the revival.

The New England Awakenings started with a revival beginning in Northampton, Massachusetts, under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards in 1734.[57] It was spurred further by a tour through the New England region by George Whitefield in 1740, followed by a longer tour by Gilbert Tennant, another of the revival leaders in the Middle Colonies. There was great reaction in New England over the extemporaneous preaching of Whitefield, Tennant, and others, as well as excesses on the part of some of the hearers. Opposition set in, as had happened in the Middle Colonies, but the increases in churches, members, and religious feeling in New England resulting from the Awakenings were proof of its effectiveness if not approval of all its corollary occurrences.

The Southern Awakenings differed from the previous two in that they were more interdenominational in nature, were closely-related forebears to the Second Awakening, kindled Methodist and Baptist development in the colonies, and marked "the real beginning of the democratizing of religion in America."[58] This segment began as a revival by the Presby-

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[56]Sweet called Whitefield "the greatest evangelist of his time and perhaps of all time" in Religion in Colonial America, pp. 276-277. Whitefield was a Methodist, but he held Calvinist views rather than the Arminian views of Wesley. He, like Wesley, however, showed an inclination to work with any denomination or minister whose purpose was evangelism.

[57]Olmstead denoted this period "The Edwardian Revival." See History of Religion, p. 162.

[58]Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, p. 292.

terians, when the Middle Colony evangels happened on fertile ground in central Virginia. A second revival commenced among the Baptists centered in Sandy Creek, North Carolina. Finally, the infant Methodist movement in Virginia and Maryland was nurtered by the other awakenings. As in both other regions, here, too, the itinerant journeys of George Whitefield were important to the success and notoriety of the Awakening.

The results of these varied submovements of the Great Awakening were myriad.[59] Large increases in membership and in the number of churches were noted. The distribution of certain denominations--such as the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists--over the colonies changed dramatically. An interest in missions and an increasing social consciousness and humanitarianism also resulted. A pattern of evangelism began which would break forth sporadically in the future. On the other side, dissension and controversy between the various schools of religious thought resulted--and were not always healed.

The Second Awakening

The Second Awakening came after a period of decline in religious and moral feeling following the American Revolution.[60] It began in the two Presbyterian colleges of Hampden-Sydney and Washington (later Washington and Lee) in Virginia in 1786. Students experienced a revival of the pietism which had resulted in the Great Awakening. From the two

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[59]See Sweet, Religion in Colonial America, pp. 311-318 and Olmstead, History of Religion, pp. 179-191.

[60]John B. Boles termed this period the Great Revival and discussed it in The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972). See also Alhstrom, Religious History, pp. 415-454.

colleges the movement spread to other Presbyterian and Congregational colleges in the new nation. The increasing number of Methodist itinerants was also a potent force in its Eastern phase. One result was an increase in church members and in religious feeling in the East. Lee wrote that the revival in Virginia in 1776 had "exceeded any thing that had been known before in that part of the country," but that the revival in 1787 "far exceeded" the previous one. The revival was not limited to the preaching meetings; conversions occurred in prayer meetings, class meetings, even at work.[61] Another product of the awakening was the growth in the numbers of revival-minded ministers who helped in the second phase of the movement, the great frontier expansion.

The frontier phase of the Second Awakening varied according to denomination. There was much interdenomination cooperation in the form of union meetings.[62] However, there remained theological differences between Calvinism on the one hand and Arminianism on the other. Each denomination brought its own characteristics over the mountains, there to be transformed.

There was a more emotional basis to the awakenings in the West, too, which was tuned to the status, needs, and conditions of the frontier and its inhabitants. A lack of indoor meeting places large enough to hold interested hearers led to outdoor meetings. These lengthened into

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[61]Lee, Short History, pp. 133-134.

[62]John Carr tells us that "All prejudice and bad feeling seemed to cease between the Presbyterians and the Methodists; and it was no easy matter to tell which of them were the more noisy in shouting the praises of God." See Early Times in Middle Tennessee (Nashville: E. Stevenson and F. A. Owen, 1857; reprint ed., Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1958), p. 35.

the protracted meeting or camp meeting discussed below. Some denominations were aghast at some of the phenomena associated with the frontier revival, while others were less reserved.[63] The Methodists used the frontier techniques longer than did most other denominations, gradually institutionalizing them along the way.

The Second Awakening peaked in the early nineteenth century, although its camp-meeting trademark lasted to mid-century and became the indoor revival. More excesses occurred than in the Great Awakening, but its effects have been labelled positive for the most part.[64] Its influence lasted long beyond its ebb.

Revivalism in the Nineteenth Century.

The revival movement did not end in America with the slowing of the Second Awakening. Evangelical revivalism was the foremost religious movement of the first half of the nineteenth century.[65] The emphasis on personal experience led to the growth of many new sects and the transformation of older ones. Successive frontiers experienced spiritual rebirth as had the colonies in the Great Awakening, but with characteristics that were more similar to those of the Second Awakening.

Revivalism had both its good and its bad points. On the one

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[63]Peter Cartwright said, "Infidelity quailed before the mighty power of God, which was displayed among the people." See Autobiography, p. 48.

[64]Olmstead, History of Religion, p. 263. See also Young, Autobiography, p. 59.

[65]Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 475. Elizabeth Nottingham stated that although there were some churches aloof from the revival movement, there was in the early nineteenth century no major church which scorned the use of such methods. See Methodism and the Frontier: Indiana Proving Ground (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 174.

hand it was a democratizing influence in society and a powerful technique for gathering in new members. On the other hand it gave rise to anti-intellectual and anti-cultural feelings, with its emphasis on the emotions. Sectarianism on the part of many speakers was another corollary to nineteenth-century revivalism.[66]

The Methodist Episcopal Church was in the forefront of the revival movement, with her members and ministers representing both sides of such an emphasis on the individual. Tempering this emphasis with the disciplinary arrangement of its connectional structure, the Methodists were able to withstand more effectively (though not completely) the divisions of other, less centralized denominations. Throughout the nineteenth century, as the Methodist Episcopal Church pushed its own frontiers outward, it constantly used revival methods in its outreach. Not only did it result in members in the new conquered areas; it also stirred up new efforts in older, more-settled regions.

Camp Meetings

Closely associated with the Second Awakening was the phenomenon of the camp meeting.[67] Although it came to be identified with the

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[66] T. Scott Miyakawa, Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 159-173. Miyakawa suggested that the emphasis on the individual and spiritual "other-worldliness" deadened much of society to the social ills about them--particularly slavery.

[67] Camp meetings have received both fame and infamy, with their effectiveness being questioned and often reduced to such glib phrases as "More souls were made than were saved." Two book-length studies exist, which examine the camp meeting and associated phenomena. These are the more general study by Charles A. Johnson, The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955) and one which relates camp meetings in the South to the social classes with which it was most effective. See Dickson D. Bruce, Jr.,

Methodists, camp meetings were used by various denominations, often in union meetings. As its more bizarre corollaries came into existence, the camp meeting was abandoned by some denominations. These practices were not condoned by the Methodists, but the use of the camp meeting was continued, although never officially endorsed by any governing conference.[68]

The Methodist Episcopal Church was of course no stranger to group or extended meetings. The quarterly conference was quite often a two- or three-day affair, beginning on Friday evening or Saturday morning and lasting until Monday morning. Preaching services were held day and night, with perhaps a love feast, too, and the sacraments were administered. People gathered from twenty or thirty miles around, and attendance was in the hundreds, sometimes in the thousands.[69] To the Methodists, the camp meeting was something of an extension of the quarterly meeting.

The origins of the camp meeting in America are obscure. Pre-Revolutionary Baptist antecedents in North Carolina have been cited.[70] Jesse Lee wrote, "I never could learn whether they began in the upper

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And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp Meeting Religion, 1800-1845 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974).

[68]Francis Asbury approved the use of orderly meetings. On August 24, 1808, he wrote in his journal: "I rejoice to think there will be perhaps four or five hundred camp meetings this year." Similarly, he wrote on September 3, 1809: "I pray God that there may be twenty camp meetings in a week." See Asbury, Journal, II:576, 614.

[69]William Warren Sweet, The Rise of Methodism in the West, Being the Journal of the Western Conference, 1800-1811 (New York: The Methodist Book Concern and Smith and Lamar, 1920), p. 43. This meeting and preaching was of course separate from the business of the quarterly conference conducted by the traveling and local ministers.

[70]Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 25-32.

parts of South Carolina, in Tennessee, or Kentucky. However, I believe they took place through necessity, and without design."[71] Shipp suggested that perhaps the first camp meeting was an open-air gathering in Lincoln County, North Carolina, in 1794.[72] Sweet stated that the phenomenon originated with the Presbyterian James McGready's revivals in Logan County, Kentucky, in 1797.[73] Posey, Boles, and Johnson stated that the first true camp meeting (with people actually camping) planned as such occurred at Gasper River, Kentucky, in July, 1800.[74] Boles said that the term "camp meeting" itself was not used until 1802.[75]

In the South most camp meetings were held at harvest time, late September being the most popular period.[76] Johnson said, too, that meetings held in August and September usually helped to increase the number of new members a preacher could list in his annual report.[77] Any Methodist conference, however, which of necessity brought a number

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[71]Lee, Short History, pp. 280-281.

[72]Albert M. Shipp, The History of Methodism in South Carolina (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1884), p. 272. About three hundred people were converted at this meeting.

[73]Sweet, Methodists, pp. 68-69. Johnston stated that although there were precursors, it was James McGready and his use of the camp meeting which led to their popular use. See Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 31-32.

[74]Walter Brownlow Posey, Frontier Mission: A History of Religion West of the Southern Appalachians to 1861 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 24; Boles, Great Revival, p. 55; and Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 36.

[75]Boles, Great Revival, p. 55.

[76]Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, p. 70. Bruce said that dates ranged from July through October, but that the post-harvest period permitted the common folk time to attend.

[77]Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 86.

of preachers together, was a likely time to hold a camp meeting. Leaton told of a two-week camp meeting held in conjunction with the meeting of the Missouri Annual Conference in 1820. The simultaneous scheduling, he said, was at that time "the almost universal practice in the West."[78]

The camp meetings were situated in a wooded area near a large spring or a river. The small trees were removed, with the limbs of the remaining, larger trees forming a natural canopy. The shape of the camp ground varied; horseshoe-shaped, circular, rectangular, and square meeting grounds have been noted.[79] A crude platform with a pulpit for the preachers was erected at one end of the cleared ground, with seating arranged in front. Seating was segregated by sex and by race. The white men and women were separated in front, with the Blacks behind them or behind the preachers' stand.

Between the stand and the front seats was an area where those seeking conversion were brought when the invitation and exhortation were given at the close of a sermon. This area has been variously called the "altar," "mourners' bench," "anxious seat," and, less solemnly, the "glory pen." Night services were lighted by camp fires, tallow candles, and grease lamps.

Pitched around the edges of the camp ground were the tents or brush arbors of those in attendance.[80] As the camp meeting became

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[78]Leaton, Methodism in Illinois, p. 167. Johnson told that by 1806 it was standard for the last quarterly conference of the year to be held in conjunction with a camp meeting. See Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 86-87.

[79]Johnson said the circular pattern was the most popular. See Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 42.

[80]The selection of site for the camp meeting grounds and the

institutionalized, more substantial structures were erected. The camp meeting grounds became more formal in appearance; in many areas camp meetings were held on the same site for decades.[81]

The schedule of a camp meeting ran from sunrise to 10:00 p.m. or midnight. Sermons, exhortations, family prayer, prayer meetings, and singing services were held at different times, a trumpet being used as the signal. There were generally no sermons at night, only exhortations and singing. "Mourners," those seeking conversion, were gathered at the front of the altar and ministered to until (it was hoped) conversion. These exercises knew no schedule but could happen at any time.[82]

Thomas L. Douglass, the presiding elder of the Nashville District in the Tennessee Conference in 1820, provided the following schedule of events for a camp-meeting held in July of that year. Thirty-three preachers and five thousand people gathered for the meeting, which opened with a sermon on Friday afternoon. A second sermon was held "at candle

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situation of their internal elements are discussed in Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 42-49; Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, pp. 70-71, 73; and Arnold, Kentucky, pp. 257-258. Johnson provided diagrams on camp meeting arrangements on pages forty-three and forty-seven, and Bruce reproduced on page seventy-two a diagram from B. W. Gorham, Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for the Camp Ground (Boston: H. V. Degen, 1854).

[81]Elam Stephenson in 1869 wrote of forty-seven camp meetings being held on one site in Giles County, Tennessee, beginning in 1813. A letter containing this information was printed in John B. McFerrin, History of Methodism in Tennessee, 3 vols. (Nashville: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1871-1874), II:185-186. Johnson said early names for the camp grounds were derived from the stream or water source at which they were located. See Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 42. Later, land was often donated for the gronds, and many such sites were then named after the donors. See Garber, Romance, p. 171 and Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, p. 88.

[82]Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, pp. 80-83; Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 122-144; and McFerrin, Methodism in Tennessee, II:337-339.

light," and those seeking conversion were gathered at both services. Preaching on Saturday was held at sunrise, 8:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 3:00 p.m., but there was too much work at the mourners' bench for candlelight services. Sunday preaching was at sunrise, 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m. Again work among the mourners precluded afternoon and evening services. Monday morning was a time for baptism of new members as well as the administration of the Lord's Supper. A sermon was preached at noon. On Tuesday there was preaching at 8:00 a.m., and the meeting ended at noon. Two hundred and two persons had made a profession of faith, and 111 had been added to the Church.[83]

The number of attendees at camp meetings ranged into the thousands. Jesse Lee attended one in Hancock County, Georgia, in July, 1807, with one thousand lodged within the encampment and the largest congregation set at forty-five hundred.[84] Grissom told of North Carolina meetings of three or four thousand and more.[85] Hammond mentioned an 1803 gathering which garnered three thousand persons, some coming seventy-five miles.[86]

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[83]Letter of Thomas L. Douglass to the editors of the Methodist Magazine, quoted in McFerrin, Methodism in Tennessee, II:353-356.

[84]Minton Thrift, Memoir of the Rev. Jesse Lee, with Extracts from His Journals (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1823; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 304. Lee wrote that the encampment covered four to five acres. Thirty-seven preachers were there. Fourteen sermons and nine exhortations were delivered in the Tuesday through Saturday encampment, and eighty converts were reported.

[85]Grissom, North Carolina, pp. 328-344.

[86]Edmund Jordan Hammond, The Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia: Being a Brief History of the Two Georgia Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church together with a Summary of the Causes of Major Methodist Divisions in the United States and the Problems Confronting Methodist Union (N.P.: 1935), p. 34.

Jacob Young "saw as many as ten thousand people assemble in groves and continue their meetings ten or twelve days."[87]

The largest camp meeting ever held was that at Cane Ridge, Kentucky, in August, 1801. This encampment was led by the Presbyterians, but Methodist preachers participated, too. The estimates of those in attendance range up to twenty-five thousand people from Kentucky, Tennessee, and the Territory North of the Ohio.[88] Not all persons in attendance were serious seekers after religion, however. There was often trouble of a more or less limited nature with rowdies, prostitutes, and "dram-sellers."[89]

The Cane Ridge meeting would be a catalyst for camp meetings in succeeding years. It also attracted attention because of peculiar physical phenomena which occurred during the meetings--for example, those actions called the jerks, the falling exercise, the dancing exercise, the barking exercise, the laughing and singing exercise, and others. So much as been written on these phenomena they they need not be described in detail in this study.[90] John Wesley himself had experienced similar phenomena under his preaching and believed it to be proof of the presence of God. Peter Cartwright thought that in addition to those involuntarily affected, there were other "weak-minded, ignorant, and superstitious" people who merely claimed to be. "It was, on all

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[87]Young, Autobiography, p. 59.

[88]Boles, Great Revival, pp. 64-68.

[89]For example, see Cartwright, Autobiography, pp. 90-93, 141-151 and Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, p. 70.

[90]See Cartwright, Autobiography, pp. 48-51 and McAnally, Methodism in Missouri, pp. 264-270.

occasions," according to Cartwright, "my practice to recommend fervent prayer as a remedy, and it almost universally proved an effectual antidote."[91]

Posey stated that there were three stages to the camp meeting movement: (1) a lack of organization; (2) the rise of regulation; and (3) the decline of their effectiveness.[92] Although the Methodists never officially blessed the camp meeting, one minister did issue a guide to their practice.[93] Their decline has been attributed to an increase in population density and in the number of members in most areas, to a broadening of the social class basis for the denomination, and to the general increase in social standards as the frontier disappeared.[94]

In addition to the obvious success in obtaining members for the church, the camp meeting served several other purposes. It was a means by which religion was introduced to many of the common folk of the frontier.[95] The gathering of preachers gave each one his chance to show his powers in the pulpit, as well as an opportunity for the newer

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[91]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 51. Francis Asbury told of a meeting with a Presbyterian on August 19, 1803, at which the latter told the Bishop of people "falling down" under preaching services. He agreed with Asbury's opinion: "[I]n my judgement any person who could not give an account of the convincing and converting power of God might be mistaken; falling down would not do." After an 1811 camp meeting, he wrote, "I . . . think also that better regulations might be made, and more order kept. "See Journal, II:403, 684.

[92]Posey, Frontier Mission, p. 35.

[93]See Gorham, Camp Meeting Manual.

[94]Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, p. 56 and Johnson, Frontier Camp Meeting, pp. 242-253.

[95]Bruce, And They All Sang Hallelujah, p. 136 and John B. Boles, Religion in Antebellum Kentucky (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), p. 29.

itinerants to learn the techniques of their more experienced colleagues. Finally, the camp meeting with its mass gatherings of people aided in the socialization process of the frontier.

Natural Phenomena

One of the failings of the camp meeting revivals was that their converts were later often backsliders. The appeal to the emotions, if not nurtured into some deeper spirituality, waned, and the professed "seeker after religion" fell by the way. Similar "conversions" of even less stability often accompanied natural phenomena and disasters, as well as the prediction of such occurrences as were to be associated with the Second Coming of the Christ.

A prime example was the results of the New Madrid Earthquake of 1812. Peter Cartwright stated that the "earthquake struck terror to thousands of people, and under the mighty panic hundreds and thousands crowded to, and joined the different Churches."[96] Hundreds joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, according to Cartwright, and although he counted many of the converts of this period as sincere, he concluded that many "no doubt had joined from mere fright."[97] The Baptist preacher Jacob Bower, on the other hand, said that there were probably fewer backsliders among the "earthquake Christians" than in any of the nineteen revivals he had witnessed.[98]

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[96]Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 180.

[97]Ibid., p. 181.

[98]Jacob Bower, "The Autobiography of Jacob Bower: A Frontier Baptist Preacher and Missionary," printed in William Warren Sweet, The Baptists, 1783-1830: A Collection of Source Material, Vol. I of Religion on the American Frontier, 4 vols. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), p. 200.

The earthquake had given added impetus to the concern arising from the sighting of a comet earlier in the same year.[99] Many thought that the end of the world was imminent; at the time of the earthquake those in the immediate vicinity feared this was true. A spirit of unity among those of many and no denominations was the immediate, if temporary, result.

A related phenomenon was Adventism or Millenialism, the searching for signs of the Second Coming of the Christ. For example, when William Miller predicted that this would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844, he attracted the listeners of all denominations.[100] Millenialism did not disappear when this world failed to do so. A cycle of prediction followed by disappointment was the result.

Recapitulation

Isaac Taylor, in writing of the success of the Methodist movement, stated, "On the one hand, without itinerancy there will be no evangelic expansion; and, on the other, without territorial occupation there can be no permanency, and no entireness of the Christian influence, as related especially to the rural districts of a country."[101] Although he was speaking primarily of Britain, the truth of his remarks holds for this country. For the Methodist Episcopal Church, the expansion occasioned by the itinerant ministry as well as migration and other

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[99]Posey, Frontier Mission, p. 35.

[100]Gaustad, Religious History, pp. 151-152 and Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 479-480.

[101]Issac Taylor, Wesley and Methodism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1852), p. 251.

factors, was added to the organic structure of the church. The mechanism of this molding process was the circuit and its combination into districts and annual conferences.

Circuits expanded, contracted, and divided to meet the needs of specific situations, whether on the Methodist frontier or in its more settled regions. New classes and revivals resulted in enlarged (either in population or in geographical extent or both) circuits, while emigration was a contracting process. At the direction of the bishop and the presiding elder, the itinerant went his way to travel an existing route or to form a new one.

The possible growth patterns for a circuit may be illustrated in the following manner. Figure 13 illustrates the process of territorial concentration. Figure 13a shows an existing circuit which is about to undergo such a process by any of those methods described above. Two results may occur. Figure 13b illustrates the circuit after the addition of meeting places, but these additions are contained within the single circuit. If large numbers of new members are added, the circuit may be divided, as in Figure 13c.

Two means of territorial expansion are diagrammed. Figure 14 represents territorial expansion brought about by the incorporation of additional areas into an extant circuit (Figure 14a). Migration has occurred into the area at the head of the circuit, and some new classes have been established (Figure 14b). The circuit-rider adds these and any other classes he may form during his rounds to the existing route to form a new charge (Figure 14c).

