

“CUMBERLAND REVIVAL OF 1798 & FOLLOWING “I now sit down agreeably to promise to give you some account of the revival of religion in the state of Kentucky; you have no doubt heard already of the Greenriver and Cumberland revivals. I will just observe that last summer [1801] is the fourth since the revival commenced in those places [1798]; and that it has been more remarkable than any of the preceding not only for lively and fervent devotion among Christians, but also for awakenings and conversions among the careless; and it is worthy of notice that very few instances of apostasy have hitherto appeared. As I was not myself in the Cumberland country, all I can say about it is from the testimony of others; but I was uniformly told by those who had been there, that their religious assemblies were more solemn and the appearance of the work much greater than what had been in Kentucky; any enthusiastic symptoms which might at first have attended the revival, had greatly subsided, whilst the serious concern and engagedness of the people were visibly increased.”¹

“Almost two years ago [1799], in the neighbourhood of Nashville, a lad of 8 or 9 years of age accompanied his sister to a Sacrament some distance from his father's house, at which it pleased the Lord to visit him in mercy. When he returned home, and was taking the horses to the field, a lad of his own age being at the house, accompanied him. He then told his companion what he had experienced, and that he was resolved, henceforward, to live the life of a Christian. "Hitherto, said he, "You and I have been companions; but unless you alter your course, we must break off our acquaintance; for I am determined to serve the Lord."

“This conversation so greatly affected the other lad, that he ran home to his father's house, and threw himself on the bed. The father seeing his son come home affrighted, was greatly concerned, and stripped him, to see if he had received any hurt; but, finding none, the whole family was alarmed.

“After the lad became able to speak, he asked for Davis M'Corkle, and said he wanted to see him. A message was instantly dispatched for Mr. M'Corkle and his son. The old man, supposing that the lancet would be necessary, carefully put that instrument into his pocket and walked over; but Davis M'Corkle was the physician who understood the disease, and it was not long before the whole company was surprised with the two lads talking in rapturous language, of redeeming love. Their zeal and crying greatly affected all present.

“The first expedient that presented itself to their minds, was to collect the neighbours together for religious worship. This was done; and, to prevent any disorder in devotion, by the crying of the boys, they put them in a back room, and posted a person at the door to keep them there. After the friends and neighbours had sang and prayed together, Mr. M'Corkle related the story to the company, who unanimously desired to flee the boys, and hear it from themselves. This request was granted, and the boys simply related to them, with tears of joy, what God had done for their souls. Before they had half done, the whole company was in tears.

“Thus began the extraordinary work, which has spread all over the country; and thousands are now rejoicing, and praising redeeming love, who, a little while ago appeared to be in the gall of bitterness. -- In Cumberland, they meet in large companies, frequently to the amount of 10 or 12,000, and spend, it may be, two weeks in religious worship, before they disperse.”

“Last summer and fall [1800] there was a considerable awakening in the Baptist Churches in Woodford, Fayette and Jefferson counties, in Kentucky.”²

¹ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

² A letter written in 1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

PRE-REVIVAL SITUATION IN EARLY 1801 "In the older settlement of Kentucky the revival made its first appearance among the Presbyterians last spring [1801]; the whole of that country about a year before was remarkable for vice and dissipation; and I have been credibly informed that a decided majority of the people were professed infidels."³

February 8 (SUN) – March 8 (SUN) 'I am glad to inform you there is a great revival of religion near this place; 51 have been added to our church since you left us; 62 to Bryant's Station [Near Lexington, Kentucky], since the 8th of February, exclusive of today [March 8], at which place 46 were received yesterday [March 7 (SAT)] and a number more expected to join. I suppose upwards of 220 have been added to that church. -- 53 were baptized at Clear Creek in one day. There is also a great reformation at Boon's Creek, Marble Creek, Shawne Run, &c. In short all the churches near this, that I have heard from, [who adhere to primitive Christianity,] are in a prosperous state.

"In some it appears like a fire that has been long confined -- bursting all its barriers, and spreading with a rapidity that is indescribable -- attended only with a still small voice -- This, my brother, is a harvest indeed, and we may, on this occasion, use the language of sacred inspiration, -- "the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." It may be truly said, the Lord is doing great things for us, [and I will add] whereof I am glad.

"O that the great Husbandman would still carry on his work, and separate the precious grain from the tares."⁴

Winter, Early 1801 "During the last winter [Early 1801] appearances were favourable among the BAPTISTS and great numbers were added to their churches:"⁵

As of March 9 (MON) "I am sorry to hear of your destitute situation, in not hearing the gospel preached -- but I will tell you one thing, [not because you are ignorant of it], the Lord can communicate spiritual health, strength, growth and vigour, without it, when he sees cause to place any of his dear children in such a situation as you are. -- It is with pleasure I inform you 58 were baptized at Bryant's yesterday [March 8 (SUN)] -- from 8th February to 8th March, 120 have been added to that church, among whom were a number of our acquaintances, and several poor black people, some of whose experiences have astonished me -- This is the work of the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes, -- But alas, poor L____n, yet in measure stands out, though I trust even in this Sodom there are a few brought to a saving knowledge of a precious Christ. I was told yesterday, that wicked son of E____ D____ has been brought in the gospel fold. My dear brother, when I think on the pleasant seasons we have enjoyed in conversing about our blessed Redeemer, my heart burns to see you again."⁶

³ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

⁴ Letter written from Lexington, Kentucky on 3/8/1801

⁵ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

⁶ Letter written from Lexington, Kentucky on 3/9/1801

March ‘You will perceive by the enclosed letter, that Christian magazines are very much in demand, the Rev. Mr. Campbell, (the writer of the letter) has perused those which you have sent, and has read them to his congregation, but it was when his audience were whole, and did not need a physician, now they are sick, and call for help. -- And may the Lord be their helper -- Mr. Campbell's congregation is about 15 miles from this place towards Lexington, in the neighbourhood (as I mentioned in my last) a great work is going on -- I hear that the Baptist-Church in that part fills very fast, 20, 30, (and the Sabbath before the last [**March 18**]) 58 were baptized in a day: the Presbyterian-Churches are also the subjects of this work -- in the same neighbourhood.

“The spirit of God appears in powerful operation among all denominations of Christians; "And if it was the Lord of the household's will, I would wish that all party names were united in that of Christians. And that the profession in the belief of one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father, might take place: that there might be but one visible household of Faith, that all might be of one heart, and one mind, and join hands in building up the torn down walls of Zion, which party zeal has almost demolished; Blessed be God, the present century begins with less bigotry, more Catholicism and benevolence, than any former period: the present revival of religion goes far, to unite the hearts of its professors. -- It is my belief, that where the true love of God is shed abroad in the heart, the subjects of it will love its image wherever they see it, and in obedience to the command of Christ, and the innate principle of love, will seek fellowship with one another, unless their prejudices are paramount to the law of Christ; the time hastens on, when these wars and fightings will cease: Our neighbourhood remains much as it was when I last wrote, our social meetings continue, and there is an apparent seriousness on the minds of many, but no remarkable stir; May the Lord, if it is his will, soon appear, and rouse up the sleepers.”⁷

Early Spring of 1801 “...early in the spring the ministrations of the Presbyterian Clergy began to be better attended than they had been for many years before. Their worshipping assemblies became more solemn, and the people after they were dismissed shewed a strange reluctance at leaving the place: they generally continued some time in the meeting-houses -- in singing or in religious conversation.”⁸

“And this spring [**1801**], in our humble opinion, it hath pleased the Lord to pour out his Spirit on some of our Presbyterian congregations. At first our ministers were shy, not knowing what judgment to form of it. -- The falling down of multitudes, and their crying out (which happened under the singing of Watts' Psalms and Hymns, more frequently than under the preaching of the word) was to us so new a scene, that we thought it prudent not to be over hasty in forming any opinion of it. However, a little conversation with the affected persons, induced us to believe, that in a judgment of charity, it was the work of the Lord.”⁹

⁷ Letter written from Washington, Kentucky on 3/19/1801

⁸ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

⁹ A letter written in 1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

May 1 (FRI) “On the 1st of May, at a society on the waters of Fleming creek, on the east side of Licking, a boy, under the age of twelve years, became affected in an extraordinary manner, publicly confessing and acknowledging his sins, praying for pardon, through Christ, and recommending Jesus Christ to sinners, as being ready to save the vilest of the vile -- Adult persons became affected in the like manner.”¹⁰

May 3 (SUN) “The flame began to spread, the Sabbath following, at Mr. Camble's Meeting House -- a number became affected.”¹¹

May 17 (SUN) “The third Sabbath of May, on Cabin creek, six miles above Limestone, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered by Mr. Camble and Mr. McNamaar, at which time about sixty persons were STRUCK down.”¹²

May 24 (SUN) “Next Sabbath, on Fleming creek, under Mr. McNamaar, and Mr. Camble, on a like occasion, about 100 persons were struck down and deeply convinced.”¹³

Late May/Early June “Perhaps about the last of May or the first of June the awakenings became general in some congregations, and spread through the country in every direction with amazing rapidity.”¹⁴

June 5 (FRI) “On Friday night preceding the Sacrament at Concord, I was present at a society, held at Kainridge, a united congregation of Mr. Stone, and saw the extraordinary work. Of fifty persons present, nine were struck down.”¹⁵

June 6 (SAT) “I proceeded next morning to Concord, ten miles distant, where a sermon was preached, at which several became affected and struck down. The exercises continued all night. This was the first occasion, that shewed the necessity of performing out doors. The number being so great, the Lord's Supper was administered at a tent. A great solemnity appeared all day. A number were struck down; on the whole occasion about 150.”¹⁶

June 7 (SUN) “The first Sabbath of June, Mr. Stone administered the Lord's Supper, in Concord congregation, on the head-waters of Kingston, in the bounds of which exercises of the same kind had made their appearance in society, and at sermon.”¹⁷

¹⁰ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹¹ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹² Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹³ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹⁴ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

¹⁵ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹⁶ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

¹⁷ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

Uncertain Date "Passing from domestic intelligence, I hasten to lay before you, the outlines of the most august proceedings of the people of God, that ever was seen in this state.