The process of establishing a completely new circuit is shown

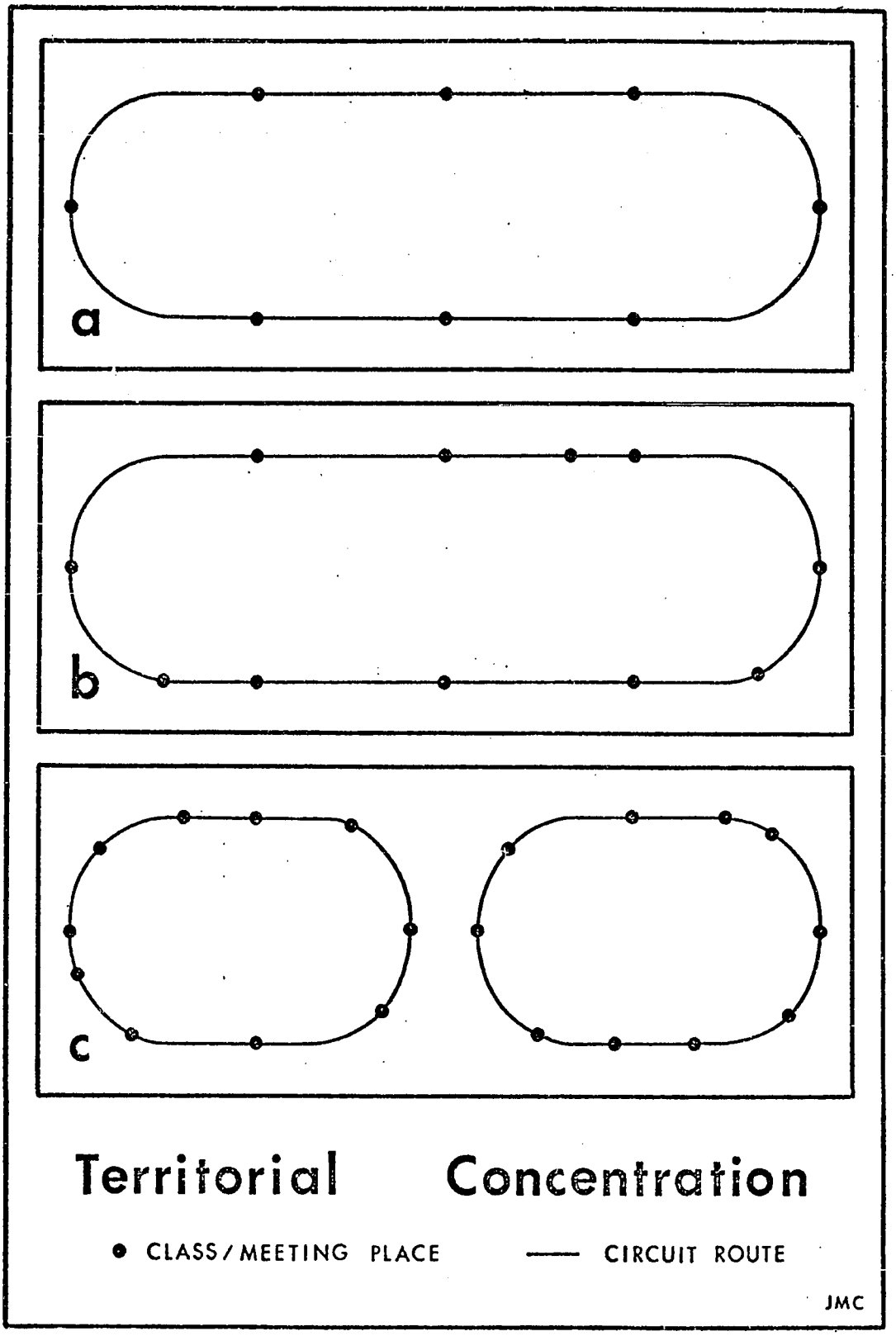
a
b
c
Territorial Concentration
• CLASS/MEETING PLACE
—— CIRCUIT ROUTE
JMC

Figure 13

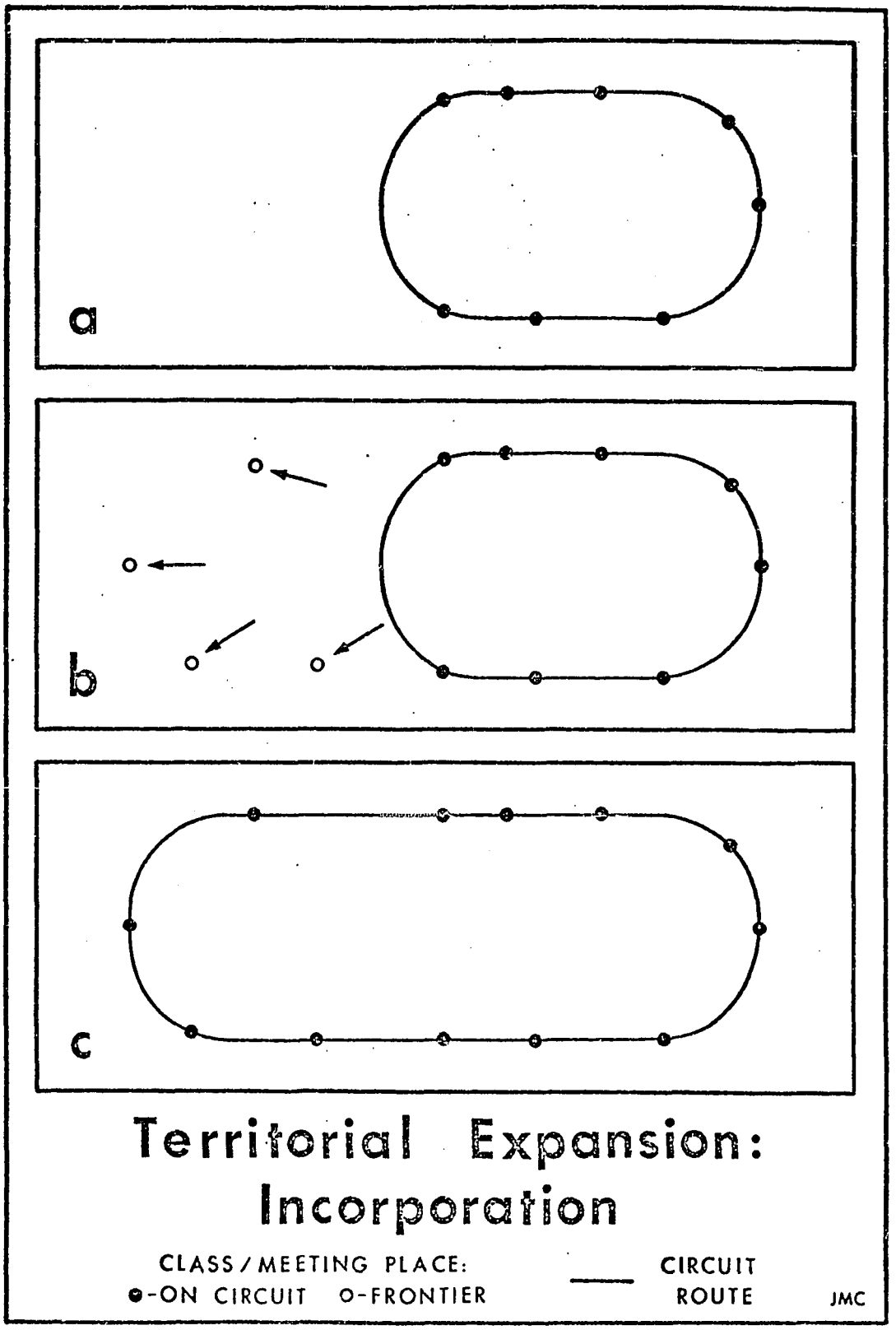
a
b
c
Territorial Expansion:
Incorporation
CLASS / MEETING PLACE:
●-ON CIRCUIT O-FRONTIER
CIRCUIT
ROUTE
JMC

Figure 14

in Figure 15. We may imagine a pristine area free of any Methodists (Figure 15a). Some migration may have occurred into the region, and some Methodist classes may already have been formed by local preachers (Figure 15b). A circuit-rider sent by the church into the region molds these pre-existing classes and other meeting places into a new circuit (Figure 15c).

Any and all of these methods of expansion and concentration might be at work at any given time and place. Figure 16 depicts an existing arrangement (the "Situation") of nine Methodist circuits located along two river valleys and in the mesopotamian area. The locale of this particular set of circuits borders upon a region into which the Methodists have as yet not penetrated. The line of convergence between the region occupied by existing circuits and that as yet unentered we may term the "Methodist Frontier."[102] The situation expressed in this diagram is a static one.

Figure 17--"Transition"--illustrates this same area, but now the region is in a state of flux. Movement by itinerants and migration of the population, including local preachers, takes place both across the "Methodist Frontier" and within the previously-occupied region. The occurrence of revivalism is also depicted.

The new situation, in which the results of the expansion and

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[102]It has previously been noted that the Methodist Frontier and the Frontier as used in its more popular sense do not necessarily coincide. The New England region in the early 1790s, after almost two centuries of European settlement, was as much a frontier to the Methodists as was trans-Appalachia. For a discussion of the various interfaces of Methodism and frontier, see Theodore L. Agnew, "Methodism on the Frontier," in History of American Methodism, 3 vols., ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), I:488-545.

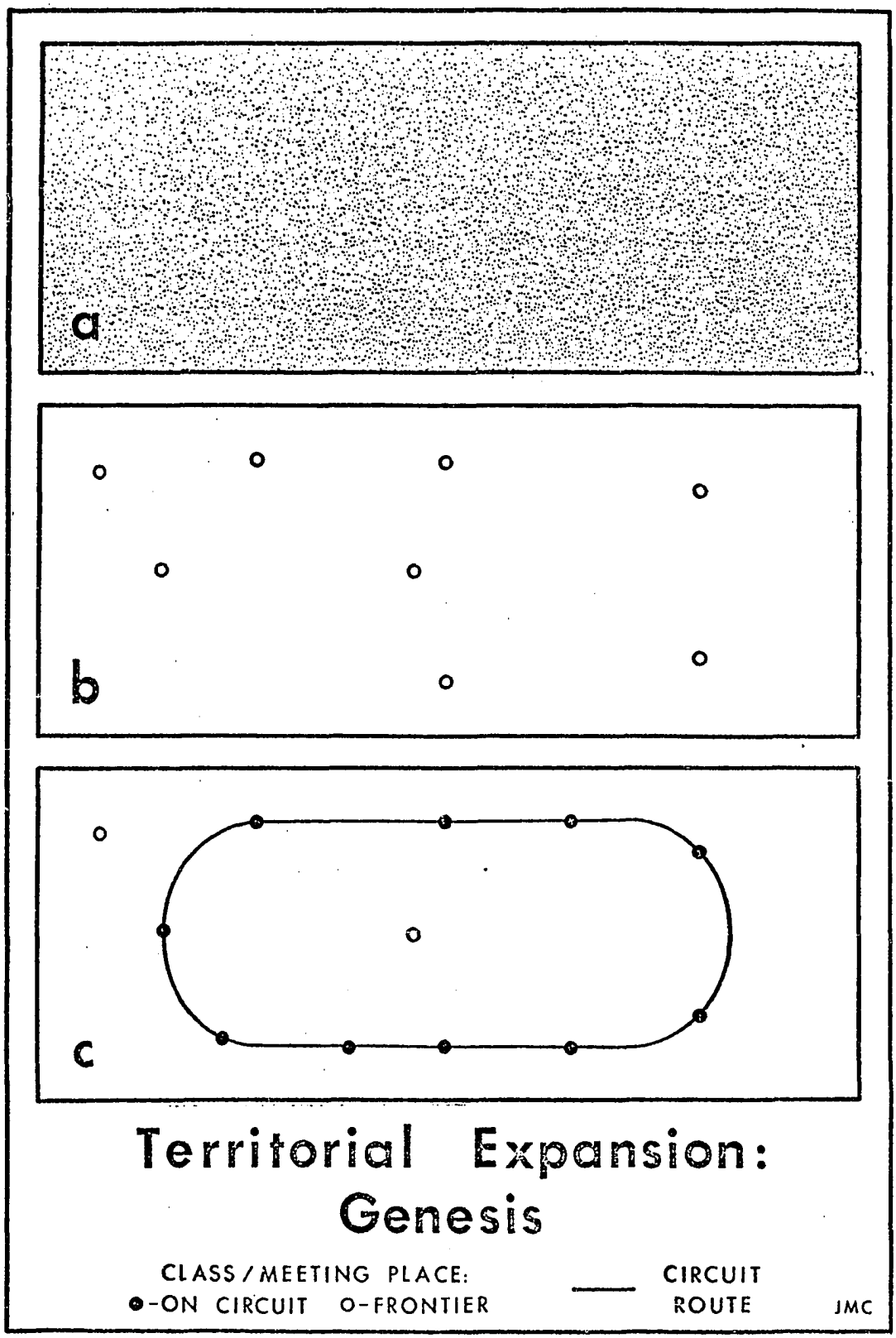
a
b
c
Territorial Expansion:
Genesis
CLASS / MEETING PLACE:
●-ON CIRCUIT O-FRONTIER
CIRCUIT
ROUTE
JMC

Figure 15

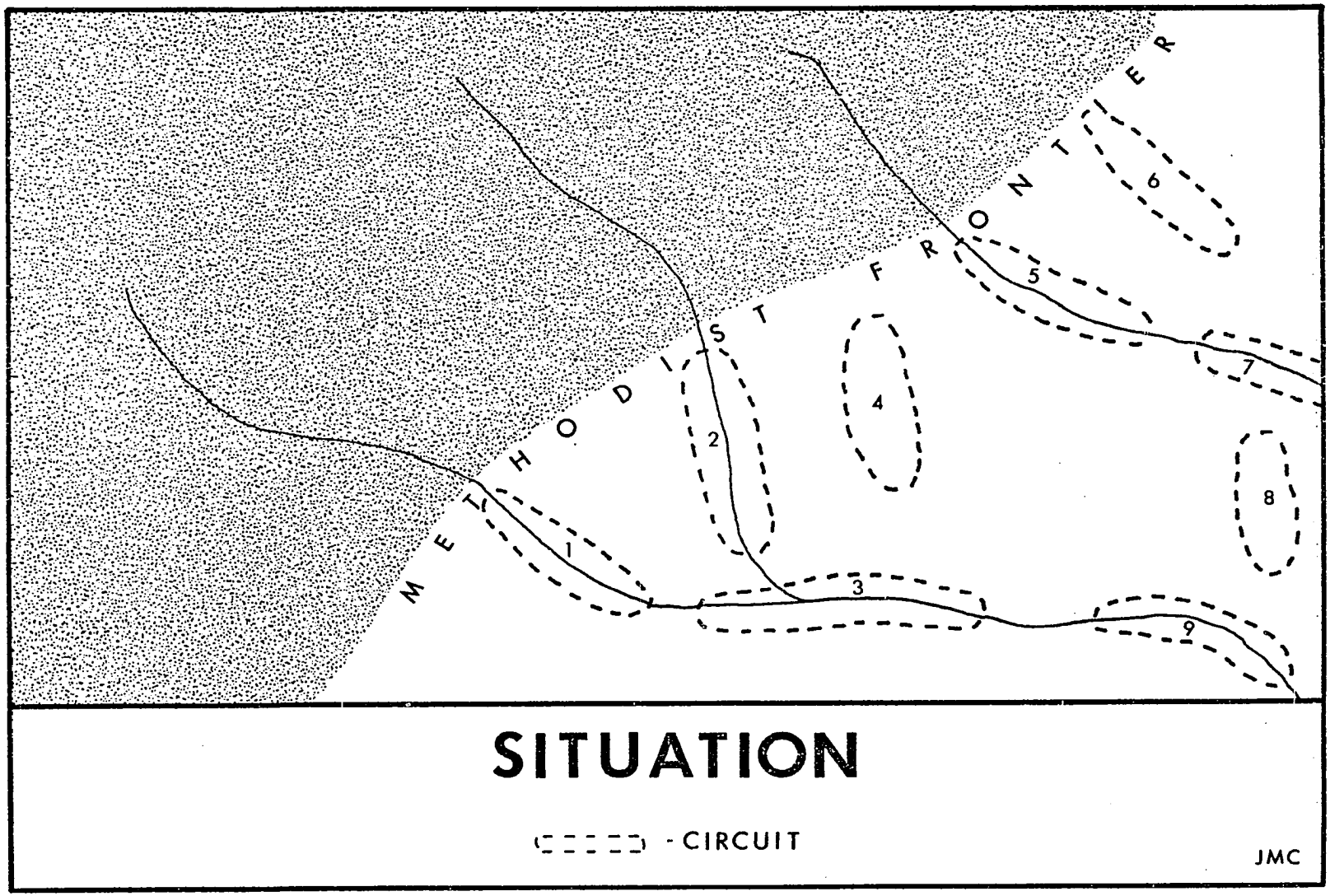

Figure 16

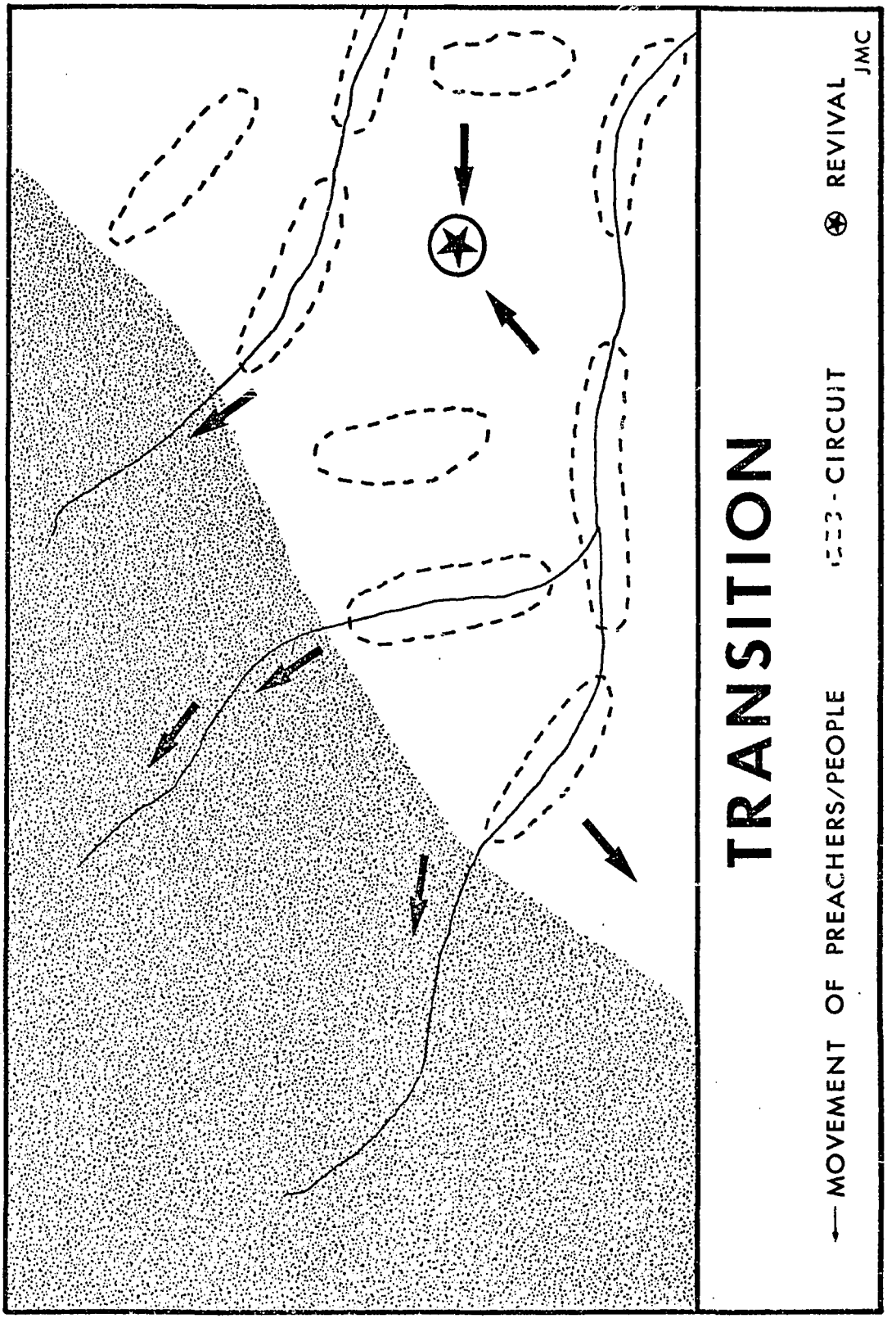
TRANSITION
MOVEMENT OF PREACHERS/PEOPLE
CIRCUIT
REVIVAL
JMC

Figure 17

concentration have been incorporated into the Methodist structure, is shown in Figure 18 ("Synthesis"). Thirteen circuits are now in existence. New circuits (10, 11, 12) have been formed; others (5, 9) have expanded; and one (1a, 1b) has divided. Throughout the time period of this study, the processes illustrated in these diagrams recurred as the Methodist Episcopal Church expanded to mold the continent to its ecclesiastical form.