"The Presbyterians assembled on Friday last, at Concord meeting house, by way of preparation for the Lord's supper. I did not attend until Sabbath day, when I saw the ordinance administered, and many of the people prostrate on the ground, crying for mercy. I passed the day as an impartial spectator, but frequently wrapped in amazement, wonder, and doubt, and anxious for certainty, I retired to a solitary part of the woods, and there prostrated myself before the great God, of heaven and earth, and frequently prayed to be directed in the right way. But alas, I returned with a most obdurate heart, ready to vilify, ripe for reproaching and persecuting the people of the most High God. I styled it enthusiastical levity, I called it a delusion of the devil, in conjunction with hypocrisy, operating on the minds of the illiterate and credulous, by the powers of oratory. Notwithstanding said I, it may turn the wicked, alter the drunkard, and finally reform the prodigal; nevertheless I thought it derogatory to the laws of God.

"You may easily see by this that I returned much displeased with the proceedings of the day. I did not intend to return the day following, but while I slumbered upon my pillow, that monitor that never sleeps, while we are surrounded with the blackness of darkness, gave me a severe wound. I rolled in my bed, and cried for mercy, but found none. I rose with a view of prostrating myself before Almighty God, but returned without making the attempt. Surrounded by the silent slumbers of my family, I struggled through the dreary hours of the night, then mounted my horse in the morning, in hopes of finding tranquillity in recreation; but the words which I heard the preceding day, "Those that are bidden, and have refused, shall never taste of my supper," obstructed my way, while the tremendous sound of "Go ye cursed," &c. re-echoed through every nerve of my body, while the tears of guilt and contrition poured over my face; I saw myself on the awful precipice, and the mouldering brink crumbling under my feet; my soul took the alarm, and for the first time, shrunk back at the very thoughts of a hell! Construe this as your please, my dear brother, but whether you call it insanity or imbecility, I am again involved in a similar situation; the view of my past guilt has watered my face afresh. I am become a proselyte in some degree, but a stranger to regeneration.

"I returned and resolved to go to meeting, that day also; accordingly, accompanied by your sister, the partner of my cares, we hastened to the place of festivity. A more tremendous sight never struck the eyes of mortal man. The very clouds, seemed to separate, and give way for the praises of the people of God to ascend the heavens, while thousands of tongues, with sounds of hallelujahs, seemed to roll through infinite space. Hundreds of the people lay prostrate on the ground crying for mercy.

"O! My brother, had you been there to have seen the convulsed limbs, the apparently lifeless bodies, to all of which the distorted features exactly comported, you would have been constrained to have cried out as I was obliged to do, that God is among the people. Nor was this confined to the commonality alone, but people of every description lay prostrate on the ground.

"There you would have seen the learned pastor, the steady patriot; and the obedient son, crying holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. There you might behold the honourable matron and the virtuous maiden, crying Jesus thou son of the Most High God, have mercy upon us. Turn your eyes a few paces further, and you might see the prodigal and the professed libertine, crying hosannah to God in the highest, there is no other name given under heaven among men, by which we can be saved, but the name of Jesus. See the poor oppressed African with his soul liberated, longing to be with God."¹⁸

¹⁸ Excerpt of a letter, quoted by the recipient in his own letter to a friend, written on 2/2/1802.

Spring “The revivals of religion in this country are really novel in our church, and so violent and imposing in their nature and appearances that I know not what to say or think. -- In two neighbouring congregations, good appearances were observed through the last spring. And now the Tennessee whirlwind has broke out among them, and seems to shake every thing before it.

“In the two last Lord's days there were sacraments in each place: at one I was present. -- In time of preaching, if care is taken, there is but little confusion: and when that is over, and the singing, and praying, and exhorting begins, the audience is thrown into what I call real disorder.

“The careless fall down, cry out, tremble, and not infrequently are affected with convulsive twitchings. Among these the pious are very busy, singing, praying, conversing, falling down in extacies, fainting with joy, exhorting sinners, combating opposers, &c.

“Those who fall, lie some a longer, some a shorter time. Some get comfort, some do not when first down, when one gets through (it is their own phrase,) that is, obtains relief, the shout is raised glory to God for a new born soul. And the holy embrace follows.

“Whole nights are spent in this way, and that part of the day which is not employed in divine service. For they stayed upon the ground in both places all the days of the solemnity. Nothing that imagination can paint, can make a stronger impression on the mind, than one of those scenes. Sinners dropping down on every hand, shrieking, groaning, crying for mercy, convulsed; professors praying, agonizing, falling down in distress, for sinners or in raptures of joy! Some singing, some shouting, clapping their hands, hugging and even kissing, laughing; others talking to the distressed, to one another, or to opposers of the work, and all this at once. -- No spectacle can excite a stronger sensation. And with what is doing, the darkness of the night, the solemnity of the place, and of the occasions, and conscious guilt, all conspire to make terror thrill through every power of the soul, and rouse it to awful attention.