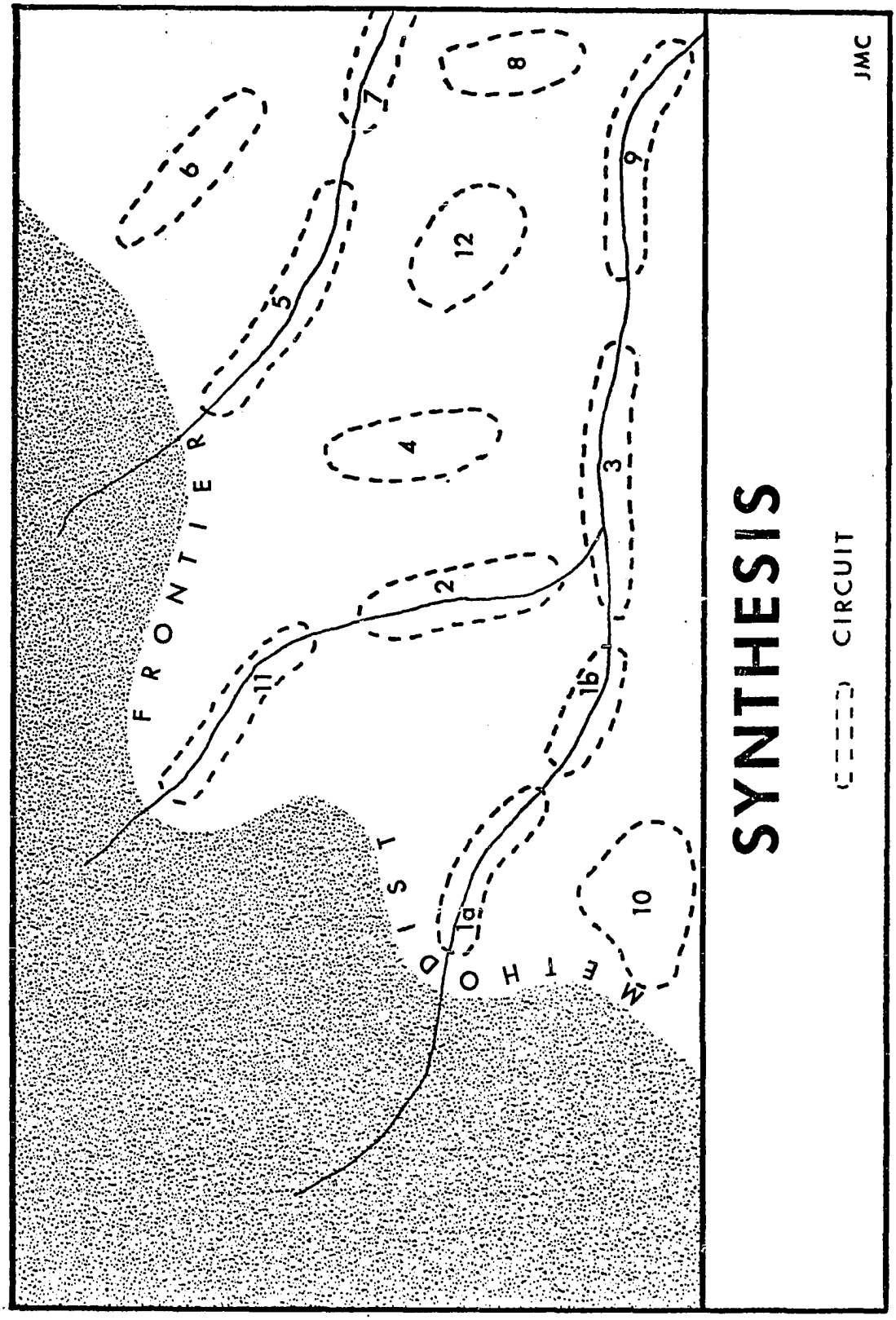
SYNTHESIS
CIRCUIT
JMC
FRONTIER
METHODIST
1a
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
16

Figure 18

CHAPTER V

OCCUPYING THE CONTINENT, 1784-1844

Introduction

At the Annual Conference of 1785, the newly-organized Methodist Episcopal Church reported 18,000 members. These adherents resided in the eight states fronting the Atlantic Ocean between New York and South Carolina.[1] The most striking characteristic of the Methodist distribution at this time was its pronounced southern concentration. The 1784 distribution showed almost ninety percent of the membership living south of the Mason-Dixon Line, forty-two percent in Virginia alone.[2] The growth of the new denomination during the subsequent sixty years would be marked by an exponential increase in membership and by an areal dispersion that would make it a truly national denomination.

One method of illustrating the areal growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church is by mapping its annual conferences. The General Conference of 1796 began the practice of delimiting geographically this

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[1] Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1773-1828 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840), pp. 23-24. The 1785 assignments listed one for Georgia, too.

[2] Ibid., p. 20. The minutes for 1785 did not give a breakdown of the membership, only the total for the entire church.

second tier in the conference hierarchy, a charge given to the Committee on Boundaries. Political boundaries, physical features, and individual districts, circuits, even towns, were used in expressing the outlines of these conferences.

The use of annual conferences as a focus for areal/numerical stock-taking allows one to gauge changes at a level between the micro-scale of the circuit or station and the macro-scale of the denomination as a whole. The method has its shortcomings, however. Methodist circuits--the building blocks for the various levels of conferences--were not constrained by political boundaries or by physical features, even those used to define the individual annual conferences. Thus, the boundary lines drawn on the following maps, even though they endeavor to follow the dictates of the General Conference, should not be considered as absolutes. Rather, each line more often represents a zone of transition between the areas of administration and control of the individual annual conferences.

Growth and Spread, 1784-1796

The delimiting of distinct areas for the annual conference structure arose in large part from the traditional Methodist desire for order and organization. The multiple-annual-conference-session system was getting out of hand. There had been only three such conference sessions in each of the years 1785-1787, a number that mushroomed to nineteen appointed sessions in 1793.

Too, one of the bishops of the church was supposed to preside at each of the sessions. Since Francis Asbury was the only bishop who resided permanently in America, the chore of presiding over the multitude

of annual conference sessions fell to him. Consideration of the health of the pioneer bishop was thus an additional factor in the decision to areally compartmentalize the annual conference system.

The denomination's increasing size--both in membership and in area--was a third consideration. Membership in the church in 1796 was almost four times the 1784 total.[3] In the twelve years after 1784, American Episcopal Methodism also expanded areally beyond its original seaboard confines. Circuits were now located in sixteen states and territories as well as in Canada.

Figure 19 represents the configuration of the first six areally-defined annual conferences of American Episcopal Methodism, those created by the General Conference of 1796.[4] Accompanying numerical data for the conference year 1797, the first official year of existence for the newly-bounded conferences, is found in Table 2.[5] The Virginia Conference alone accounted for almost one-third of the total membership.[6] If

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[3]The church membership rolls had seen an earlier, higher peak in 1793. The 1796 figure represented the bottoming-out of a decline in membership brought on by the O'Kelley Schism, named for its leader James O'Kelley. This break in the denomination was occasioned by a squabble over the power of the bishops to appoint ministers to their respective charges. For more on the schism, see Frederick A. Norwood, "The Church Takes Shape," in History of American Methodism, ed. Emory Stevens Bucke, 3 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), I:440-452.

[4]The official written description of these conferences, taken from the Journal of the General Conference of 1796, is found in Appendix 1.

[5]The "number of circuits" column is derived from counting the number of reporting units listed under the question "What numbers are in Society?" This figure will not always correspond to the number of assignments listed under the question "Where are the preachers stationed this year?" The average number of members per circuit is given to illustrate gross regional differences. If the averages were carried to the district level, even greater disparity in regions would be seen.

[6]This percentage existed despite the fact that Virginia had

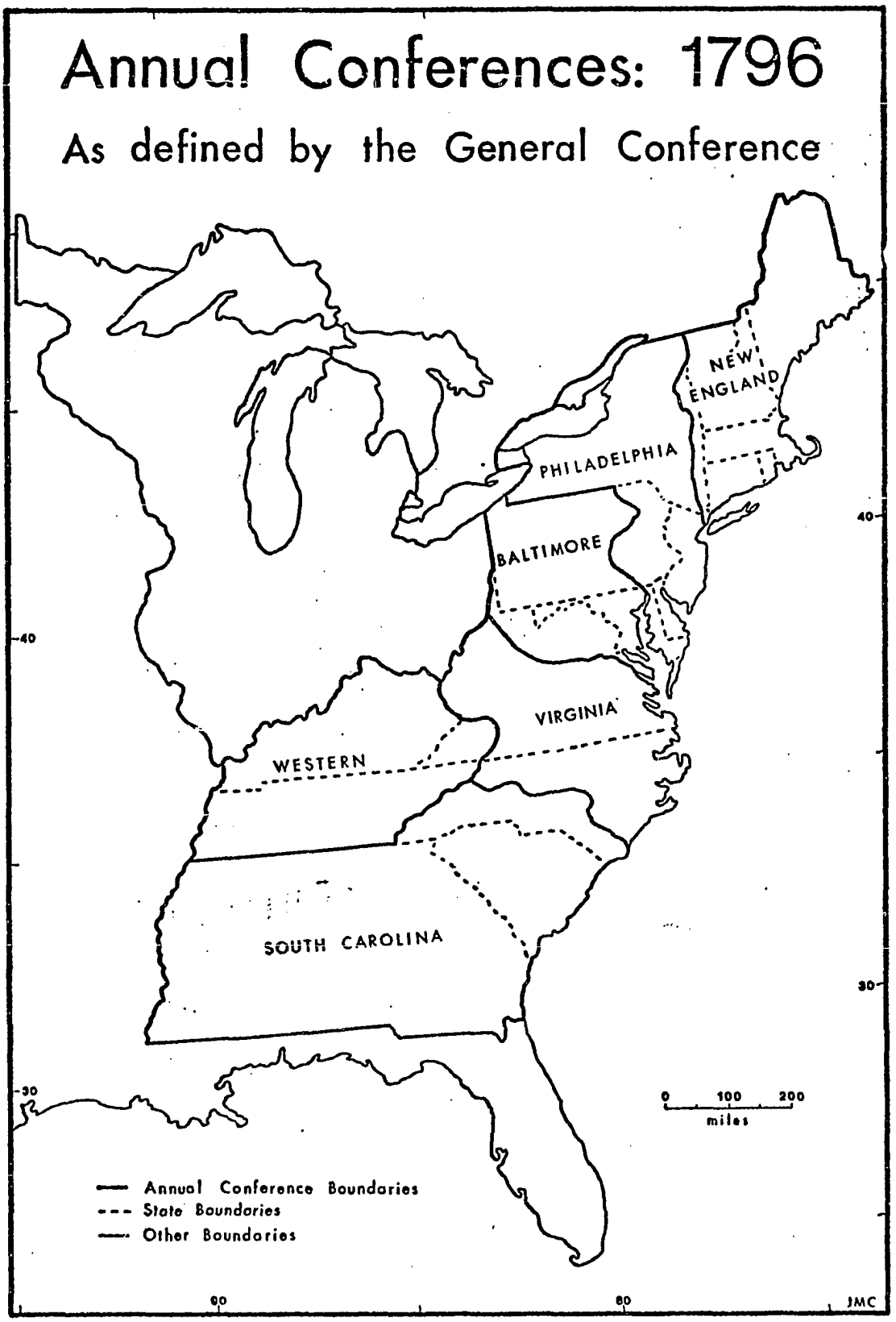
Annual Conferences: 1796
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
VIRGINIA
WESTERN
SOUTH CAROLINA
40
40
30
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
80
80
JMC

Figure 19

TABLE 2

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1797

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Virginia	32	16,880	28.8	528
South Carolina	15	5,880	10.0	392
Western	10	2,886	4.9	289
New England	29	6,111	10.4	211
Philadelphia	33	15,771	26.9	478
Baltimore	27	11,134	19.0	412
TOTAL	146	58,662	100.0	402

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 73-74.

Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia portions of the Baltimore and Philadelphia conferences are added to the Virginia and South Carolina conferences, the southern predominance in membership is shown to continue. Almost seventy-two percent of the total membership was found in the six Southern seaboard states.

The Period of Areal Expansion, 1796-1820

The period 1796-1820 in the history of American Episcopal Methodism is especially marked by territorial expansion. What has been termed a "forced march" to the north and particularly to the west took place as the circuit-riders were sent to travel among the settled areas of the continent as well as to the frontier.[7] By 1820 the denomination had incorporated areally practically as much territory as it was to

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lost thousands of its members to the new Republican Methodist Church established by James O'Kelley.

[7]Edwin Scott Gaustad used this term in his Historical Atlas of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 78.

comprise in 1844. All of the United States territory east of the Mississippi, part of the Trans-Mississippi West, and much of settled Canada, were incorporated into, if not always occupied by, the expanding church.

The General Conference of 1800 divided the area of the New England Conference into the New England and New York conferences (Figure 20 and Appendix 2). Other areas were incorporated beyond the stated boundaries in the Ohio region and in Canada. A change in the political definition of "Georgia" led to a corresponding change in the bounds of the South Carolina Conference.[8]

Church membership in the preceding four years had increased by almost one quarter, to 72,874 (Table 3). The Philadelphia Conference led the seven conferences in total membership. It took this spot over from the Virginia Conference, which had even declined in membership. The total number of circuits grew to 177, up over twenty percent. The average circuit membership was 412.

Although the total number of annual conferences remained at seven in 1804, wholesale changes in boundaries occurred (Figure 21 and Appendix 3). No conference remained untouched. Both the Virginia and South Carolina conferences shrank. The latter's diminution, however, was due to the changing political definition of "Georgia," rather than to any annexation of circuits (excepting Natchez) to other annual

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[8]The South Carolina Conference is an example of a conference in which incorporation and occupation were quite different. Although the conference as described extended to the Mississippi River, it was not until late 1800 that a missionary circuit-rider was sent to the Natchez area to organize a circuit. Between that infant circuit and the circuits in present-day Georgia, there was no area effectively occupied by the church. Even the Natchez Circuit was transferred to the Western Conference after 1801.

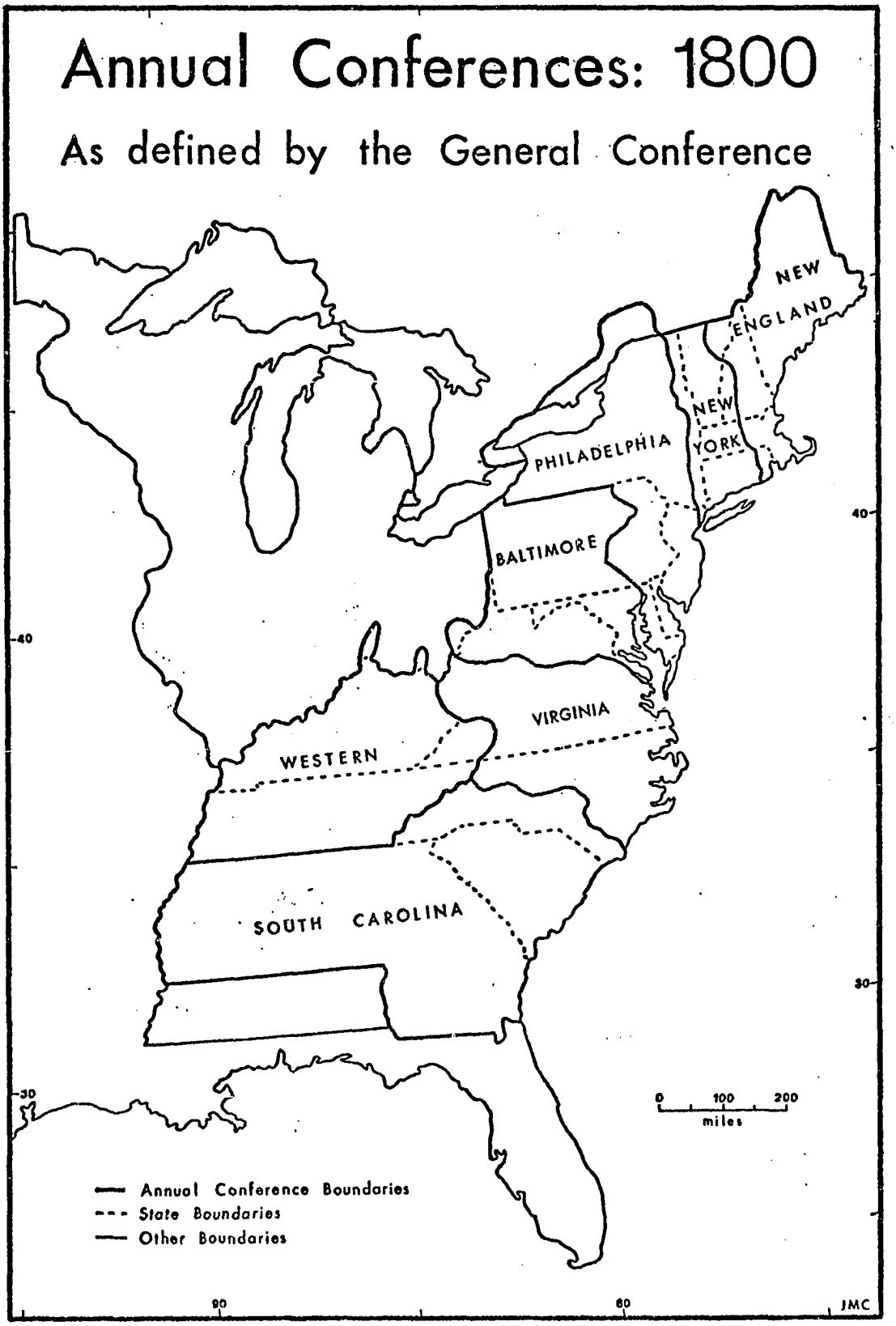
Annual Conferences: 1800
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
VIRGINIA
WESTERN
SOUTH CAROLINA
40
40
30
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 20

TABLE 3

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1801

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
New England	19	2,313	3.2	122
New York	25	7,940	10.9	318
Philadelphia	41	23,233	31.9	567
Baltimore	28	13,122	18.0	469
Virginia	33	15,112	20.7	458
South Carolina	18	7,728	10.6	429
Western	13	3,426	4.7	264
TOTAL	177	72,874	100.0	412

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 97-98.

conferences. Expansion into Ohio and Illinois, as well as in Canada, also resulted in conference changes. Canada itself is mentioned for the first time in the description of the conferences, although its territory shifts administratively from the Philadelphia to the New York conference.

Philadelphia and Baltimore conferences led in total membership, as indicated in Table 4. Church-wide membership totals increased by almost sixty-five percent; some 119,945 members were now claimed by the denomination. The number of circuits, however, increased by less than thirty percent, and a corresponding increase in the average number of members per circuit occurred. Although increasingly difficult to calculate, even more so in terms of orientation if not in political location, the southern majority remained, if in decline vis-a-vis other regions of the church.

There were fewer changes in the conferences of 1808 (Figure 22

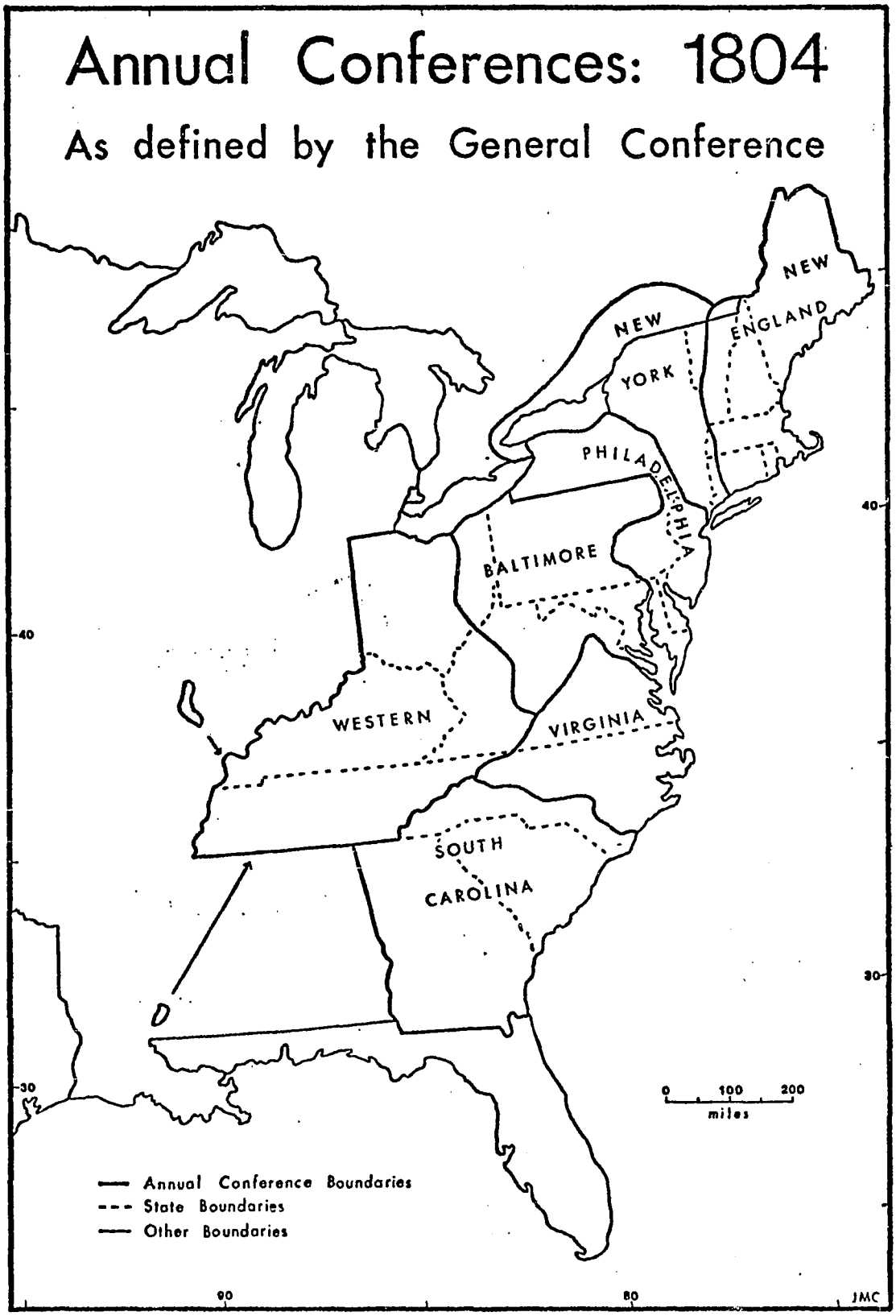
Annual Conferences: 1804
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
WESTERN
VIRGINIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 21

TABLE 4

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1805

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
New England	45	8,540	7.1	190
New York	32	11,686	9.7	365
Philadelphia	35	29,327	24.5	838
Baltimore	39[a]	24,606	20.5	665[a]
Virginia	29	17,820	14.9	614
South Carolina	24	16,089	13.4	670
Western	26	11,877	9.9	457
TOTAL	230[b]	119,945	100.0	526[b]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 129-131.

[a]Only thirty-seven charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only 228 charges listed membership returns.

and Appendix 4). The Philadelphia Conference lost the Cayuga District to the New York Conference but gained the Susquehannah District from the Baltimore Conference. Ohio circuits formerly contained within districts of the Baltimore Conference were this year moved administratively to the Western Conference. The Western Conference outliers in Mississippi/Louisiana and Illinois/Missouri expanded, as did the area of Upper Canada in the New York Conference.

Table 5 shows the numerical strength of the respective annual conferences for 1809. Philadelphia and Baltimore conferences again led the seven in terms of membership. The body of Methodist Episcopal adherents grew to 163,038, an increase of thirty-six percent from the previous period. The rate of increase in the number of circuits was less, which led to a slight increase in the average membership for the 304 charges reported in 1809.

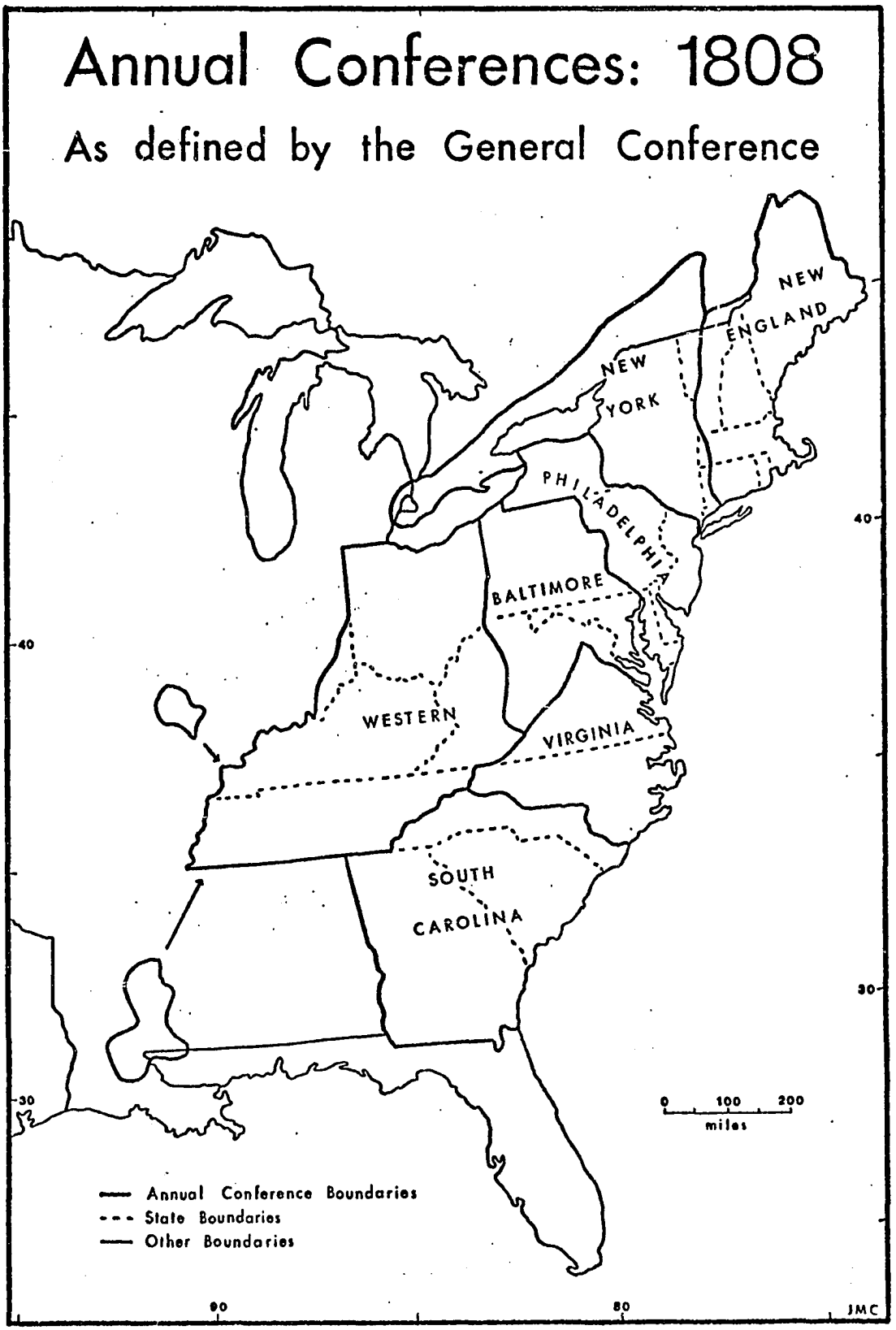
Annual Conferences: 1808
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
WESTERN
VIRGINIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC
40
30

Figure 22

TABLE 5

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1809

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
New England	60[a]	10,096	6.2	171[a]
New York	54	23,654	14.5	438
Philadelphia	39	36,899	22.6	946
Baltimore	41	26,472	16.2	646
Virginia	36	24,241	14.9	673
South Carolina	31	22,628	13.9	730
Western	43	19,048	11.7	443
TOTAL	304[b]	163,038	100.0	538[b]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 169-171.

[a]Only fifty-nine charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only 303 charges listed membership returns.

In the 1812 map (Figure 23, described in Appendix 5) two new annual conferences are shown. The Genesee Conference had been formed by the bishop out of parts of the New York and Philadelphia conferences in 1810; this arrangement was ratified by the General Conference in 1812.[9] The 1812 session divided the old Western Conference into the Tennessee and Ohio conferences. Canadian circuits were assigned to the Genesee Conference, and there were other changes along the boundary of the New York and New England conferences.

Numerically the South Carolina Conference assumed the lead in total membership (Table 6). Sizable increases in membership in the Trans-Appalachian conferences indicated Methodist successes on the

[9]Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855), I:103.

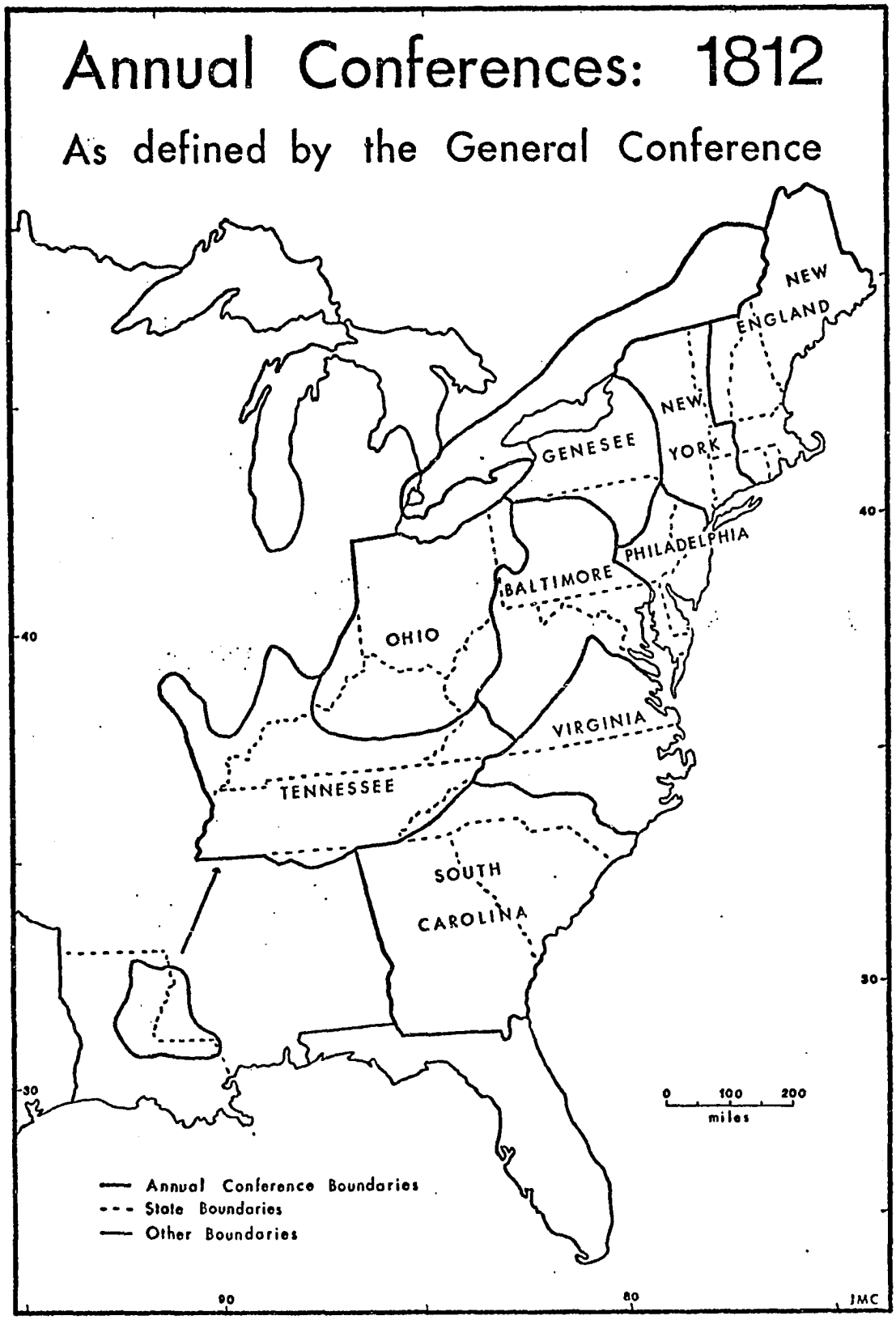
Annual Conferences: 1812
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
NEW YORK
GENESEE
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
OHIO
VIRGINIA
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
40
40
30
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 23

TABLE 6

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1813

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Ohio	39	23,284	10.9	597
Tennessee	43	22,699	10.6	528
South Carolina	45	37,737	17.6	839
Virginia	44	26,151	12.2	594
Baltimore	45	28,262	13.2	628
Philadelphia	39	34,757	16.2	891
New York	41	19,049	8.9	465
New England	60	11,860	5.5	198
Genesee	32	10,508	4.9	328
TOTAL	388	214,307	100.0	552

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 227-229.

Western frontier. Total Methodist Episcopal Church membership increased by another thirty-one percent in this four-year period and now stood at 214,307. The total number of circuits increased by twenty-eight percent, to 388, and the average circuit membership grew to 552.

Two additional annual conferences were given in the General Conference Minutes for 1816 (Figure 24 and Appendix 6). The Mississippi Conference was called into existence in 1813, having previously existed as an outlier to, first, the Western and, later, the Tennessee conferences. At the General Conference itself the Missouri Conference was created, co-extensive by definition with much of the territory of the northwestern United States. Subtle changes took place in several other boundaries, and the Canadian circuits were at this session divided among three annual conferences.

The South Carolina Conference again led the roll in terms of

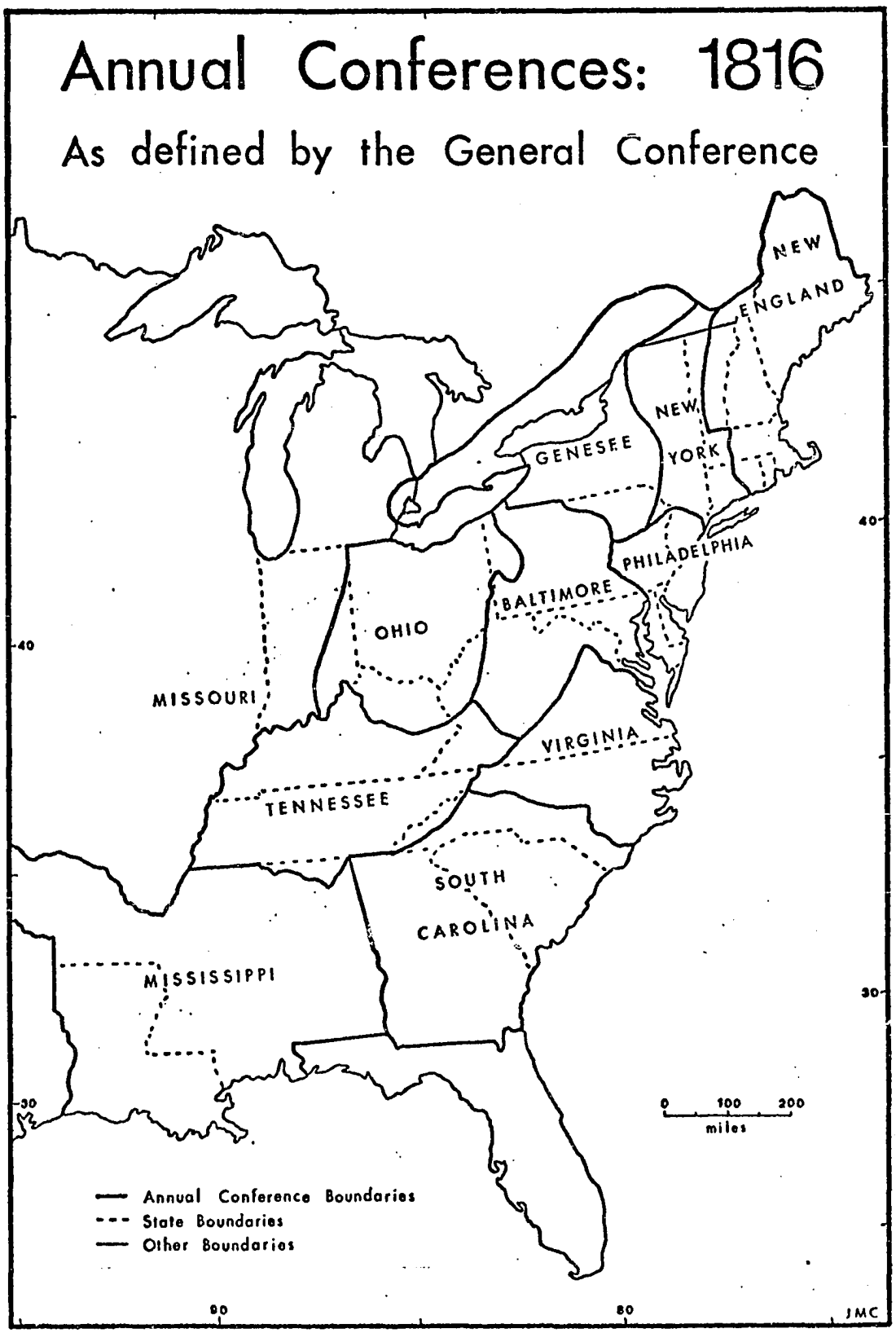
Annual Conferences: 1816
As defined by the General Conference
NEW ENGLAND
NEW YORK
GENESEE
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
OHIO
MISSOURI
VIRGINIA
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
40
30
90
80
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
JMC

Figure 24

total membership (Table 7). Total membership in the church increased by only five percent, in part occasioned by the War of 1812, and stood at 224,853 in 1817. The increase in circuits, though modest, exceeded the rate of increase in total membership. Each of the 437 charges had an average membership of 516.

The 1820 annual conference arrangement showed twelve such conferences (Figure 25 and Appendix 7). Only one new annual conference was created--the Kentucky Conference--formed from portions of the Tennessee, Ohio, and Baltimore conferences. The Ohio Conference expanded, while the Missouri, Tennessee, Baltimore, and Mississippi conferences contracted as a result of their new boundaries.

TABLE 7

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1817

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Ohio	37	22,178	9.9	599
Missouri	20	3,173	1.4	159
Tennessee	40	19,401	8.6	485
Mississippi	9[a]	1,941	0.9	243[a]
South Carolina	50	39,172	17.4	783
Virginia	41	24,152	10.7	589
Baltimore	45	29,992	13.3	666
Philadelphia	38	32,460	14.4	854
New York	46	21,042	9.4	457
New England	59	13,407	6.0	227
Genesee	52	17,935	8.0	345
TOTAL	437[b]	224,853	100.0	516[b]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 294-297.

[a]Only eight charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only 436 charges listed membership returns.

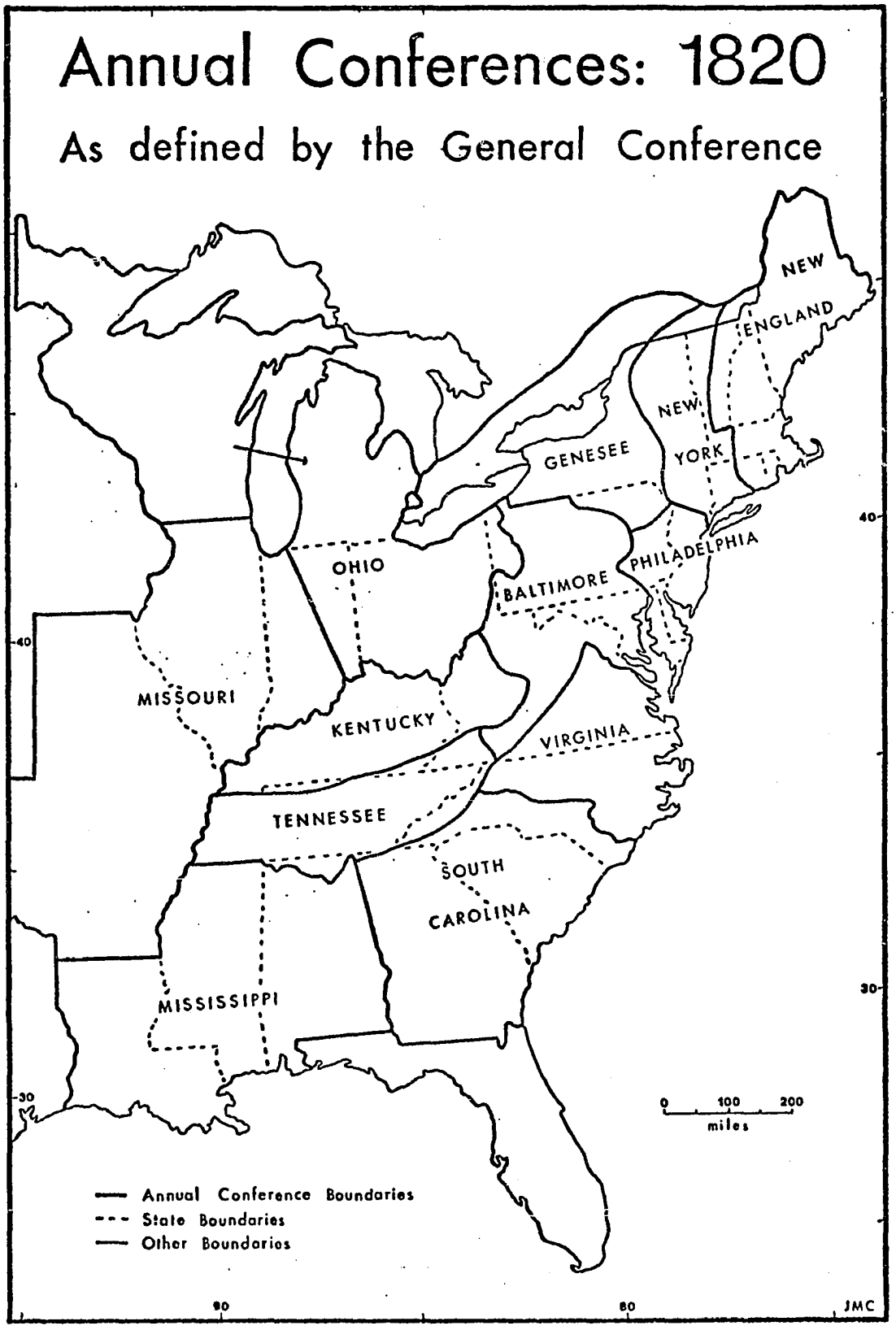
Annual Conferences: 1820
As defined by the General Conference
NEW
ENGLAND
NEW
YORK
GENESEE
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
OHIO
MISSOURI
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
TENNESSEE
SOUTH
CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
40
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 25

These twelve annual conferences contained 281,146 members and comprised some 545 circuits (Table 8). Total membership was up twenty-five percent, the number of circuits up by an equivalent amount. The Baltimore Conference this year was first in membership, while the Mississippi Conference contained the fewest members.

The 1820 configuration of annual conferences is important in that for the period of this study, the Methodist Episcopal Church had

TABLE 8

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1821

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Ohio	48	34,178	12.6	712
Missouri	30	7,458	2.6	549
Tennessee[a]	30	15,192	5.4	506
Kentucky[a]	41[b]	19,367	6.9	523[b]
Mississippi	15	4,147	1.5	276
South Carolina	50	34,590	12.3	692
Virginia	41	24,970	8.9	609
Baltimore	55	37,684	13.4	685
Philadelphia	40	34,805	12.4	870
New York	50	23,638	8.4	473
New England	75[c]	19,650	7.0	266[c]
Genesee	70[d]	25,467	9.0	369[d]
TOTAL	545[e]	281,146	100.0	522[e]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 363-366.

[a]The Kentucky Conference was not listed as a separate conference but was contained within the Tennessee Conference. Data for it was abstracted using the circuits assigned it for the coming year.

[b]Only thirty-seven charges listed membership returns.

[c]Only seventy-four charges listed membership returns.

[d]Only sixty-nine charges listed membership returns.

[e]Only 539 charges listed membership returns.

almost reached its ultimate areal size. There was a more precise definition than in the 1816 descriptions, which had also covered approximately the same area. This 1796-1820 period in the denomination's history witnessed its expansion over the populated portions of the United States and Canada. At the end of twenty-four years of an expanding ecclesiastical structure and of forty-six years as a denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church exhibited to the world "a well-defined ecclesiastical geography, covering all the settled parts of the Republic and Canada."[10]

The Period of Areal Concentration, 1820-1844

As with the 1796-1820 period, the succeeding twenty-four years of American Episcopal Methodism had its own major trait. Whereas the former span of years had been marked by the areal expansion of the denomination over the continent, the latter was to be characterized more by an intensification of that occupation. There was to be less growth in the defined bounds of the church but a dramatic increase in membership and in the number of administrative subdivisions of the denomination.

This territorial concentration was illustrated very well by the actions of the Committee on Boundaries at the 1824 General Conference. Five new annual conferences were created within the 1820 limits of the church (Figure 26). The circuits in Canada were set apart as a conference. An Illinois Conference was formed, comprised of the states of Illinois and Indiana, previously part of the Missouri and Ohio conferences. The Holston Conference was established in the Southern

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[10]Abel Stevens, History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 4 vols. (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1864-1867), IV:186.


Annual Conferences: 1824
As defined by the General Conference
MAINE
CANADA
NEW YORK
NEW ENGLAND
GENESEE
OHIO
PITTSBURG
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
ILLINOIS
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
MISSOURI
HOLSTON
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
40
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 26

Appalachian region, and the Pittsburgh Conference was formed from areas previously contained within the Baltimore, Ohio, and Genesee conferences. Finally, the work in Maine, together with a small region in eastern New Hampshire, was brought together to comprise the Maine Conference. In one year the total number of annual conferences had increased by forty percent.