“As to the work in general there can be no question but it is of God. The subjects of it, for the most part are deeply wounded for their sins, and can give a clear and rational account of their conversion. A number, too, are wrought upon in the usual way, and hopefully get religion without any of these extraordinary appearances. There is, however something curious in this falling down. I am told by the subjects of it that a tremulous benumbing sensation seizes the extremities, particularly the fingers, which rapidly spreads through the system, the knees become feeble, the heart violently compressed and the person drops to the ground.”¹⁹

Until June 10 (WED) “The exercises continued from Saturday till Wednesday, day and night, without intermission. The appearance itself was awful and solemn. It was performed in a thick grove of beachen timber; candles were furnished by the congregation, the night still and calm. Add to that, exhortations, praying, singing, the cries of the distressed, on account of sin; the rejoicing of those that were delivered from their sin's bondage, and brought to enjoy the liberty that is in Christ Jesus; all going on at the same time. About 4000 persons attended, 250 communicated; twelve waggons had brought some of the people with their provisions, &c. from distant places. This was the first occasion that shewed the necessity of encamping on the ground; the neighbourhood not being able to furnish strangers with accommodation; nor had they a wish to separate.”²⁰

¹⁹ Excerpt of a letter written by a Kentucky clergyman, as quoted in a letter written 9/10/1801

²⁰ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

June 12 (FRI) – 17 (WED) "The Lord's Supper was appointed to be held at Point Pleasant, on Stony creek, ten miles above Paris, being one of Mr. Joseph Howe's congregations. There the flame spread more and more. Curiosity led a great many strangers, I with my family attended.

"About forty waggons, four carriages, in all about 8000 persons. The meeting commenced on Friday, and continued till Wednesday. Three hundred and fifty communicants, 250 were struck down. There was an opposition both on this and the former occasions, by some who appeared to be real Christians, by nominal professors and by Deists. The first class stood astonished, not knowing, and wondering what these things meant; not willing to reprobate it, and many at last closed in with it. The next class, the most inveterate, call it enthusiasm, hypocrisy, witchcraft, possession of the Devil, sympathy, in fine, everything but what it really is. The latter confines it to sympathy, agitation, delusion, &c. As well as I am able, I will describe it, as I have had it from the subjects, not being able to describe it experimentally. Of all ages, from 8 years and upwards; male and female; rich and poor; the blacks; and of every denomination; those in favour of it, as well as those, at the instant in opposition to it, and railing against it, have instantaneously laid motionless on the ground. Some feel the approaching symptoms by being under deep convictions; their heart swells, their nerves relax, and in an instant they become motionless and speechless, but generally retain their senses. It comes upon others like an electric shock, as if felt in the great arteries of the arms or thighs; closes quick into the heart, which swells, like to burst. The body relaxes and falls motionless; the hands and feet become cold, and yet the pulse is as formerly, though sometimes rather slow. Some grow weak, so as not to be able to stand, but do not lose their speech altogether. They are all opposed to any medical application; and though the weather is very warm, and people in large crowds around them, yet they do not incline to drink water. They will continue in that state from one hour to 24. When they regain their speech, which comes to them gradually, they express themselves commonly in the following manner -- that they are great sinners; the vilest of vile, and pray earnestly for mercy through Christ. Some think there is mercy for all but for them; that salvation through Christ, is a wonderful salvation, but will not be applied to them. They often continue in this state many days. Many have not yet recovered, so that it is not certain that they will. -- Others will recover in an hour, and speak of salvation sure, and are in possession of great gifts in praying and exhortation, which they often perform in an incredible manner. Indeed it is a miracle, that a wicked unthoughtful sinner, who never could, or did address himself, to an audience before, should, rise out of one of those fits and continue for the space of two hours recommending religion and Jesus Christ to sinners, as a lovely Saviour, free willing, and all sufficient, and calling to sinners and inviting them to come to Christ and close in with the offer of salvation, in the most pressing and engaging manner.

"But, I am sure, my description, and your view (if you were an eye witness) would differ as much as day from night. So say those who have first heard and then seen. Notwithstanding that all our ministers, and a vast number of the most respectable and sensible people, in the country, acknowledge, that it is the wonderful work of God; and is marvellously manifested to us; yet there are people so hardened, that they either cannot or will not acknowledge the work to be of God, but represent it in an unfavourable view.

"People in a number of instances, in opposition, have felt it coming on, and have endeavoured to fly, but could not get away. They have been struck in the woods, in the act of running away. Some have been struck at home; on the road; in the field; in bed; at the plough; asleep; whole families together, at home, and sometimes one of a family."²¹

²¹ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

June 18 (THU) - 25 (THU) "On the 3d Sabbath of June [21], the Sacrament was administered at Lexington, Mr. Welch's congregation; the same day at Indian creek, Mr. Robertson's congregation, the latter on Kingston creek, eighteen miles below Paris, and twenty miles N. of this place. The former began on Friday [19] and continued till Tuesday [23], being the first time that this strange work made its appearance here. About 70 were struck; 300 communicants; 6000 persons in all attended. The latter commenced on Thursday [18], and continued till Thursday [25], day and night; the first night excepted. -- About 10,000 persons; 50 waggons; 800 struck; 500 communicated."²²

June "I attended at Point-pleasant [(West) Virginia] congregation, about 50 miles from me: There were about 5 or 6000 people; hundreds deeply affected; all serious; many saying, "What is this?" and most spending the time in some religious exercise, chiefly singing hymns, night and day, without intermission, from Friday till Friday. A Lawyer F____, who came to find fault and ridicule, was, we hope, effectually brought to Christ, and is now a flaming exhorter. -- This was in the month of June"²³