The total membership in 1825 was twenty-four percent greater than the total of four years before; it stood at 348,195 (Table 9). Of this figure almost sixty percent were found in only six of the seventeen annual conferences: South Carolina, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Virginia, and Ohio. A third of the Methodist membership resided west of the Appalachians. More than 678 circuits were in existence, an increase of almost twenty-five percent over the previous period, and the average membership per circuit dropped slightly.

The 1828 General Conference created no new annual conferences (Figure 27). It provided, however, in more specific terms than usual, that several new annual conferences could be set apart during the coming interval between general conferences. Such action would be at the discretion of the bishop(s) and with the consent of those annual conferences to be affected.

Although no new conferences were formed, the General Conference did make some changes in some of the existing boundaries. The Kentucky and Tennessee conferences exchanged areas. A change of territorial boundaries caused a change in the make-up of the Missouri Conference. Other, minor changes occurred, but the greatest change was the removal of the Canadian circuits from American control. This separation took

TABLE 9

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1825

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Ohio[a]	45	28,599	8.2	636
Kentucky[a]	48	24,085	6.9	502
Missouri	21	3,354	1.0	160
Illinois	21	9,225	2.6	439
Tennessee	28	13,577	3.9	485
Holston	18	14,934	4.3	830
Mississippi	26	10,024	2.9	385
South Carolina	64	43,049	12.4	673
Virginia	45	28,999	8.3	644
Baltimore	42	32,316	9.3	769
Philadelphia	44	36,655	10.5	833
New York	66	28,848	8.3	437
New England	67	16,055	4.6	240
Maine	32	6,960	2.0	218
Genesee[a]	65	25,473	7.3	392
Canada	22	6,875	2.0	312
Pittsburgh[a]	--	19,167	5.5	---
TOTAL	678	348,195[b]	100.0	485[b]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, pp. 449-473.

[a]No separate Pittsburgh Conference was listed this year. One has been constructed using the districts and circuits which comprised that conference in 1826. As a result, the totals listed for the Ohio, Kentucky, and Genesee conferences differ from those listed in the Minutes. An undetermined number of circuits and their members, listed as having come from the Baltimore Conference, was listed in the "General Recapitulation." That total has been added to the total membership for 1825 and to the Pittsburgh Conference. No exact number of circuits for the Pittsburgh Conference could be calculated.

[b]Only 329,028 members, the total membership excluding that of the Pittsburgh Conference, was used to determine the average size of each charge.

place by mutual consent in 1828, and the Canadian Methodists were later to affiliate with the British Wesleyans.

In terms of membership in 1829, the South Carolina Conference resumed its premier role (Table 10). Total church rolls increased by


Annual Conferences: 1828
As defined by the General Conference
MAINE
NEW YORK
NEW ENGLAND
GENESEE
OHIO
PITTSBURG
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
ILLINOIS
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
MISSOURI
HOLSTON
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
40
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 27

TABLE 10

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1829

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Pittsburgh	46	22,759	5.2	495
Ohio	48	33,101	7.5	690
Missouri	16	3,607	0.8	225
Illinois	34	18,840	4.3	554
Kentucky	46	28,570	6.5	621
Holston	29	19,964	4.5	688
Tennessee	43	20,677	4.7	481
Mississippi	34	14,924	3.4	439
South Carolina	82[a]	60,008	13.7	741[a]
Virginia	54	38,140	8.7	706
Baltimore	52	38,330	8.9	749
Philadelphia	53	42,978	9.8	811
New York	79[b]	33,160	7.5	425[b]
New England	110	20,557	4.7	187
Genesee[c]	96	32,892	7.5	343
Maine	49	9,942	2.3	203
TOTAL	871[d]	439,065	100.0	505[d]

Source: Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1829-1839 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840), pp. 3-35.

[a]Only eighty-one charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only seventy-eight charges listed membership returns.

[c]The Oneida Conference had been created in time for inclusion in these minutes. Those figures were joined together with those reported for the Genesee Conference to create data for only those annual conferences reported in the General Conference of 1828.

[d]Only 869 charges listed membership returns.

over twenty-five percent, and the total number of circuits by almost thirty percent. As the number of circuits neared one thousand, church membership approached the half-million mark.

By the adjournment of the 1832 General Conference, another six

annual conferences had come into being (Figure 28 and Appendix 10). During the general conference interval, three new annual conferences had been established. The Oneida Conference was created in 1829, its territory coming primarily from the Genesee Conference. In 1830 most of Georgia and Florida, previously a part of the South Carolina Conferences, was set apart as the Georgia Conference. Finally, much of New Hampshire and Vermont were brought together as the New Hampshire Conference in 1831.

At the General Conference session itself the Committee on Boundaries recommended the creation of another three annual conferences. The Indiana Conference was carved from the Illinois and Ohio conferences. Divided approximately in half, the Mississippi Conference became the Mississippi and Alabama conferences. The Troy Conference was created from the northern portion of the New York Conference. Additional changes took place in other existing conferences. The Northwestern Territory was added to the bounds of the Illinois Conference, the Indian Territory was placed within the limits of the Missouri Conference, and the Holston Conference expanded into both Georgia and South Carolina.

The Philadelphia Conference led the twenty-two annual conferences in total membership (Table 11). For the first time, however, no single annual conference had so much as ten percent of the total church membership. Between 1829 and 1833 the number of American Episcopal Methodists grew thirty-six percent, the number of circuits by an equivalent amount. The membership in Trans-Appalachia continued to increase its share of the total. There were 599,736 members reported in this conference year, an average of 504 on each of the charges.

There were no new annual conferences formed during the next

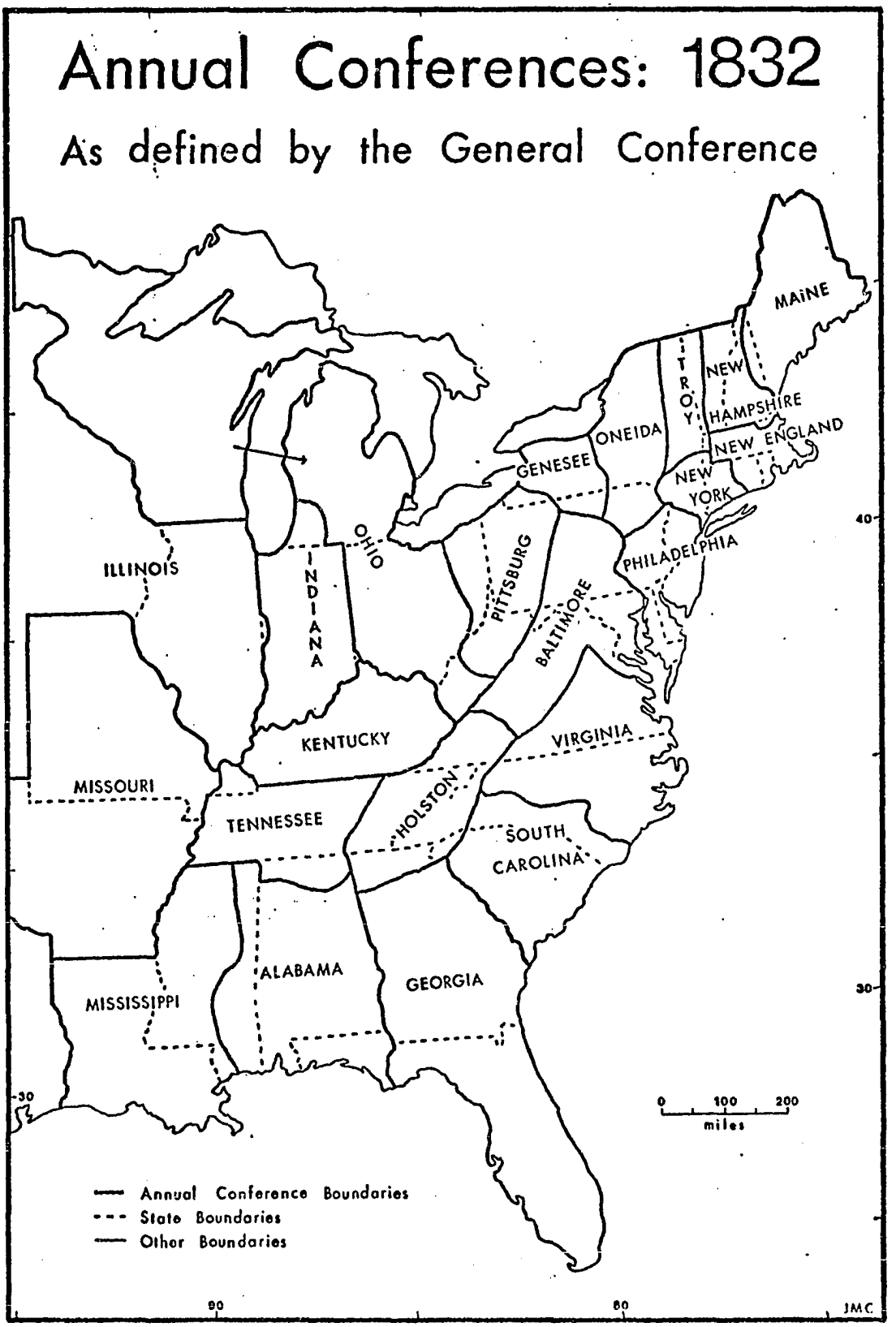
Annual Conferences: 1832
As defined by the General Conference
MAINE
NEW HAMPSHIRE
TROY
NEW ENGLAND
ONEIDA
GENESEE
NEW YORK
PHILADELPHIA
BALTIMORE
PITTSBURG
OHIO
INDIANA
ILLINOIS
KENTUCKY
VIRGINIA
MISSOURI
TENNESSEE
HOLSTON
SOUTH CAROLINA
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
MISSISSIPPI
40
30
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 28

TABLE 11

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1833

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Pittsburgh	57	29,493	4.9	517
Ohio	69	51,460	8.6	746
Missouri	29	7,198	1.2	248
Illinois	29	10,318	1.7	356
Indiana	39	20,035	3.3	514
Kentucky	50	26,193	4.4	524
Tennessee	53	29,156	4.9	550
Holston	35	23,114	3.9	660
Georgia	55	33,574	5.6	610
Mississippi	30	9,726	1.6	324
Alabama	22	10,966	1.8	498
South Carolina	41	47,099	7.8	1149
Virginia	69	41,808	7.0	606
Baltimore	64	49,239	8.2	769
Philadelphia	70	55,071	9.2	787
New York	58	30,477	5.1	525
New England	80	15,621	2.6	195
Maine	77	14,591	2.4	189
New Hampshire	64	15,703	2.6	249
Troy	51	18,492	3.1	363
Oneida	94[a]	37,187	6.2	404[a]
Genesee	56	23,215	3.9	415
TOTAL	1191[b]	599,736	100.0	504[b]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1829-1839, pp. 164-213.

[a]Only ninety-two charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only 1189 charges listed membership returns.

general conference interim. Another six were added, however, during the 1836 General Conference session, bringing the total to twenty-eight (Figure 29 and Appendix 11). Created by the General Conference at this session were the Arkansas, Michigan, North Carolina, Black River, New Jersey, and Erie conferences.

The Arkansas Conference was formed from portions of the Missouri

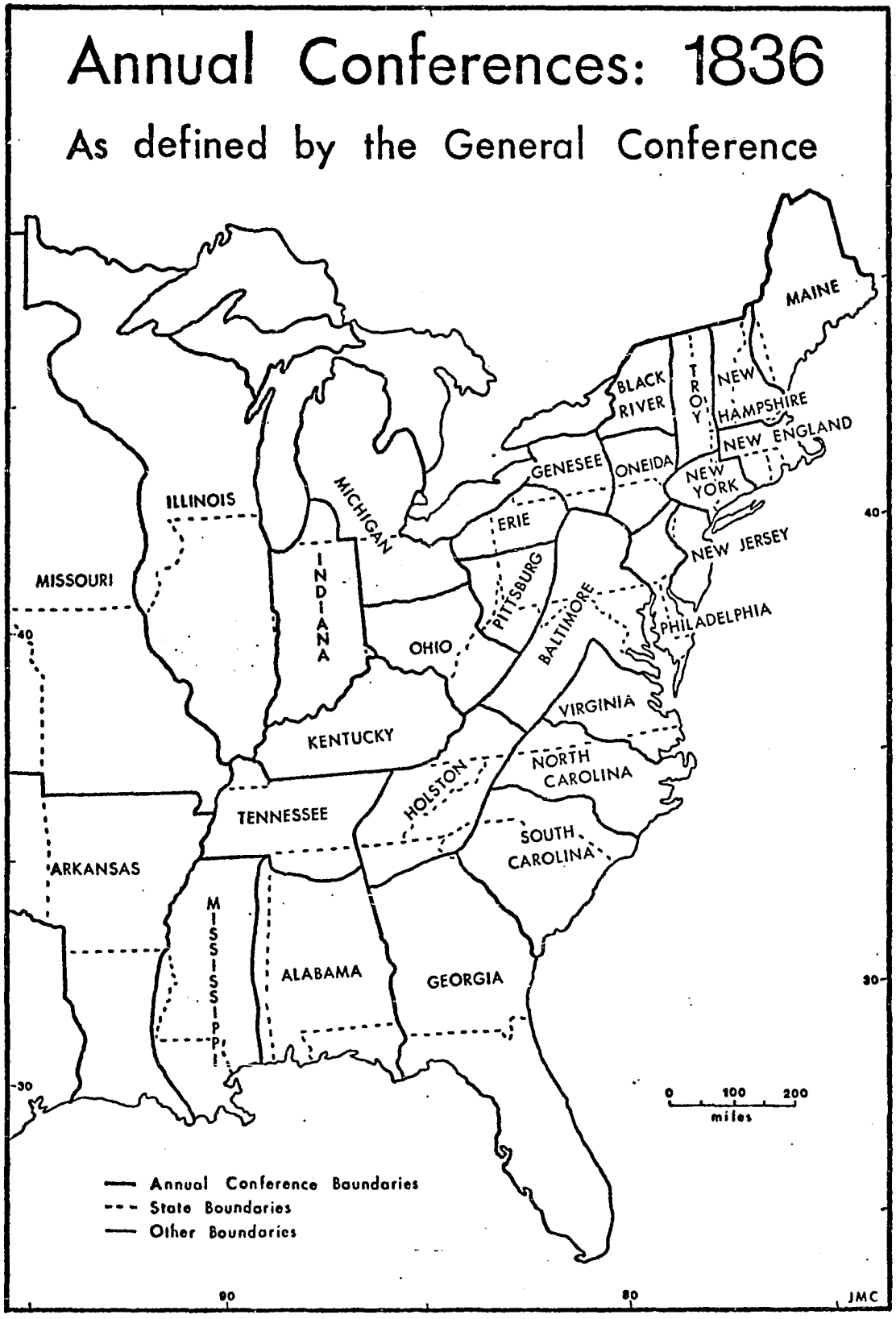
Annual Conferences: 1836
As defined by the General Conference
MAINE
NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW ENGLAND
BLACK RIVER
TROY
GENESEE
ONEIDA
NEW YORK
ERIE
NEW JERSEY
PITTSBURG
BALTIMORE
PHILADELPHIA
ILLINOIS
MICHIGAN
INDIANA
MISSOURI
OHIO
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
NORTH CAROLINA
HOLSTON
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
ARKANSAS
MISSISSIPPI
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
40
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 29

and Mississippi conferences, while the Michigan Conference was carved from the Ohio Conference. From the southern portion of the Virginia Conference came the North Carolina Conference. The Black River and Erie conferences were formed from the northern sections of, respectively, the Oneida and Pittsburgh conferences. New Jersey Conference was drawn out of the territory of the Philadelphia Conference. The Missouri and Illinois conferences underwent other modifications in their definitions, but the remainder of the extant conferences experienced minor, if any, changes in boundary.

An increase of approximately ten percent in total American Episcopal Methodist membership took place in the 1833-1837 quadrennium, but the total number of circuits reported increased by almost fifty percent (Table 12). The average circuit membership dropped from 504 to 382. Trans-Appalachian annual conferences accounted for some forty percent of the denomination's total members. The Ohio Conference, although reduced from its 1832 boundaries, was second only to the Baltimore Conference in total membership.

The General Conference of 1840 increased the annual conferences to thirty-three (Figure 30 and Appendix 12). Rock River, Memphis, Texas, North Ohio, and Providence were the five new conferences. The Rock River

TABLE 12

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1836-1837

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Ohio	71	48,407	7.4	682
Missouri	35	8,946	1.4	256

TABLE 12 - Continued

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Kentucky	62[a]	27,832	4.2	456[a]
Illinois	61	17,254	2.7	283
Indiana	64	28,452	4.3	445
Holston	47	23,257	3.5	495
Tennessee	63	30,984	4.7	492
Arkansas	30[b]	4,661	0.7	194[b]
Mississippi	32	7,701	1.2	241
Alabama	39	16,588	2.5	425
Georgia	76	29,810	4.5	392
South Carolina	52	46,884	7.1	902
Virginia[c]	44	22,246	3.4	506
North Carolina[c]	42	18,919	2.9	450
Baltimore	87	50,047	7.6	575
Philadelphia	64	35,942	5.5	562
New Jersey	57	18,482	2.8	324
New York	115[d]	31,651	4.8	283[d]
New England	130[e]	19,580	3.0	152[e]
Maine	97[f]	16,140	2.4	168[f]
New Hampshire	89	15,230	2.3	171
Troy	68	20,277	3.1	298
Pittsburgh	58	27,213	4.1	469
Erie	50	16,359	2.5	327
Black River	56	13,475	2.0	241
Oneida	79	19,006	2.9	241
Michigan	52	21,113	3.2	406
Genesee	86	21,431	3.3	249
TOTAL	1735[g]	658,157	100.0	382[g]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1829-1839, pp. 413-496.

[a]Only sixty-one charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only twenty-four charges listed membership returns.

[c]No separate data for the North Carolina Conference existed in the Minutes for this year. The data for it were abstracted from the Virginia Conference.

[d]Only 112 charges listed membership returns.

[e]Only 129 charges listed membership returns.

[f]Only ninety-six charges listed membership returns.

[g]Only 1721 charges listed membership returns.


Annual Conferences: 1840
As defined by the General Conference
MAINE
BLACK RIVER
TROY
NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW ENGLAND
PROVIDENCE
GENESEE
ONEIDA
NEW YORK
MICHIGAN
ROCK RIVER
ERIE
NEW JERSEY
NORTH OHIO
INDIANA
PITTSBURG
BALTIMORE
PHILADELPHIA
ILLINOIS
OHIO
MISSOURI
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
NORTH CAROLINA
HOLSTON
MEMPHIS
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
ARKANSAS
ALABAMA
GEORGIA
MISSISSIPPI
TEXAS
40
30
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
90
80
JMC

Figure 30

and Texas conferences were frontier conferences, the former comprised of territory taken from the Illinois and Missouri conferences, the latter formed from virgin Methodist territory. The other three new conferences were more divisions of the existing Methodist domain. North Ohio came from the Michigan Conference, Providence from the southern half of the New England Conference, and Memphis from the Tennessee and Mississippi conferences. Other major changes in extant conferences were the expansion of the Arkansas Conference into northeast Texas and of Pittsburgh Conference into south central Ohio. Smaller changes occurred in the boundary lines of other conferences.

Total church membership jumped by almost thirty percent during this quadrennium and now stood at 851,996 (Table 13). There were in

TABLE 13

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1840-1841

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Troy	89	24,566	3.9	276
New England	150[a]	22,554	2.6	152[a]
New Hampshire	111	20,084	2.4	181
Pittsburgh	72	35,750	4.2	496
Maine	111	22,359	2.6	201
Black River	65[b]	15,935	1.9	249[b]
Erie	54	17,910	2.1	332
Oneida	96	22,974	2.7	239
Michigan	43	11,407	1.3	265
Rock River	46[c]	6,585	0.8	157[c]
Genesee[d]	--	27,981	3.3	---
North Ohio	55	23,898	2.8	434
Ohio	76	54,283	6.4	714
Illinois	80[e]	24,687	2.9	334[e]
Missouri	51	13,992	1.6	274
Kentucky	76	37,000	4.3	487
Tennessee	54	26,080	3.1	483
Indiana	92	52,615	6.2	572

TABLE 13 - Continued

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Memphis	37[f]	14,492	1.7	439[f]
Arkansas	29	6,479	0.8	223
Holston	44	28,322	3.3	644
Mississippi	56[g]	12,678	1.5	249[g]
North Carolina	49	20,463	2.4	418
Texas[d]	--	1,853	0.2	---
Alabama	64[h]	25,312	3.0	415[h]
South Carolina	61	57,426	6.7	941
Virginia	50	24,927	2.9	499
Georgia	88[i]	38,857	4.6	457[i]
Baltimore	98[j]	56,693	6.6	603[j]
Philadelphia	81	43,872	5.2	542
New Jersey	74	23,275	2.7	315
New York	132[k]	36,687	4.3	284[k]
TOTAL	2184[l]	851,996	100.0	383[l]

Source: Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1839-1845 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1846), pp. 65-156.

[a]Only 148 charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only sixty-four charges listed membership returns.

[c]Only forty-two charges listed membership returns.

[d]Only gross membership data were available for the Genesee and Texas conferences.

[e]Only seventy-four charges listed membership returns.

[f]Only thirty-three charges listed membership returns.

[g]Only fifty-one charges listed membership returns.

[h]Only sixty-one charges listed membership returns.

[i]Only eighty-five charges listed membership returns.

[j]Only ninety-four charges listed membership returns.

[k]Only 129 charges listed membership returns.

[l]Only 2149 charges listed membership returns.

1841 2,182 circuits in the church; the average membership in each was 383. Almost half of the membership was now west of the Appalachians. South Carolina, Baltimore, Ohio, and Indiana were the top four conferences in membership, accounting for a quarter of all Episcopal Methodists in the United States.

The General Conference of 1844 brought six additional annual conferences into being. These were the East Texas and West Texas, Vermont, Indian Mission, North Indiana, Iowa, and Florida conferences. All of these new annual conferences can be considered as divisions around the rim of the sphere of Methodist Episcopal control (Figure 31 and Appendix 13).

The division and expansion of the Texas conferences, with additional territory added from the Arkansas Conference, and the splitting-off of the Indian Mission and Iowa conferences from the Arkansas-Missouri and Rock River conferences, represented new westward movement of the church to keep up with settlement. The new Florida Conference was an eastern example of another Methodist frontier. North Indiana and Vermont conferences were a division of existing Methodist areas.

There was another thirty-four percent increase in church membership in the 1841-1845 period.[11] Circuits were up forty percent in number. Adherents were more widely scattered among the annual conferences; only the South Carolina, Ohio, and Baltimore conferences had individual membership totals representing more than five percent of the total for the denomination (Table 14).

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[11]Even though the General Conference of 1844 had voted to divide the church, nothing deterred the regular gathering and printing of the minutes of each of the annual conferences.


Annual Conferences: 1844
As defined by the General Conference
90
80
70
40
30
VERMONT
MAINE
BLACK RIVER
TROY
NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW ENGLAND
PROVIDENCE
GENESEE
ONEIDA
NEW YORK
MICHIGAN
ROCK RIVER
IOWA
ERIE
NEW JERSEY
NORTH INDIANA
NORTH OHIO
PITTSBURG
BALTIMORE
PHILADELPHIA
ILLINOIS
INDIANA
OHIO
MISSOURI
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
INDIAN MISSION
HOLSTON
NORTH CAROLINA
MEMPHIS
TENNESSEE
SOUTH CAROLINA
ARKANSAS
GEORGIA
EAST TEXAS
ALABAMA
MISSISSIPPI
FLORIDA
WEST TEXAS
0 100 200
miles
Annual Conference Boundaries
State Boundaries
Other Boundaries
JMC

Figure 31

In 1844 the area defined as the Methodist Episcopal Church was essentially the same as it had been in 1820. Texas, Florida, and the Indian territories had been added, and Canada had been dropped. Within this region now, however, were thirty-eight annual conferences, where there had been twelve, 3062 circuits where there had been 545, 1,138,750 members where there had been 281,146. The changes of the past twenty-four years had not been so much the addition of territory to the General Conference's definition of the Methodist domain, but rather a more effective occupation of the territory traversed and settled by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

TABLE 14

ANNUAL CONFERENCE DATA FOR THE CONFERENCE YEAR 1844-1845

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Troy	124	28,178	3.5	227
Providence	94	13,832	1.2	147
New Hampshire	139[a]	21,977	1.9	162[a]
Pittsburgh	92	47,375	4.2	515
New England	89[b]	16,031	1.4	182[b]
Erie	68	23,370	2.0	344
Black River	84	18,283	1.6	218
Rock River	75[c]	16,151	1.4	218[c]
Maine	158[d]	25,843	2.3	166[d]
North Ohio	71	30,297	2.7	427
Iowa	28[e]	5,403	0.5	208[e]
Oneida	126[f]	29,840	2.6	239[f]
Illinois	77	28,729	2.5	373
Ohio	115	70,763	6.2	615
Genesee	146	34,136	3.0	234
Kentucky	110	48,739	4.3	443
Indiana	72	35,686	3.1	496
Missouri	84	26,225	2.3	312
Michigan	65[g]	16,368	1.4	260[g]
Holston[h]	--	40,063	3.5	---
North Indiana	75	27,343	2.4	365
Indian Mission	16	3,210	0.3	201

TABLE 14 - Continued

Conference	Number of Circuits	Number of Members	Percent of Total Membership	Members Per Circuit
Tennessee	67[i]	39,257	3.4	595[i]
Virginia	59	31,217	2.7	529
Arkansas	42	9,481	0.8	226
Memphis	59	28,185	2.5	478
North Carolina	49	25,889	2.3	528
Mississippi	70	21,171	1.9	302
South Carolina	69	71,801	6.3	1041
East Texas	11	3,167	0.3	288
West Texas	17	2,915	0.3	171
Georgia	73	50,749	4.5	695
Florida	28	6,816	0.6	243
Alabama	80	40,051	3.5	501
Baltimore	129[j]	69,878	6.1	546[j]
Philadelphia	104[k]	51,987	4.6	505[k]
New Jersey	100	30,434	2.7	304
New York	197	47,910	4.2	243
TOTAL	3062[l]	1,138,750	100.0	361[l]

Source: Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1839-1845, pp. 478-603.

[a]Only 136 charges listed membership returns.

[b]Only eighty-eight charges listed membership returns.

[c]Only seventy-four charges listed membership returns.

[d]Only 156 charges listed membership returns.

[e]Only twenty-six charges listed membership returns.

[f]Only 125 charges listed membership returns.

[g]Only sixty-three charges listed membership returns.

[h]No data were given for the Holston Conference this year; the Minutes gave the total membership from the previous conference year.

[i]Only sixty-six charges listed membership returns.

[j]Only 128 charges listed membership returns.

[k]Only 103 charges listed membership returns.

[l]Only 3047 charges listed membership returns. The number excludes the Holston Conference.

The Division of the Church, 1844

The question of slavery had always been a problem for the Methodists. As early as 1780 the Annual Conference in its Minutes had condemned the practice of slave-holding among the membership and required that any traveling preacher who held slaves set them free.[12] From that point on there was a continual inner struggle over the question. Few defended the practice of slavery, but many felt that it was not the church's role to try to stop it.

Debate over the slavery issue was a standard aspect of General Conference. Resolutions were offered, memorials were sent, the flow of words was unending. The debate came to a head at the General Conference of 1844. James O. Andrew, a bishop in the church, had married a widow who brought slaves with her. The General Conference, after much debate, voted to ask the bishop to desist from his duties as bishop until the slaves could be freed. This vote precipitated even more debate, the result being the submission and passage of a resolution providing for a division of the church. Although the division began calmly and did not cause an immediate break, a split did occur, and feelings became rancorous by the 1848 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. That body voted to undo much of the agreement reached at the preceding session and refused even to seat a representative from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the new body of the southern church. After sixty years as a denomination and almost eighty as a movement in American History, Episcopal Methodism underwent its most significant division. For many it presaged what they feared would happen to the nation itself.

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[12] Minutes, Annual Conferences, 1773-1828, p. 12.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT IRON WHEEL REVISITED

Ezekiel, Cookman, and Graves

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel was carried off with the leading Israelites into the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century, B.C. Chapter One of the Book of Ezekiel contains the vision of a throne-chariot transporting Yahweh. A part of the description of this vision is that of wheels within wheels:

> Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.[1]

In 1839, at the Methodist Centennial address at the John-street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City, the Rev. George G. Cookman expanded on Ezekiel's vision of "a wheel in the middle of a wheel."[2]

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[1] Ezekiel 1:15-16. The description is used again in chapter ten, verses nine and ten.

[2] See George G. Cookman, Speeches Delivered on Various Occasions (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1858), pp. 130-150. Cookman's use of Ezekiel's words is not necessarily as the prophet saw these wheels. Herbert G. May suggests that this phrasing "perhaps means that each wheel was composed of two wheels at right angles to each other." See "The Book of Ezekiel" in The Interpreters Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, et al., 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI:72.

Cookman first envisaged two sets of four wheels, each composed of a "great iron wheel," to which is attached a "brazen wheel," then a "bright silver wheel," and finally a "splendid golden wheel." Citing Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Methodist minister first labelled these wheels "tribulation," "patience," "experience," and "hope."[3] After this Biblical application, he proceeded to two Methodist examples.

The first set of Methodist wheels envisioned by Cookman concerned what he considered the keys to the movement. Itinerancy was the name given the great iron wheel, and the brazen, silver, and golden wheels were, respectively, the local ministry, the class-leaders, and the doctrine and discipline of the church.[4] Itinerancy was the cornerstone of Methodism, that which kept all other parts in constant movement, "the mighty spring of our motive power, the true secret of our unparalleled success."[5]

Cookman's final use of the imagery concerned the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Here the wheels increased in number to seven.

> First there is the great outer wheel of episcopacy, which accomplishes its entire revolution once in four years. To this there are attached twenty-eight smaller wheels, styled annual conferences, moving around once a year; to these are attached one hundred wheels, designated presiding elders, moving twelve hundred other wheels, termed quarterly conferences, every three months; to these are attached four thousand wheels, styled traveling preachers, moving round once a month, and communicating motion to thirty thousand wheels, called class-leaders, moving round once a week, and who, in turn, being attached to between seven

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[3] Cookman, Speeches, pp. 144-145. The Biblical reference is from Romans 5:3-4.

[4] Cookman, Speeches, p. 145.

[5] Ibid., p. 144.

> and eight hundred thousand wheels, called members, give a sufficient impulse to whirl them round every day.[6]

In 1855, J. R. Graves, a Baptist and the editor of the Tennessee Baptist, published an anti-Methodist volume called The Great Iron Wheel; or Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed.[7] It has been called "perhaps the most repulsive book ever written against Methodism."[8] Using Cookman's own analogy, Graves continually heaped abuse on the Methodists. Not only was its ecclesiastical structure "a monstrous system of clerical absolutism;" more importantly, given the audience to which the book was directed, "The Methodist system is death to all the institutions for which Washington fought and freemen died."[9] Graves goes on to state, "The Gospel tells us, 'The Methodist system is Antichrist,--For it is the very identical priestly power which has crushed and trodden under foot the liberty wherewith Christ doth make free, in every age of the world.'"[10] The author was not surprised that the Methodists had ended up this way; John Wesley had been "a monarchist and enemy of Republican principles."[11]

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[6] Ibid., p. 146. Emphasis his.

[7] James Robinson Graves, The Great Iron Wheel; or, Republicanism Backwards and Christianity Reversed. In a Series of Letters Addressed to J. Soule, Senior Bishop of the M. E. Church, South (Nashville: Graves and Marks, 1855).

[8] Paul Neff Garber, The Romance of American Methodism (Greensboro, North Carolina: Piedmont Press, 1931), p. 201.

[9] Graves, Great Iron Wheel, pp. 160, 162. Emphasis his.

[10] Ibid., p. 162. Emphasis his.

[11] Ibid., p. 156. Graves' work did not go unanswered. William B. Brownlow, a Methodist, replied with The Great Iron Wheel Examined, or, Its False Spokes Extracted, and an Exhibition of Elder Graves, Its

Beyond the glorification of a Cookman and the condemnation of a Graves, the use of the wheels-within-wheels analogy is apt.[12] The wheel, by both its shape and its function, exemplifies the Wesleyan principle of itinerancy. As its shape is a continuous line and its function that of rotation, so, too, was constant itinerancy to be the goal of each individual at every level of church government. The circuit-rider was to travel among the preaching places of his circuit, the presiding elder among the circuits of his district, and the bishop among the annual conferences of the entire church.[13]

Cookman's view of wheels nested within increasingly larger wheels is an ideal model for the ecclesiastical structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Individual church members grouped within classes, classes forming the network of the circuit, circuits contained within a

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Builder. In a Series of Chapters (Nashville: For the Author, 1856). In this book Brownlow proposed "to show that Graves [one of a group of "bigoted sectarians"] has perpetrated TWENTY-FIVE FALSEHOODS in one chapter of his book ["a fair specimen of the other thirty-nine chapters"], a short chapter at that, composed of only twelve pages, making more than two lies to a page. Not so bad for one of the successors of the apostles, in a direct lineal descent from John the Baptist!" See pages 243-244; emphasis his. Neither side was very proud of the uproar the dispute caused.

[12]Abel Stevens used it in An Essay on Church Polity: Comprehending an Outline of the Controversy on Ecclesiastical Government, and a Vindication of the Ecclesiastical System of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Lane and Tippett for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1847), p. 170. John Fletcher Hurst used the "great iron wheel" for itinerancy on at least two occasions in his History of Methodism, 8 vols. (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1902-1904), IV:121, 249.

[13]For the circuit-rider and presiding elder, rotation had a larger meaning as well. Annually, or even more frequently, they could be shifted in space to a new circuit or station, there to continue their day-to-day itinerancy. The bishops by virtue of their office already rotated throughout the bounds of the entire denomination.

district, districts compounded to form an annual conference, and all comprised within the perimeter of the General Conference--such was the form of American Episcopal Methodism. The concept of rotation--each level at a periodicity corresponding to its relative location within the amalgam of wheels--is partnered with the Wesleyan idea of connectionalism, each segment being ultimately bound to all others.

In terms of its ecclesiastical structure, American Methodism began as two points--the classes in New York City and Maryland--founded and served by local preachers. Through lay workers the number of classes grew in these and surrounding colonies, but administratively they remained discrete points. When the Wesleyan missionaries arrived in 1769, they brought the quarterly conference with them, thus creating a network out of the existing points. The first annual conference in the colonies was held in 1773, adding a new level to the existing structure. Although a single meeting at first, the annual conference began dual sessions in 1781 and multiple sessions in 1785. Until 1796 the annual conference had no definite geographical existence, the number of sessions varying in number, and, in their sum, co-extensive with the General Conference in boundary. This last level of conference government was begun in 1792, after a brief attempt at a Council. Episcopal Methodism in America was now complete.

Each element of the ecclesiastical structure--class, circuit/station, quarterly conference, annual conference, general conference--was in its time the supreme level of Methodist government in, first, the colonies and, later, the nation. As each new layer was added to the existing structure, it assumed the more important duties. However, in

each case it left certain powers at each level of the church hierarchy. After 1796, with the decision to delimit the territory of each of the annual conferences, the ecclesiastical structure achieved a geographical hierarchy as well.

The ecclesiastical structure of a denomination is important. Such a structure reveals the flow and degree of authority within the body. It often reveals aspects of a church's history. Such a structure, however, can exist on a purely theoretical level. It can be no measure of the success of a sect or church.

Two measurements of the success of any group--religious or otherwise--are (1) the number of adherents, and (2) the area of control. In an historio-geographical study of any national body, the two are closely intertwined. A body may contain a large number of members but be of only regional importance. Such is the case with the Congregationalists of New England. On the other hand, a group may be found throughout the nation, but in numbers so small as to diffuse any significant influence, as, for example, with Christian Scientists.

American Methodism began on the basis of a few dozen organized members in the 1760s, although there probably existed a much larger pool of unorganized Wesleyans among the previous, and on-going, British immigration to the colonies. Methodist growth during the colonial and early national periods was one of almost steady increase, although it was hampered by a lack of preachers, as well as a dearth of ordained clergy from whom members could receive the sacraments. At the time of its formal advance to the rank of denomination in 1784, it counted almost 15,000 members.

With its new status and its own ordained clergy, Methodism was able to add many new members. Also helpful in this quest were the missionary functions of the circuit-riding preacher, who was sent to form new churches rather than to wait to be called to them, and the evangelical spirit of Methodism. Its theology of free grace successfully competed against the Calvinism of many of its Protestant rivals. Although suffering setbacks by wars and, more seriously, by divisions--the O'Kelley Schism of 1792, the break-off of the Republican Methodists in 1830, and the formation of several Black Methodist groups--the Methodist Episcopal Church grew exponentially in its United States membership, from its 15,000 members in 1784 to 1,138,750 in 1845 (Figure 32).[14]

In areal terms, American Methodism began with the two small Wesleyan classes in urban New York City and rural Maryland, each without knowledge of the other's existence. Founded by two local preachers, its colonial expansion was furthered by the missionary efforts of Wesley's preachers sent over from Britain and by the development of a native American ministry. At the time of the Christmas Conference of 1784, organized Methodists were found in all the states between New York and South Carolina.

The expansion of the Methodist Episcopal Church was carried into every existing state and all along the advancing frontier. Until 1828 it included Canadian circuits as well. This expansion resulted from several interactive agencies. The organized and unorganized work

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[14]The 1844-1845 figure was a slight drop from the 1843-1844 total of 1,170,482 United States members; there were also some 874 members in the Liberia Mission Annual Conference. See Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the Years 1839-1845 (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1840-1845), p. 477.

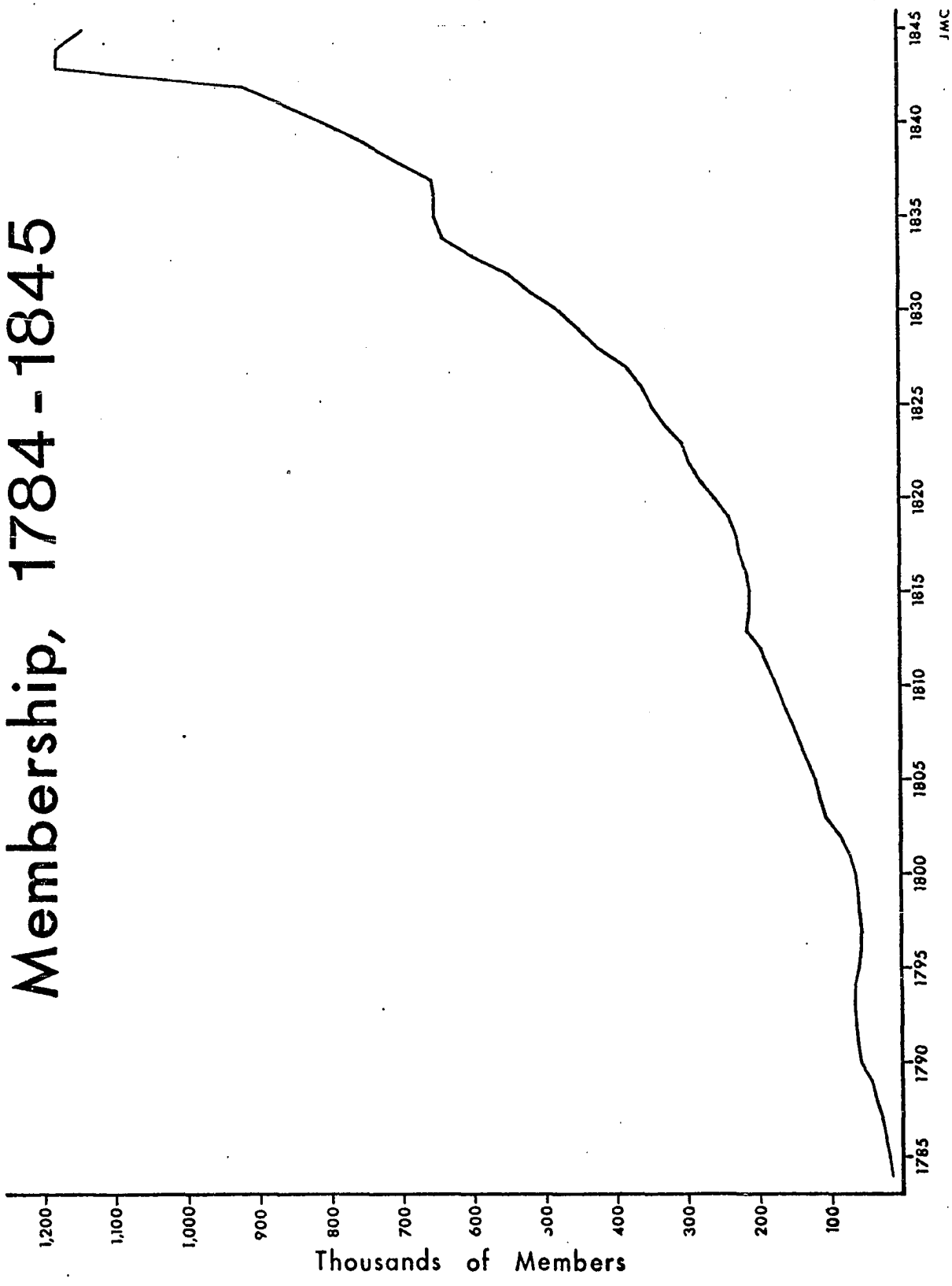
Membership, 1784-1845
Thousands of Members
1,200
1,100
1,000
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
1785
1790
1795
1800
1805
1810
1815
1820
1825
1830
1835
1840
1845
JWF

Figure 32

of circuit riders and local preachers established classes and circuits all along the Methodist frontier. Population migration by Methodist members, while often decimating existing classes or circuits, gave birth to new groups upon settling. Camp meetings and other organized revival techniques, as well as real or threatened natural phenomena, aided the growth of Methodist membership in both settled and frontier regions. By 1844 bodies of Methodists existed in every state and almost every territory of the United States.

The phenomenal success of American Episcopal Methodism, both in growth of members and in their areal extent, exerted influences upon the developing ecclesiastical structure. Increased distances to conference--in both time and in space--was the corollary problem to areal expansion. The increasing membership brought along with it the problem of effectively organizing these adherents. The results were not only a new level (the General Conference, which met less frequently) added to the Wesleyan model of church government, but also a multiplicity of units at each level underneath the General Conference.

Perhaps even George Cookman would have been surprised at the success of the Great Iron Wheel by 1844. Where once there were two small points--the societies in New York City and in Maryland--there were now thirty-eight annual conferences encompassing thirty states and territories. These conferences were in turn divided into hundreds of presiding elders' districts comprising over three thousand circuits. Where in the 1760s two local preachers led a few dozen transplanted Wesleyans, in 1844, 4,465 circuit-riders, and even more local preachers, ministered to the needs of 1,138,750 Episcopal Methodists.

Even the division of the Great Wheel of American Episcopal Methodism did not greatly lessen the momentum of the Great Iron Wheel of Itinerancy. There were now two major wheels to American Methodism. Both the northern and the southern wheels, though rubbing each other, proceeded with the common goal "to reform the continent and spread scriptural holiness over these lands." A century after the division, when the cause of their split and most of its aftermath had disappeared or receded from memory, the two would rejoin--to become common again in government as they had always remained in purpose.

APPENDIX 1

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1796[1]

"1. The New-England Conference--under the direction of which shall be the affairs of our Church in New England, and in that part of the State of New-York which lies on the east side of Hudson's River: Provided, That if the bishops see it necessary, a conference may be held in the Province of Maine.

"2. The Philadelphia Conference, for the direction of our concerns in the remainder of the State of New-York, in New-Jersey, in all that part of Pennsylvania which lies on the east side of the Susquehanna River, the State of Delaware, and all the rest of the peninsula.