June "In July, at the administration of the Lord's Supper, at Cynthiana, everybody was amazed. Hundreds fell to the ground at once, among whom was a Doctor C____, a professed Deist. The news was spread, and 10 or 12 of his companions ran to see; but, in less than half an hour, they were all lying on the ground near the Doctor; and I humbly hope, that most of them have experienced a saving change."²⁴

July 31 (FRI) – August 5 (WED) "On the first Sabbath of August, was the Sacrament of Kainridge, the congregation of Mr. Stone. -- This was the largest meeting of any that I have seen: It continued from Friday till Wednesday. About 12,000 persons; 125 waggons; 8 carriages; 900 communicants; 300 were struck. One girl, aged 10 years, after recovering her speech, continued to pray and exhort in an extraordinary and most pathetic manner, for the space of two hours."²⁵

August 7 (FRI) "I am on my way to one of the greatest meetings of the kind perhaps ever known; it is on a sacramental occasion. Religion has got to such a height here, that people attend from a great distance; on this occasion I doubt not but there will be 10,000 people, and perhaps 500 waggons. The people encamp on the ground, and continue praising God, day and night, for one whole week before they break up."²⁶

²² Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

²³ A letter written in 1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

²⁴ A letter written in 1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

²⁵ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

²⁶ Letter written from Bourbon County, Kentucky on 8/7/1801.

August 8 (SAT) "I hasten to give you an account of the revival of religion, and some of the remarkable circumstances thereof. I am sure the most discerning and observant pensman, or the nicest pencil, could not portray to your imagination, the full idea of the meeting that took place at Kain-ridge, in Bourbon-county: -- I shall confine myself only to a few particulars --

"This meeting was published about one month generally, throughout the Presbyterian connexion, as one of their annual sacraments: thither assembled the religious of every denomination, some from one hundred miles distant, but more particularly the Presbyterians and Methodists, who are in full communion with each other: -- lastly the Baptists, who preach with each other, but do not commune. To this general assembly I set off last Friday [**August 7**], and arrived there on Saturday [**August 7**] about 10 o'clock: I then began to note some of the most extraordinary particulars: I first proceeded to count the waggons containing families, with their provisions, camp equipage, &c. to the number of 147: at 11 o'clock the quantity of ground occupied by horses, waggons, &c. was about the same size as the square between Market, Chesnut, Second and Third-streets, of Philadelphia -- There was at this place a stage erected in the woods, about 100 yards from the meeting-house, where were a number of Presbyterian and Methodist ministers; one of the former preaching to as many as could get near enough to hear -- in the house also, was another of the same denomination, preaching to a crowded audience -- at the same time another large concourse of people collected about 100 yards in an east direction from the meeting-house, hearing a Methodist speaker -- and about 150 yards in a fourth course from the house was an assembly of black people, hearing the exhortations of the blacks, some of whom appeared deeply convicted, and others converted. The number of communicants who received tokens were 750, nor was there a sufficiency of them - these tokens are small pieces of lead, the size of a five-penny bit, with the letter A or B impressed thereon, and distributed by the ministers to the members of the several churches, not excluding any baptist who apply for them. I believe there was at one time as many as three hundred who exhorted on this occasion. I noted a remarkable instance of a little girl, by the name of Barbara, about 7 years old, who was set upon a man's shoulder, agreeably to her desire, to speak to the multitude, which she did, until she appeared almost exhausted, and leaned back her head on her bearer. A tender hearted old man, standing close behind her, observed, "Poor thing, she had better be laid down;" at which she quickly turned round her head, and said, "Don't call me poor, for Christ is my brother, God my father, and I have a kingdom to inherit, therefore don't call me poor, for I am rich in the blood of the Lamb.

"["And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased, and said unto him, hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, yea; have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise!"]

"Permit me to ask, are we, like those new converts, constantly in season, and out of season beseeching our friends and fellow sinners to surrender to the demand of "My Son give me thine heart!" So far as relates to myself, I am not only a fruitless but a leafless tree, encumbering the ground of gospel light."

"Last Sunday [**August 2**] the association was held at Higby's, 6 miles from here, where it is said, there were from 8 to 10 thousand persons; and on the same day in the two counties adjoining, there were, at two congregations, from 18,000 to 25,000 souls."²⁷

²⁷ Letter written from a man in Lexington, Kentucky to the his sister in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 8/10/1801.

August 11 (TUE) “The revival of religion in Cumberland has extended over a vast tract of country, and is still increasing. How pleasing to the Christian to hear of the thousands of souls which are added to the Redeemer's Kingdom in that country.