"3. The Baltimore Conference, for the remainder of Pennsylvania, the remainder of Maryland, and the Northern Neck of Virginia.

"4. The Virginia Conference, for all that part of Virginia which lies on the south side of the Rappahannock River, and for all that part of North Carolina which lies on the north side of Cape Fear River, including also the circuits which are situated on the branches of the Yadkin.

"5. The South Carolina Conference, for South Carolina, Georgia, and the remainder of North Carolina.

"6. The Western Conference, for the States of Kentucky and Tennessee: Provided, That the bishops shall have authority to appoint other yearly conferences in the interval of the General Conference, if a sufficiency of new circuits be anywhere formed for that purpose."

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:11.

APPENDIX 2

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1800[1]

"1. The New-England Conference shall include the district of Maine, and all the circuits eastward and northward from the bounds of the New-York Conference.

"2. The New-York Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York east of the Hudson River, all Connecticut, and those parts of Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Vermont, which are included in the New-York and New-London districts."

3. "The Philadelphia Conference, for the direction of our concerns in the remainder of the State of New-York, in New-Jersey, in all that part of Pennsylvania which lies on the east side of the Susquehanna River, the State of Delaware, and all the rest of the peninsula.

4. "The Baltimore Conference, for the remainder of Pennsylvania, the remainder of Maryland, and the Northern Neck of Virginia.

5. "The Virginia Conference, for all that part of Virginia which lies on the south side of the Rappahannock River, and for all that part of North Carolina which lies on the north side of Cape Fear River, including also the circuits which are situated on the branches of the Yadkin.

6. "The South Carolina Conference, for South Carolina, Georgia, and the remainder of North Carolina.

7. "The Western Conference, for the States of Kentucky and Tennessee: Provided, That the bishops shall have authority to appoint other yearly conferences in the interval of the General Conference, if a sufficiency of new circuits be anywhere formed for that purpose."

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[1]The General Conference records contain only the changes in the conference boundaries, not the entire listing. The New England and New York conferences were taken from Robert Emory, History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Revised, and brought down to 1856, by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), p. 228. The remaining conference boundaries are repeated from Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:11.

APPENDIX 3

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1804[1]

"1. The New-England Conference shall include the District of Maine, and the Boston, New-London, and Vermont Districts.

"2. The New-York Conference comprehends the New-York, Pittsfield, Albany, and Upper Canada Districts.

"3. The Philadelphia Conference shall include the remainder of the state of New-York, all New-Jersey, that part of Pennsylvania which lies on the east side of the Susquehanna River--except what belongs to the Susquehannah District--the state of Delaware, the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and all the rest of the peninsula.

"4. The Baltimore Conference shall include the remainder of Pennsylvania, the Western Shore of Maryland, the Northern Neck of Virginia, and the Greenbrier District.

"5. The Virginia Conference shall include all that part of Virginia which lies on the south side of the Rappahannock River and east of the Blue Ridge, and all that part of North Carolina which lies on the north side of Cape Fear River, except Wilmington, also the circuits which are situated on the branches of the Yadkin.

"6. The South Carolina Conference shall include the remainder of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

"7. The Western Conference shall include the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, and that part of Virginia which lies west of the great river Kanawha, with the Illinois and the Natchez. Provided, that the bishops shall have authority to appoint other yearly conferences, &c."

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:52-53.

APPENDIX 4

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1808[1]

Neither the Journal of the General Conference nor Robert Emory's book on the history of the Discipline lists in full the descriptions of the annual conferences for 1808. The only changes voted in the existing boundaries are those included below; otherwise, the boundaries remain as they were described in 1804 (See Appendix 3).

The following changes were made in 1808:

"Voted, that the Carlisle District be connected with the Baltimore Conference.

"Voted, that the Susquehanna District be connected with the Philadelphia Conference.

"Voted, that the Cayuga District be connected with the New-York Conference."

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[1]The changes listed were taken from Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:76.

APPENDIX 5

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1812[1]

"1. The Ohio Conference shall include Ohio, Muskingum, Miami, Kentucky, and Salt River districts.

"2. The Tennessee Conference shall include Holston, Nashville, Cumberland, Wabash, Illinois, and Mississippi districts.

"3. The South Carolina Conference shall include Georgia, South Carolina, and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Tennessee Conferences.

"4. The Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the branches of the Yadkin, and that part of North Carolina on the north side of Cape Fear River, (except Wilmington,) and that part of Virginia on the south side of the Rappahannock, and east of the Blue Ridge.

"5. The Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Tennessee and Virginia Conferences, the Western Shore of Maryland, and that part of Pennsylvania east of the Ohio River, and west of the Susquehannah, not included in the Genesee Conference.

"6. The Philadelphia Conference shall include the whole of the peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Delaware and Susquehannah Rivers, (except what is included in the Genesee Conference,) and all the state of New-Jersey, with Staten Island.

"7. The New-York Conference shall include all the state of New-York not included in the Genesee and Philadelphia Conferences, that part of Connecticut and Massachusetts west of the Connecticut River, and that part of Vermont lying west of the Green Mountain.

"8. The New-England Conference shall include the remaining part of Vermont, and all the New-England states east of Connecticut River.

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[1]Taken from Robert Emory, History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Revised, and brought down to 1856, by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), pp. 229-230.

"9. The Genesee Conference shall include the bounds of the Susquehannah, Cayuga, and Upper and Lower Canada districts. Provided, nevertheless, the bishops have authority, in the interval of the General Conference, to appoint another annual conference down the Mississippi, if they judge it necessary. Provided, also, that they have authority to appoint another annual conference, in the interval of the General Conference, if a sufficient number of new circuits be anywhere formed; but no district or circuit shall be added to such new conference, without the consent of the old conference to which it belongs."

APPENDIX 6

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1816[1]

"1. The Ohio Conference shall include Ohio, Muskingum, Scioto, Maimi, and Kentucky Districts.

"2. The Missouri Conference shall be bounded by the Ohio Conference on the north, by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers on the east, and by the Arkansas River on the south.

"3. The Tennessee Conference shall include Salt River, Green River, Cumberland, Nashville, and Holstein Districts.

"4. The Mississippi Conference shall include all the state of Louisiana south of the Arkansas, and all the Mississippi Territory south of the Tennessee River.

"5. The South Carolina Conference shall include Georgia, South Carolina, and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Tennessee Conferences.

"6. The Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the branches of the Yadkin River, and that part of North Carolina north of Cape Fear River except Wilmington, and that part of Virginia on the south side of Rappahannock and east of the Blue Ridge except Fredericksburg.

"7. The Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Tennessee and Virginia Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, and that part of Pennsylvania east of the Ohio River and west of Susquehanna not included in Genesee Conference.

"8. The Philadelphia Conference shall include the whole of the peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware bays, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers, except what is included in the Genesee Conference; and all the state of

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:153-154.

New-Jersey, with Staten Island and so much of the state of New-York as now is or may at any time be attached to the Bergen and Hamburgh Circuits.

"9. The New-York Conference shall include all the state of New-York not included in the Genesee and Philadelphia Conferences, and those parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts west of Connecticut River; also that part of Vermont lying west of the Green Mountains, with that part of Lower Canada between Lakes Champlain and Magog.

"10. The New-England Conference shall include the remaining part of Vermont and all the New-England states east of the Connecticut River, and that part of Lower Canada east of Lake Magog.

"11. The Genesee Conference shall include all within the bounds of Susquehanna, Oneida, Genesee, Chenango, and Upper and Lower Canada Districts.

"Provided, nevertheless, that the bishops shall have authority to appoint other annual conferences in the interval of General Conference if the number of circuits should increase so as in their judgment to require it."

APPENDIX 7

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1820[1]

1. "The Ohio Annual Conference shall commence at the town of Madison, on the Ohio River, state of Indiana, thence running due north to the nearest point on Lake Michigan, shall include the whole of the Michigan Territory, thence running down Lake Erie to the town of Erie, thence to Waterford, on French Creek, thence down French Creek to the Alleghany River, thence down the Alleghany and Ohio Rivers to the place of beginning.

2. "The Missouri Conference shall include that part of the state of Indiana not included in the Ohio Conference, the states of Illinois and Missouri and the Territory of Arkansas.

3. "The Kentucky Conference shall include the Kentucky, Salt River, Green River, and Cumberland Districts, and that part of the state of Virginia included in the Greenbrier and Monroe Circuits, heretofore belonging to the Baltimore Conference, and the Kanawha and Middle Island Circuits, heretofore belonging to the Ohio Conference.

4. "The Tennessee Conference shall include the Nashville, French Broad, and Holston Districts, together with the New River Circuit, heretofore belonging to the Baltimore Conference, and that part of Tennessee District north of Tennessee River.

5. "The Mississippi Conference shall include the states of Mississippi and Louisiana, and all that part of the state of Alabama south of Tennessee River.

6. "The South Carolina Conference shall include Georgia, South Carolina, and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Tennessee Conferences.

7. "The Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the banks of the Yadkin, and that part of North Carolina north of Cape

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:215-217.

Fear River, excepting Wilmington, and that part of Virginia on the south side of the Rappahannock and east of the Blue Ridge, except Fredericksburgh.

8. "The Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Virginia, Philadelphia, Kentucky, and Tennessee Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, and that part of Pennsylvania east of the Ohio River and west of the Susquehanna, together with the Bald Eagle, Lycoming, Northumberland, and Shamokin Circuits, heretofore belonging to the Genesee Conference.

9. "The Philadelphia Conference shall include the whole of the peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers, except what is included in the Baltimore and Genesee Conferences, and all the state of New-Jersey and Staten Island, and so much of the state of New-York as now is or at any time may be included in the Bergen and Hamburgh Circuits.

10. "The New-York Conference shall include all the state of New-York not included in the Genesee and Philadelphia Conferences, and those parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts west of Connecticut River; also that part of Vermont lying west of the Green Mountains, and that part of Lower Canada between Lakes Champlain and Magog.

11. "The New-England Conference shall include the remaining part of Vermont and all the New-England states east of Connecticut River, and that part of Lower Canada east of Lake Magog.

12. "The Genesee Conference shall include the Oneida, Genesee, Chenango, Seneca, and Upper and Lower Canada Districts, the Chatauque and Lake Circuits, heretofore belonging to the Ohio Conference, and that part of the Susquehanna District not included in the Baltimore Conference.

"Resolved, That the following words be inserted as the answer to the eighth question of the third section chapter first of our book of Discipline, viz.: 'There shall be twelve conferences in the year.' --See second part, section one.

"Resolved, by the delegates of the annual conferences in General Conference assembled, That the bishops be, and are hereby authorized, by and with the advice and consent of the New-England Conference, to form a new conference in the eastern part of the New-England Conference, in the interval between this and the next General Conference, if they shall judge it to be expedient."

APPENDIX 8

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1824[1]

"1. Maine Conference shall include all the state of Maine and that part of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills and north of the waters of the Ossipee Lake.

"2. New-England Conference shall include the remaining part of the state of New-Hampshire, that part of Vermont lying east of the Green Mountains, those parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut lying east of Connecticut River, and all the state of Rhode Island.

"3. New-York Conference shall include those parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts lying west of the Connecticut River, that part of Vermont lying west of the Green Mountains, and all the state of New-York not included in the Genesee and Philadelphia Conferences.

"4. Genesee Conference shall include the Oneida, Black River, Chenango, Susquehanna, Ontario, Genesee, and Erie Districts and Sharon Circuit, from New York, except that part of Erie District southwest of Cattaraugus Creek.

"5. Canada Conference shall include all the upper province of Canada.

"6. Pittsburgh Conference shall commence at the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek on Lake Erie, thence to Olean Point, on Alleghany River, thence eastward to the top of the Alleghany Mountains, thence along the mountains southward to the head of Tygart's Valley, thence to the Ohio Valley, thence to the Ohio River, so as to include the Middle Island and Little Kenhona Circuits, thence up said river to the mouth of Little Muskingum, thence to the mouth of White Woman, so as to include Munroe, Barrensville, and Duck Creek Circuits; thence northeastward between the waters of Tuscarawas and Mohican to Lake Erie, near the mouth of Cuyahoga, so as to include Tuscarawas and Canton Circuits, thence down the lake to the mouth of Cattaraugus.

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:273-275.

"7. The Ohio Conference shall include the remaining part of the state of Ohio, the territory of Michigan, and the Kenhawa.

"8. Illinois Conference shall include the states of Indiana and Illinois.

"9. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri and Arkansas Territory.

"10. Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, and that part of the state of Tennessee lying north of the Cumberland River.

"11. Tennessee Conference shall include all that part of Tennessee state south of Cumberland River and west of the Cumberland Mountains, and that part of Alabama state lying north of the mountains which divide the waters of Mobile Bay from the Tennessee River.

"12. Holston Conference shall include the remaining part of Tennessee lying east of the Cumberland Mountains, and that part of Virginia and North Carolina embraced in Holston District and the Black Mountain and French Broad Circuits, formerly belonging to South Carolina Conference.

"13. Mississippi Conference shall include the states of Mississippi and Louisiana and that part of Alabama not included in Tennessee Conference, and all West Florida.

"14. South Carolina Conference shall include all of South Carolina, Georgia, East Florida, and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Holston Conferences.

"15. Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the Yadkin River, and that part of North Carolina lying north of Cape Fear River, except Wilmington, and that part of Virginia lying south of Rappahannock and east of the Blue Ridge, except Fredericksburgh.

"16. Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, and that part of Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehanna River, including Northumberland District.

"17. Philadelphia Conference shall include the whole of the peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers, except what is included in the Baltimore and Genesee Conferences; and all the state of New-Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the state of New-York as now is, or at any time may be, included in the Bergen and Hamburgh Circuits.

"Provided that the bishops be, and are hereby authorized, by

and with the advice and consent of the South Carolina and Mississippi Conferences, to form a new conference of such sections of country as may be included in those conferences. Provided also that the bishops shall have authority to appoint other annual conferences, if the number of circuits should increase so as, in their judgment, to require it.

APPENDIX 9

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1828[1]

"1. Maine Conference shall include all the states of Maine and that part of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills and north of the waters of the Ossipee Lake.

"2. New-England Conference shall include the remaining part of the state of New-Hampshire, that part of Vermont lying east of the Green Mountains, those parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut lying east of Connecticut River, and all the state of Rhode Island.

"3. New-York Conference shall include those parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts lying west of the Connecticut River, that part of Vermont lying west of the Green Mountains, and all the state of New-York not included in the Genesee and Philadelphia Conferences.

"4. Genesee Conference shall include the Oneida, Black River, Chenango, Susquehanna, Ontario, Genesee, and Erie Districts and Sharon Circuit, from New York, except that part of Erie District southwest of Cattaraugus Creek.

"5. Canada Conference shall include all the upper province of Canada.

"6. Pittsburgh Conference shall commence at the mouth of

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[1]Neither the General Conference Journals nor Robert Emory's volume on the history of the Discipline provided a complete, discrete listing of the 1828 boundaries. Emory stated that only the Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia conferences, along with the provisos, were changed. The descriptions for the Kentucky and Tennessee Conferences, with the changed provisos and an additional exception (Port Royal) to the Virginia Conference, came from Robert Emory, History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Revised, and brought down to 1856, by W. P. Strickland (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1857), p. 235. All other descriptions are from the 1824 boundaries in the Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:273-275.

Cattaraugus Creek on Lake Erie, thence to Olean Point, on Alleghany River, thence eastward to the top of the Alleghany Mountains, thence along the mountains southward to the head of Tygart's Valley, thence to the Ohio Valley, thence to the Ohio River, so as to include the Middle Island and Little Kenhona Circuits, thence up said river to the mouth of Little Muskingum, thence to the mouth of White Woman, so as to include Munroe, Barrensville, and Duck Creek Circuits; thence northeastward between the waters of Tuscarawas and Mohican to Lake Erie, near the mouth of Cuyahoga, so as to include Tuscarawas and Canton Circuits, thence down the lake to the mouth of Cattaraugus.

"7. The Ohio Conference shall include the remaining part of the state of Ohio, the territory of Michigan, and the Kenhawa.

"8. Illinois Conference shall include the states of Indiana and Illinois.

"9. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri and Arkansas Territory."

"10. The Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, except so much of said state as lies west of the Tennessee River.

"11. The Tennessee Conference shall include all that part of the state of Tennessee lying west of the Cumberland Mountains, and that part of the state of Kentucky lying west of the Tennessee River, and that part of the state of Alabama lying north of the Mountains which divide the waters of Mobile Bay from the Tennessee River.

"12. Holston Conference shall include the remaining part of Tennessee lying east of the Cumberland Mountains, and that part of Virginia and North Carolina embraced in Holston District and the Black Mountain and French Broad Circuits, formerly belonging to South Carolina Conference.

"13. Mississippi Conference shall include the states of Mississippi and Louisiana and that part of Alabama not included in Tennessee Conference, and all West Florida.

"14. South Carolina Conference shall include all of South Carolina, Georgia, East Florida, and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Holston Conferences.

"15. Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the Yadkin River, and that part of North Carolina lying north of Cape Fear River, except Wilmington, and that part of Virginia lying south of Rappahannock and east of the Blue Ridge, except Fredericksburgh and Port Royal.

"16. Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, and that part

of Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehanna River, including Northumberland District.

"17. Philadelphia Conference shall include the whole of the peninsula between the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers, except what is included in the Baltimore and Genesee Conferences; and all the state of New-Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the state of New-York as now is, or at any time may be, included in the Bergen and Hamburgh Circuits."

"Provided. that the bishops or bishop attending the following conferences, with the advice and consent of the said conferences respectively, be, and hereby are authorized to form new conferences, as follows, namely:--

From the South Carolina Conference, of any section of country included in said conference: from the Mississippi Conference, of any section of country included in said conference: or, on the joint recommendation of the South Carolina and Mississippi Conferences, to form one new conference, from any section of country within the bounds of the said conferences: also, at the joint request of the New-York and New-England Conferences, to form a new conference within the bounds of said conferences: and, with the advice and consent of the Genesee Conference, to form a new conference in any section of country now within the bounds of said conference."

APPENDIX 10

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1832[1]

"1. New-York Conference shall include the New-York, New-Haven, Rhinebeck, and Hudson River Districts, Hudson station, and Ghent and Lee circuits.

"2. New-England Conference shall include all the state of Massachusetts lying east of the Green Mountains, not included in the New-Hampshire Conference, and that part of Connecticut lying east of the Connecticut River, and all the state of Rhode Island.

"3. Maine Conference shall include all the state of Maine, and that part of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills, and north of the waters of the Ossipie Lake.

"4. New-Hampshire Conference shall include all the state of New Hampshire not included in the Maine Conference, that part of the state of Vermont east of the Green Mountains, and that part of the state of Massachusetts northwest of the Merrimack River.

"5. Troy Conference shall include the Saratoga, Middlebury, and Plattsburg districts, and that part of the Troy district not included in the New-York Conference.

"6. Oneida Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York east of Cayuga Lake, not included in the New-York and Troy Conferences, and the Susquehanna district in the state of Pennsylvania.

"7. Genesee Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York, west of Cayuga Lake, not included in the Pittsburg[h] Conference and the Tioga, Loyalsock, and Wellsborough circuits in the state of Pennsylvania.

"8. Pittsburg[h] Conference shall commence at the mouth of

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:388-390.

Cattaraugus Creek on Lake Erie, thence to Olean Point on Alleghany River, thence eastward to the top of the Alleghany Mountains; thence along said mountains southward to the head of Tygart's Valley; thence to the Ohio River so as to include the Middletown circuit; thence to the mouth of the Little Muskingum; thence to the mouth of White Woman River so as to include Woodfield, Summerfield, and Freeport circuits; thence northwestward between the waters of Tuscarawas and Mohicken to Lake Erie, near the mouth of Cuyahoga, so as to include Teesbury and Canton circuits; thence down the lake to the mouth of Cattaraugus.

"9. The Ohio Conference shall include the remainder of the state of Ohio, (except Elizabethtown,) and that part of Virginia contained in the Kenhawa district, and the territory of Michigan, except St. Joseph's and Kalamazoo missions.

"10. Indiana Conference shall include the state of Indiana, (except so much as is included in the Illinois Conference,) Elizabethtown in the state of Ohio, and the St. Joseph's and Kalamazoo missions in Michigan Territory.

"11. Illinois Conference shall include the state of Illinois, and Paris and Eugene circuits in the state of Indiana, and the Northwestern Territory.

"12. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri, the Indian Mission and Arkansas Territory.

"13. Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, except so much of said state as is west of the Tennessee River.

"14. Tennessee Conference shall include West Tennessee, and that part of Kentucky lying west of Tennessee River and North Alabama.

"15. Holston Conference shall include East Tennessee, and that part of the state of Georgia lying north of the Blue Ridge, and also what is now embraced in the Tugulo and Pickens circuits, and those parts of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia included in the Ashville and Abington districts.

"16. Mississippi Conference shall include the state of Louisiana, and that part of Mississippi lying west of the dividing ridge between Pearl and Half Rivers, and thence with the said ridge between Mississippi and Tombecbee on the Tennessee River.

"17. Alabama Conference shall include South Alabama, that part of Mississippi not included in the Mississippi Conference, and West Florida.

"18. Georgia Conference shall include the state of Georgia, (except what is embraced in the Holston Conference,) East and Middle Florida.

"19. South Carolina Conference shall include the state of South Carolina, (except so much as is included in the Tugulo, Greenville, and Pickens circuits,) and that part of North Carolina not included in the Virginia and Holston Conferences.

"20. Virginia Conference shall include the circuits situated on the Yadkin River, and that part of North Carolina lying north of Cape Fear River, except the town of Wilmington, and that part of Virginia lying south of the Rappahannock River, and east of the Blue Ridge, except Fredericksburgh and Port Royal.

"21. Baltimore Conference shall include the part of Virginia not included in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, except a small portion included in the Pittsburg[h] Conference, and that part of Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehanna River, including Northumberland district.

"22. Philadelphia Conference shall include the eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia, the whole of the state of Delaware, and that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers, except so much as is included in the Baltimore and Oneida Conferences, and all the state of New-Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the state of New-York as now is, or at any time may be, included in the Haverstraw and Hamburg circuits."

APPENDIX 11

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1836[1]

"1. The New-York Conference shall embrace all that territory now included in the New-York, Whiteplains, New-Haven, Poughkeepsie, Rhinebeck, Delaware, and Newburg districts.

"2. New-England Conference shall include all the state of Massachusetts, lying east of the Green Mountains, not included in the New-Hampshire Conference, and that part of Connecticut lying east of Connecticut River, and all the state of Rhode Island.

"3. The Maine Conference shall include all the state of Maine, and that part of the state of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills, and north of the waters of Assipee Lake.

"4. The New-Hampshire Conference shall include all the state of New-Hampshire not included in the Maine Conference, that part of the state of Vermont east of the Green Mountains, and that part of the state of Massachusetts northeast of the Merrimack River.

"5. The Troy Conference shall include the Albany, Middlebury, Plattsburg, and Troy districts.

"6. Black River Conference shall include that part of the state of New York west of the Troy Conference not included in the Genesee Conference, as far south as the Erie Canal, and all the societies on the immediate banks of said canal except Utica.

"7. The Oneida Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York, east of Cayuga Lake, not included in the New-York, Troy, and Black River Conferences, and the Susquehanna district in the state of Pennsylvania.

"8. The Genesee Conference shall include that part of the state

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), I:469-472.

of New-York west of Cayuga Lake, not included in the Erie Conference, and so much of Pennsylvania as is included by the Sugar Creek, Wellsborough, Smithsport, and Loyalsock circuits.

"9. The Erie Conference shall be bounded on the north by Lake Erie, on the east by a line commencing at the mouth of Cattaraugus Creek, thence to the Alleghany River, at the mouth of Tunanquant Creek, thence up said creek eastward, to the ridge dividing between the waters of Clarion and Sinnamahoning Creeks; thence eastward to the head of Mahoning Creek; thence down said creek to the Alleghany River; thence across said river in a northwesterly direction to the Western Reserve line, including the north part of Butler and New Castle circuits, west to the Ohio Canal, thence along said canal to Lake Erie, including Ohio City.

"10. Pittsburg[h] Conference shall be bounded on the north by the Erie Conference, on the east by the Alleghany Mountains, on the south by a line stretching from the head of Tygert's Valley to the Ohio River at the mouth of the Little Muskingum, embracing Middleburn Circuits and Hughes River Mission, thence to the Muskingum River, embracing Woodfield and M'Connelsville Circuits, thence on the west to the mouth of White Woman Creek, embracing Summerfield and Freeport Circuits, thence northeast to the Ohio Canal, embracing Dover Circuit, and thence to the line of Erie Conference.

"11. Michigan Conference shall embrace all that part of the state of Ohio not included in the Pittsburg[h], Erie, Ohio, and Indiana Conferences, and all the territory of Michigan, except so much as is included in the Laporte District, Indiana Conference.

"12. Ohio Conference shall commence at the mouth of the Great Miami River, thence running north with the state line as far as the north line of Drake county, excluding Elizabethtown, thence eastwardly, so as to include Lebanon, Urbana, Columbus, and Zanesville Districts, thence down the Muskingum River so as to include Marietta Circuit and Kanahwa District in Virginia, thence down the Ohio River to the place of beginning.

"13. Indiana Conference shall include the state of Indiana, except so much as is included in the Illinois Conference, Elizabethtown in the state of Ohio, and that part of Michigan territory now included in the Laporte District.

"14. Illinois Conference shall include the state of Illinois, and that part of Indiana included in the Danville and Eugene Circuits, the Wisconsin territory north of the state and west of Lake Michigan, and also that part of said territory west of the Mississippi, commonly called the Black Hawk Purchase.

"15. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri, and that part of Missouri territory which lies north of the Cherokee line.

"16. Arkansas Conference shall include the Arkansas territory, that part of Missouri territory lying south of the Cherokee line, also so much of the state of Louisiana as is now included in the Louisiana District.

"17. Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, except so much of the said state as lies west of the Tennessee River.

"18. Tennessee Conference shall include West Tennessee, and that part of Kentucky lying west of Tennessee River and North Alabama.

"19. Holston Conference shall include East Tennessee, and that part of the state of Georgia now embraced in the Newtown District, and also what is now included in the Tugaloo and Pickens Circuits, and those parts of South Carolina and Virginia which are included in the Ashville and Abingdon Districts.

"20. Mississippi Conference shall include all the state of Mississippi, except what is embraced in the range of counties on the east boundary of the state, viz., Jackson, Greene, Wayne, Clark, Lauderdale, Kemper, Noxaber, Lounds, and Monroe, and that part of the state of Louisiana not included in the Arkansas Conference.

"21. Alabama Conference shall include South Alabama, and that part of the Mississippi not included in the Mississippi Conference and West Florida.

"22. Georgia Conference shall include the state of Georgia, except what is embraced in the Holston Conference, East and Middle Florida.

"23. South Carolina Conference shall include the state of South Carolina, except so much as is included in the Tugaloo, Greenville, and Pickens Circuits, and that part of North Carolina now included in the Wilmington and Lincolnton Districts.

"24. North Carolina Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the top of the Blue Ridge, including the counties of Wilks and Iredell, on the south by the south lines of Iredell, Rowan, Davidson, Randolph, and Chatham, thence by Cape Fear River, except those appointments now included in the Wilmington and Lincolnton Districts.

"25. Virginia Conference shall be bounded on the east by Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, on the south by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the Blue Ridge, on the north by the Rappahannock River, except Fredericksburg and Port Royal.

"26. Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not included in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburg[h], and Philadelphia Conferences, the western shore of Maryland, except a small portion included in the Pittsburgh Conference, and that part of

Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehanna River, including Northumberland District.

"27. Philadelphia Conference shall include the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, the state of Delaware, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between Susquehannah and Delaware Rivers, except so much as is included in the Baltimore, Oneida, and New-Jersey Conferences.

"28. New-Jersey Conference shall include the whole state of New-Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the states of New-York and Pennsylvania as is now included in the Asbury District.

"29. There shall be an annual conference on the western coast of Africa, to be denominated The Liberian Mission Annual Conference, possessing all the rights, powers, and privileges of other annual conferences, escept that of sending delegates to the General Conference, and of drawing its annual dividend from the avails of the Book Concern, and of the Chartered Fund.

"On motion of John Early:--

"Resolved, That nothing contained in the report, fixing the boundaries of the Virginia and North Carolina Conferences shall be so construed as to prevent members from meeting at Petersburgh in February next, where and when a division of the preachers between the said conferences shall take place."

APPENDIX 12

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1840[1]

"1. The New-York Conference shall include all that is now embraced in the New-York, White Plains, New-Haven, Poughkeepsie, Hartford, Rhinebeck, Delaware, and Newburg Districts.

"2. Providence Conference shall include that part of the state of Connecticut lying east of the Connecticut River, all the state of Rhode Island, and that part of the state of Massachusetts lying south-east of a line drawn from the north-east corner of the state of Rhode Island to the mouth of the Neponset River, which line shall so run as to leave the Walpole station within the bounds of the Providence Conference.

"3. New-England Conference shall include all the state of Massachusetts lying east of the Green Mountains not embraced in the New-York, New-Hampshire, and Providence Conferences.

"4. Maine Conference shall include all the state of Maine, and that part of the state of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills, and north of the waters of Ossipee Lake.

"5. New-Hampshire Conference shall include all the state of New-Hampshire not embraced in the Maine Conference, that part of the state of Vermont east of the Green Mountains, and that part of the state of Massachusetts north-east of the Merrimack River.

"6. Troy Conference shall include the Albany, Troy, Poultney, Burlington, and Plattsburg Districts.

"7. Black River Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York west of the Troy Conference not embraced in the Genesee Conference, as far south as the Erie Canal, and all the societies on the immediate banks of said canal, except Utica and Canistota.

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), II:77-81.

"8. Oneida Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York east of Cayuga Lake not embraced in the New-York, Troy, and Black River Conferences, and the Susquehanna District, in the state of Pennsylvania.

"9. Genesee Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York lying west of a line running south from Lake Ontario, by way of Cayuga Lake, to Pennsylvania, not embraced in the Erie Conference, and so much of the north part of the state of Pennsylvania as is included in Seneca Lake, Dansville, and Cataraugus Districts.

"10. Erie Conference shall be bounded on the north by Lake Erie, on the east by a line commencing at the mouth of Cataraugus Creek, thence to the Alleghany River at the mouth of Tunanquant Creek, thence up said creek eastward to the ridge dividing between the waters of Clarion and Sinnamahoning Creeks, thence east to the head of Mahoning Creek, thence down said creek to the Alleghany River, thence across said river in a north-westerly direction to the Western Reserve line, including the north part of Butler and Newcastle circuits, thence west to the Ohio Canal, thence along said canal to Lake Erie, including Cleveland City.

"11. Pittsburg[h] Conference shall be bounded on the north by the Erie Conference, on the east by the Alleghany Mountains, on the south by a line stretching from the head of Tygert's Valley to the Ohio River, so as to embrace Middleburn circuit and Kanawha mission, thence to the mouth of the Muskingum River, and up said river, exclusive of the towns of Marietta and Zanesville, to the Tuscarawas River, and thence up said river to the line of the Erie Conference.

"12. Ohio Conference shall commence at the mouth of the Great Miami River, running north with the state line to the line of Dark county, excluding Elizabethtown, thence eastwardly along the line of the North Ohio Conference, so as to exclude the circuits of Greenville, Sidney, (except Westville and M'Farlands,) Belfontaine, Allen mission, Richwood, Marion, Delaware, and Roscoe, to the Muskingum River, thence down said river so as to include the towns of Zanesville and Marietta, and Kanawha District, in Virginia, thence down the Ohio River to the place of beginning.

"13. North Ohio Conference shall embrace all that part of the state of Ohio not included in the Ohio, Pittsburg[h], and Erie Conferences.

"14. Michigan Conference shall include the state of Michigan.

"15. Indiana Conference shall include all the state of Indiana, and Elizabethtown in Ohio.

"16. Rock River Conference shall include that part of the state of Illinois not embraced in the Illinois Conference, and the Wisconsin and Iowa Territories.

"17. Illinois Conference shall include the state of Illinois,

except that part north of the following line, viz.:--Beginning at the mouth of Rock River, thence up said river to the mouth of Green River, thence up said river to the Winnebago Swamp; thence down the south branch of the Bureau River to the Illinois River, thence up said river to the mouth of the Kankakee, thence up the Kankakee River to the east line of the state of Illinois.

"18. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri and that part of Missouri Territory which lies north of the Cherokee line.

"19. Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, except so much of the said state as lies west of the Tennessee River.

"20. Holston Conference shall include East Tennessee and that part of the states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginig, now embraced in the Newtown, Ashville, Wytheville, Abingdon, and Greenville Districts.

"21. Tennessee Conference shall include Middle Tennessee and North Alabama.

"22. Memphis Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Tombigbee River, Alabama state line, and Tennessee River, on the north by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, west by the Mississippi River, and south by a line running due east from the Mississippi River to the south-west corner of Tallahatchie county, thence due east to the south-eastern corner of Yallabusha county, thence in a straight line to the north-western corner of Oktibaha county, thence due east to the Tombigbee River.

"23. Arkansas Conference shall include the state of Arkansas, that part of Missouri Territory south of the Cherokee line, and so much of Texas as is now embraced in the Red River District.

"24. Texas Conference shall include the Republic of Texas, except what is embraced in the Red River District, Arkansas Conference.

"25. Mississippi Conference shall include all that part of the state of Mississippi not embraced in the Alabama and Memphis Conferences, and all the state of Louisiana.

"26. Alabama Conference shall include South Alabama, West Florida, and the counties of Jackson, Greene, Wayne, Clark, Lauderdale, Kemper, Noxubee, Lowndes, and that part of Monroe east of the Tombigbee River, in the state of Mississippi.

"27. Georgia Conference shall include all the state of Georgia, except what is now embraced in the Newtown District in the Holston Conference, East and Middle Florida.

"28. South Carolina Conference shall include the state of South Carolina, (except that part of said state now embraced in the Holston

Conference,) and so much of North Carolina as is included in the Lincolnton and Wilmington Districts.

"29. North Carolina Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the top of the Blue Ridge, including the counties of Wilkes and Iredell, on the south by the south lines of Iredell, Rowan, Davidson, Randolph, and Chatham, thence by Cape Fear River, except those appointments now included in the Wilmington and Lincolnton Districts.

"30. Virginia Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, on the south by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the Blue Ridge, on the north by the Rappahannock River, except Fredericksburgh and Port Royal.

"31. Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not embraced in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburg[h], and Philadelphia Conferences, the Western Shore of Maryland, escept a small portion included in the Pittsburg[h] Conference, and that part of Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehannah River, including Northumberland District.

"32. Philadelphia Conference shall include the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia, the state of Delaware, and all that part of Pennsylvania lying between the Susquehannah and Delaware Rivers, except so much as is included in the Baltimore, Oneida, and New-Jersey Conferences.

"33. New-Jersey Conference shall include the whole state of New-Jersey, Staten Island, and so much of the states of New-York and Pennsylvania as is now included in the Paterson District.

"34. There shall be an Annual Conference on the western coast of Africa, to be denominated The Liberia Mission Annual Conference, possessing all the rights, powers, and privileges of other Annual Conferences, except that of sending delegates to the General Conference, and of drawing its annual dividend from the avails of the Book Concern and of the Chartered Fund.

"Your committee are of the opinion that the request of the Baltimore Conference, asking the privilege of dividing within the next four years, ought not to be granted."

APPENDIX 13

ANNUAL CONFERENCE BOUNDARIES OF 1844[1]

"1. New-York Conference shall include all that territory now embraced in the New-York, Long Island, New-Haven, Poughkeepsie, Hartford, Rhinebeck, Delaware, and Newburg Districts.

"2. Providence Conference shall include that part of the state of Connecticut lying east of the Connecticut River, all the state of Rhode Island, and that part of the state of Massachusetts lying south-east of a line drawn from the north-east corner of the state of Rhode Island to the mouth of the Neponset River, which line shall so run as to leave the Walpole station within the bounds of the New-England Conference.

"3. New-England Conference shall include all the state of Massachusetts lying east of the Green Mountains not embraced in the New-York, New-Hampshire, and Providence Conferences.

"4. Maine Conference shall include all the state of Maine, and that part of the state of New-Hampshire lying east of the White Hills, and north of the waters of the Ossipee Lake.

"5. New-Hampshire Conference shall include all the state of New-Hampshire not embraced in the Maine Conference, and that part of the state of Massachusetts north-east of the Merrimack River.

"6. Vermont Conference shall include the state of Vermont, except that part lying west of the top of the Green Mountains, embraced in the Troy Conference.

"7. Troy Conference shall include Troy, Albany (including Sharon and Cobleskill circuits, formerly embraced in the Oneida Conference,) Saratoga, Poultney, Burlington, and Plattsburg Districts.

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[1]Taken from Journals of the General Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton and Phillips, 1855-1856), II:91-96.

"8. Black River Conference shall include, together with Rose circuit, that part of the state of New-York west of the Troy Conference not embraced in the Genesee Conference, as far south as the Erie Canal, and all the societies on the immediate banks of said canal, except Utica and Canistota, Montezuma and Port Byron.

"9. Oneida Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York east of Cayuga Lake not embraced in the New-York, Troy, and Black River Conferences, and the Susquehannah and Wyoming Districts, in the state of Pennsylvania.

"10. Genesee Conference shall include that part of the state of New-York lying west of a line running south from Lake Ontario, by way of Cayuga Lake, to Pennsylvania, not embraced in the Erie Conference, and so much of the north part of the state of Pennsulvania as is included in Seneca Lake, Dansville, and Cataraugus Districts.

"11. Erie Conference shall be bounded on the north by Lake Erie, on the east by a line commencing at the mouth of Cataraugus Creek, thence to the Alleghany River at the mouth of Tunanquant Creek, thence up said creek eastward to the ridge dividing between the waters of Clarion and Sinnamahoning Creeks, thence east to the head of Mahoning Creek, thence down said creek to the Alleghany River, thence across said river in a north-westerly direction to the Western Reserve line, including the north part of Butler and Newcastle circuits, thence west to the Ohio Canal, thence along said canal to Lake Erie, including Akron, and Cleveland City.

"12. Pittsburg[h] Conference shall be bounded on the north by the Erie Conference, on the east by the Alleghany Mountains, on the south by a line stretching from the head of Tygert's Valley to the Ohio River, so as to embrace Kanawha circuit, thence to the mouth of the Muskingum River, and up said river, exclusive of the towns of Marietta and Zanesville, to the Tuscarawas River, and thence up said river to the Line of the Erie Conference.

"13. Ohio Conference shall commence at the mouth of the Great Miami River, running north with the state line to the line of Dark county, excluding Elizabethtown, thence eastwardly along the line of the North Ohio Conference, so as to exclude the circuits of Greenville, Sidney, Belfontaine, Richwood, Marion, Delaware, and Roscoe, to the Muskingum River, thence down said river so as to include the towns of Zanesville and Marietta, and Kanawha District, in Virginia, thence down the Ohio River to the place of beginning.

"14. North Ohio Conference shall embrace all that part of the state of Ohio not included in the Ohio, Pittsburg[h], and Erie Conferences.

"15. Michigan Conference shall include the state of Michigan, and the Ojibway missions on the waters of Lake Superior, formerly embraced in the Rock River Conference.

"16. Indiana Conference shall include that part of the state of Indiana south of the National Road, with Elizabethtown in Ohio and the western charge in Indianapolis, with all the towns that are immediately on the road to the state line, except Terre Haute.

"17. North Indiana Conference shall include that part of the state of Indiana north of the National Road, the eastern charge in Indianapolis, with all the towns that are immediately on the road, to the eastern line of the state, together with Terre Haute in the west.

"18. Rock River Conference shall include that part of the state of Illinois not embraced in the Illinois Conference, and the Wisconsin Territory.

"19. Iowa Conference shall include all the Iowa Territory.

"20. Illinois Conference shall include that part of the state of Illinois south of the following line, namely: beginning at Warsaw on the Mississippi River, and running thence to Augusta, thence to Doddsville, thence to the mouth of Spoon River, thence to Bloomington, thence to Danville, thence to the Indiana state line, embracing Warsaw town, Havannah mission, Bloomington station, and Danville circuit.

"21. Missouri Conference shall include the state of Missouri.

"22. Indian Mission Conference shall be bounded as follows, namely: on the north by the Missouri River, east by the states of Missouri and Arkansas, south by Red River, and west by the Rocky Mountains.

"23. Kentucky Conference shall include the state of Kentucky, except so much of the said state as lies west of the Tennessee River.

"24. Holston Conference shall include East Tennessee, that part of the state of North Carolina now embraced in the Ashville and Wytheville Districts, and so much of the state of Virginia as is now embraced in the Wytheville District, and the districts lying west of New River.

"25. Tennessee Conference shall include Middle Tennessee, and that part of North Alabama watered by those streams flowing into the Tennessee River.

"26. Memphis Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Tombigbee River, Alabama state line, and Tennessee River, on the north by the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, west by the Mississippi River, and south by a line running due east from the Mississippi River to the south-west corner of Tallahatchie county, thence due east to the south-eastern corner of Yallabusha county, thence in a straight line to the north-western corner of Octibaha county, thence due east to the Tombigbee River.

"27. Arkansas Conference shall include the state of Arkansas.

"28. Eastern Texas Conference shall embrace all that part of the republic of Texas east of a line beginning at the east pass of the Bay of Galveston, thence through said bay to the mouth of Trinity River, thence up said river to the source of the middle fork of the same.

"29. Western Texas Conference shall embrace all that part of the republic of Texas lying west of the Trinity River, including Galveston Island.

"30. Mississippi Conference shall include all that part of the state of Mississippi not embraced in the Alabama and Memphis Conferences, and all the state of Louisiana.

"31. Alabama Conference shall include all that part of the state of Alabama not included in the Tennessee Conference, West Florida, and the counties of Jackson, Greene, Wayne, Clark, Lauderdale, Kemper, Noxubee, Lowndes, and that part of Monroe east of the Tombigbee River, in the state of Mississippi.

"32. Georgia Conference shall include all the state of Georgia, except that part which lies south of a line commencing at Fort Gaines on the Chattahoochee River, running thence in a direct line to Albany, on Flint River, thence along the line of the Ocmulgee and Flint River Railroad to the Ocmulgee River, thence down said river to the Altamaha, thence down the Altamaha to the Atlantic Ocean, and also that part of North Carolina embraced in the Murphy circuit, Lafayette District.

"33. Florida Conference shall include all that part of the state of Georgia not included in the Georgia Conference, and East and Middle Florida.

"34. South Carolina Conference shall include the state of South Carolina, and so much of North Carolina as is included in the Lincolnton and Wilmington Districts.

"35. North Carolina Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the north by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the top of the Blue Ridge, including the counties of Wilkes and Iredell, on the south by the south lines of Iredell, Rowan, Davidson, Randolph, and Chatham, thence by Cape Fear River, escept those appointments now included in the Wilmington and Lincolnton Districts.

"36. Virginia Conference shall be bounded on the east by the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean, on the south by Albemarle Sound, Roanoke, and Staunton Rivers, on the west by the Blue Ridge, on the north by the Rappahannock River, except Fredericksburg and Port Royal.

"37. Baltimore Conference shall include the remaining part of Virginia not embraced in the Virginia, Holston, Ohio, Pittsburg[h], and

Philadelphia Conferences, the Western Shore of Maryland, except a small portion included in the Pittsburg[h] Conference, and that part of Pennsylvania lying east of the Alleghany Mountains and west of Susquehannah River, including Northumberland District.

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"40. There shall be an Annual Conference on the western coast of Africa, to be denominated The Liberia Mission Annual Conference, possessing all the rights, powers, and privileges of other Annual Conferences, except that of sending delegates to the General Conference, and of drawing its annual dividend from the avails of the Book Concern and the Chartered Fund."

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