“Mr. Hall, who went missionary to the Natchez [**Tribe in western Mississippi**], has returned, and gives a pleasing account of the prospects of religion in that lately savage country: a number of churches are formed there by him: about forty were added to the church at one communion, and there is every prospect that the Gospel will flourish there in a few years. O, may all the nations of the earth know and serve the Lord.”²⁸

August 15 (SAT) “I must call your attention to the glorious work of God in this place. Not long since, religion appeared to be at a very low ebb here, but last winter there appeared a great anxiety in people generally to hear the gospel; and numbers have been made to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" and I will add, many of our accomplished Deists have been made to bow the knee, and throw down their weapons of rebellion.”²⁹

August “In August last I attended at Caneridge meeting-house. There were present, besides 18 Presbyterian ministers, and a number of Baptist and Methodist preachers, the GOVERNOR OF THE STATE, each of whom was personally and busily engaged, either in preaching, praying or exhorting!!! Some suppose the number of people 10, others 17, and others 21,000. There were 148 waggons and coaches present. The number of convicted persons were great; some crying for mercy; some shouting redeeming grace; and others collected in numberless small circles of 12 or 20 singing hymns; all serious; many walking to and fro, with anxiety pictured in their countenances; and the whole conversation was either of religion, or something relating thereto. The number of communicants was 828. Many young persons have set to their seal that God is true.

“Some, perhaps, will censure us for associating with the Baptists and Methodists: But, my dear Sir, we are all very friendly; there appears to be good doing; all are encouraging it; and is this not better, than to be devouring one another? Is it not more agreeable with the command of Christ, whose every precept is love? We all preach the truth, as we think, carefully observing decorum, as far as conscience will admit, that one society may not hurt the feelings of another.

“N.B. On the 19th of August [**WED**], at a sacramental occasion at Paris, thousands attended, and hundreds fell to the ground at once. This is about 30 miles from me. The work of the Lord appears to be progressing, though attended with some enthusiasm. -- But this is generally confined to the grossly ignorant; for whom we must make every apology, as they are just emerging, as it were, out of heathenish darkness.”³⁰

²⁸ Letter written from a man in North Carolina to a friend in Virginia on 8/11/1801.

²⁹ Letter written from a man in Kentucky to his friend in Maryland on 8/15/1801.

³⁰ A letter written from Lancaster, Ohio, in 1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

Until 25 September (SUN) “I attended the like occasions, at the following places, yiz. Paris, Mr. Reynolds's congregation; Walnut Hill, Mr. Crawford's congregation; Salem, Mr. Lyle's congregation; Beaver, Mr. Marshall's: and last Sabbath [**25 September**], Blue Spring, Mr. Marshall's -- all similar to those I have described. The work is greatest on Sacramental occasions.

“In order to give you a more just conception of it -- suppose so large a congregation assembled in the woods, ministers preaching day and night; the camp illuminated with candles, on trees, at waggons, and at the tent; persons falling down, and carried out of the crowd, by those next to them, and taken to some convenient place, where prayer is made for them; some Psalm or Hymn, suitable to the occasion, sung. If they speak, what they say is attended to, being very solemn and affecting -- many are struck under such exhortations. But if they do not recover soon, praying and singing is kept up, alternately, and sometimes a minister exhorts over them -- for generally a large group of people collect, and stand round, paying attention to prayer and joining in singing. Now suppose 20 of those groups around; a minister engaged in preaching to a large congregation, in the middle; some mourning; some rejoicing, and great solemnity on every countenance, and you will form some imperfect idea of the extraordinary work! Opposers call this confusion! But in any of these parties, employment for the mind, may be found. The work being engaging, persons subsist with less sleep and victuals than at other times.”

“P.S. As the bearer did not start as soon as I expected, I would just inform you that since I wrote the above, I heard from different parts of Cumberland, Green-river, and of this state, that the work is increasing fast. One instance of a person in opposition at Mr. Lyle's Sacrament, last Sunday, 25 miles from this. A man of 30 years, had procured a staff with a sharp nail in the end, intending therewith to probe such as would fall down, in the crowd, which (he was certain) would soon rouse them out of their lethargy. -- He himself had often boasted that he should not fall down; however, he became affected; which, when he felt it coming on, he endeavoured to expel by making use of whiskey, thinking that would allay his feelings; but to no purpose, for in a short time he was struck down. When able to speak, made a wonderful confession of his obstinacy; acknowledged himself a great sinner, and hoped for pardon through Christ.³¹

³¹ Patterson Letter of 9/25/1801.

Uncertain Date “It will give you and aunt some happiness to hear that myself and family are well; and to increase your joy, I shall add a short account of the revival of religion in Kentucky. The best way to give you a satisfactory idea will be to describe a communion occasion.

“Out of many I shall select that of Caneridge, which I attended with eighteen Presbyterian ministers and Baptists and Methodists, I do not know how many, all being either preaching or exhorting the distressed with more harmony than could be expected: The governor of our state was with us and encouraging the work.

“The number of the people computed from 10 to 21,000 and the communicants 828. The whole people serious, all the conversation was of a religious nature, or calling in question the divinity of the work. Great numbers were on the ground from Friday until the Thursday following, night and day without intermission engaged in some religious act of worship.

“They are commonly collected in small circles of ten or twelve, close adjoining another circle, and all engaged in singing Watt's and Hart's Hymns; and then a minister steps upon a stump or log and begins an exhortation or sermon, when as many as can hear, collect around him.

“On Sabbath night, I saw above one hundred candles burning at once -- and I saw I suppose one hundred persons at once on the ground crying for mercy of all ages from 8 to 60 years. Some I had satisfaction in conversing with, others I had none; and this was the case with my Brethren as some of them told me.

“When a person is struck down he is carried by others out of the congregation, when some minister converses with and prays for him, afterwards a few gather around and sing a Hymn suitable to his case. The whole number brought to the ground under convictions, about one thousand, not less. The sensible, the weak, learned and unlearned, the rich and the poor are the subjects of it. At Cinthiana, Paris, Flat- creek, Point Pleasant, Walnut Hill and George Town, great congregations are all in these places, and exercised in the manner as above described.

“There are many irregularities among us, so it was in 1776 among the wigs in their enthusiasm for liberty, and so is human nature every where; sitting up whole nights is extravagant, but you cannot bid them quit, or you need not.

“The Methodists are friendly, and are very anxious to do good; and for my part I should be sorry to forbid, or even discourage them. -- I see several things I do disapprove; but can say, if only the tenth person convicted is truly converted, 'tis a great work.

“In Cumberland the work is also great; they often meet in congregations of twenty five thousand, and spend sometimes two weeks together.

“At Conewago, there were one hundred and forty waggons, and six coaches -- I cannot descend to particulars respecting the exercises of little boys, and old grey headed men, some struck down on the spot, some at their plough, and some affected in the same manner on their beds; and many rejoicing in hope, &c. The neighbourhood in which I live, is beginning to think more seriously, but are far short of the neighbouring societies.”³²

³² A letter written on 9/20/1801 by the nephew of a past president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

September “At the beginning of the revival in Shelby county [North-central Kentucky] the appearances, as related to me by eye-witnesses, were very surprising indeed. The revival had before this spread with irresistible power through the adjacent counties; and many of the pious had attended distant sacraments with great benefit. These were much engaged, and felt unusual freedom in their addresses at the throne of grace, for the outpouring of the divine Spirit at the approaching sacrament in Shelby. The Sacrament came on in September. The people, as usual, met on Friday: but all were languid, and the exercises went on heavily. On Saturday and Sunday morning it was no better, at length the communion service commenced, every thing was still lifeless: whilst the minister of the place was speaking at one of the tables, without any unusual animation suddenly there were several shrieks from different parts of the assembly; instantly persons fell in every direction; the feelings of the pious were suddenly revived, and the work progressed with extraordinary power, till the conclusion of the solemnity: this phenomenon of falling is common to all ages, sexes and characters; and when they fall they are differently exercised. Some pious people have fallen under a sense of ingratitude and hardness of heart, and others under affecting manifestations of the love and goodness of GOD. Many thoughtless persons under legal convictions, who have obtained comfort before they arose. But perhaps the most numerous class consists of those who fall under distressing views of their guilt, who arise with the same fearful apprehensions, and continue in that state for some days, perhaps weeks, before they receive comfort.”³³

October “Some circumstances have concurred to distinguish the Kentucky revival from most others, of which we have had any account, I mean the largeness of the assemblies on sacramental occasions.

“The length of time, they continued on the ground in devotional exercises. And the great numbers who have fallen down under religious impressions, -- on each of these particulars I shall make some remarks.

“With respect to the largeness of the assemblies. It is generally supposed that at many places there were not fewer than 8, 10, or 12 thousand people -- at a place called Cane Ridge meeting-house, many are of opinion there were at least 20 thousand. There were 140 waggons which came loaded with people, besides other wheel carriages. Some persons had come 200 miles. The largeness of these assemblies was an inconvenience -- they were too numerous to be addressed by one speaker, it therefore became necessary for several ministers to officiate at the same time at different stands: this afforded an opportunity to those who were but slightly impressed with religion to wander to and fro between the different places of worship, which created an appearance of confusion and gave ground to such as were unfriendly to the work to charge it with disorder. Another cause also conduced to the same effect; about this time the people began to fall down in great numbers under serious impressions: this was a new thing among Presbyterians; it excited universal astonishment, and created a curiosity which could not be restrained when people FELL even during the most solemn parts of divine service: those who stood near were so extremely anxious to see how they were affected, that they often crowded about them so as to disturb the worship. -- But these causes of disorder were soon removed; different sacraments were appointed on the same Sabbath, which divided the people, and the falling down became so familiar as to excite no disturbance.

³³ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

October {continued} “In October I attended three Sacraments, at each there were supposed to be 4 or 5 thousand people, and every thing was conducted with strict propriety; when persons fell, those who were near took care of them, and every thing continued quiet until the worship was concluded.

“The length of time that people continue at the places of worship is another important circumstance of the Kentucky revival: at Cane Ridge they met on Friday and continued until Wednesday evening, night and day without intermission, either in the public or private exercises of devotion; and with such earnestness that heavy showers of rain were not sufficient to disperse them. On other Sacramental occasions they generally continued on the ground until Monday or Tuesday evening; and had not the preachers been exhausted and obliged to retire or had they chosen to prolong the worship, they might have kept the people any length of time they pleased, and all this was, or might have been done, in a country where less than twelve months before the Clergy found it difficult to detain the people during the usual exercises of the Sabbath.

“The practice of camping on the ground was introduced, partly by necessity, and partly by inclination; the assemblies were generally too large to be received by any common neighbourhood; every thing indeed was done which hospitality and brotherly kindness could do, to accommodate the people; public and private houses were opened, and free invitations given to all persons who wished to retire. Farmers gave up their meadows before they were mown to supply the horses; yet notwithstanding all this liberality it would have been impossible in many cases, to have accommodated the whole assemblies with private lodgings: but besides the people were unwilling to suffer any interruption in their devotions; and they formed an attachment to the place where they were continually seeing so many careless sinners receiving their first impressions, and so many Deists constrained to call on the formerly despised name of JESUS; they conceived a sentiment like what Jacob felt at Bethel. "Surely the Lord is in this place," "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

“The number of persons who have fallen down under serious impressions in this revival, is another matter worthy of attention, and on this I shall be more particular, as it seems to be the principal cause why this work should be more suspected of enthusiasm than some other revivals. At Cane Ridge sacrament it is generally supposed not less than 1000 persons fell prostrate to the ground; among whom were many infidels. At one sacrament which I attended, the number that fell was thought to be more than 300.

“Persons who fall, are generally such as had manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour. Immediately before they become totally powerless they are seized with a general tremor and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling; persons in this situation are affected in different degrees; sometimes when unable to stand or sit they have the use of their hands and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once in a minute: in some instances their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life forsake them for nearly an hour; persons who have been in this situation have uniformly avowed that they felt no bodily pain, that they had the entire use of their reason and reflection, and when recovered, they could relate every thing that had been said or done near them, or which could possibly fall within their observation. From this it appears that their falling is neither common fainting, nor a nervous affection. Indeed this strange phenomenon appears to have taken every possible turn to baffle the conjectures of those who are not willing to consider it a supernatural work.

October {continued} “Persons have sometimes fallen on their way from public worship; and sometimes after they had arrived at home, and in some cases when they were pursuing their common business on their farms, or when retired for secret devotion. It was above observed that persons generally are seriously affected for some time previous to their falling; in many cases however it is otherwise. Numbers of thoughtless sinners have fallen as suddenly as if struck with lightning. Many professed infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested in this way, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work.”³⁴

“I have conversed with many who fell under the influence of comfortable feelings, and the account they gave of their exercises while they lay entranced was very surprising. I know not how to give you a better idea of them than by saying that in many cases they appeared to surpass the dying exercises of Dr. Finley: their minds appeared wholly swallowed up in contemplating the perfections of deity, as illustrated in the plan of salvation, and whilst they lay apparently senseless, and almost lifeless, their minds were more vigorous and their memories more retentive and accurate than they had ever been before. I have heard men of respectability assert that their manifestations of gospel truth were so clear as to require some caution when they began to speak, lest they should use language which might induce their hearers to suppose they had seen those things with their bodily eyes; but at the same time they had seen no image nor sensible representation, nor indeed any thing besides the old truths contained in the Bible.

“Among those whose minds were filled with the most delightful communications of divine love, I but seldom observed any thing extatic. Their expressions were just and rational, they conversed with calmness and composure and on their first recovering the use of speech, they appeared like persons recovering from a violent disease which had left them on the borders of the grave. I have sometimes been present when persons who fell under the influence of convictions obtained belief before they arose, in these cases it was impossible not to observe how strongly the change in their minds was depicted in their countenances, instead of a face of horror and despair, they assumed one open, luminous, serene and expressive of all the comfortable feelings of religion. As to those who fall down under legal convictions and continue in that state they are not different from those who receive convictions in other revivals, excepting that their distress is more severe. Indeed extraordinary power is the leading characteristic of this revival, both saints and sinners have more striking discoveries of the realities of another world than I have ever known on any other occasion.

“I trust I have said enough on this subject to enable you to judge how far the charge of enthusiasm is applicable to it: Lord Lyttleton in his letter on the conversion of St. Paul observes (I think justly) that enthusiasm is a vain self-righteous spirit, swelled with self-sufficiency and disposed to glory in its religious attainments. If this be a good definition there has been perhaps as little enthusiasm in the Kentucky revival as in any other, never have I seen more genuine marks of that humility which disclaims the merit of its own duties, and looks to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of acceptance with God, I was indeed highly pleased to find that Christ was all and all in their religion, as well as in the religion of the gospel. Christians in their highest attainments seemed most sensible of their entire dependence on divine grace, and it was truly affecting to hear with what agonizing anxiety awakened sinners enquired for Christ, as the only physician who could give them any help.

³⁴ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

October {continued} “Those who call these things enthusiasm ought to tell us what they understand by the Spirit of Christianity. In fact, sir, this revival operates as our Saviour promised the Holy Spirit should when sent into the world, it convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement, a strong confirmation to my mind, both that the promise is divine, and that this is a remarkable fulfilment of it. It would be of little avail to object to all this, that probably the professions of many were counterfeited, such an objection would rather establish what it meant to destroy, for where there is no reality there can be no counterfeit, and besides when the general tenor of a work is such as to dispose the more insincere professors to counterfeit what is right, the work itself must be genuine; but as an eye-witness in the case, I may be permitted to declare that the professions of those under religious convictions were generally marked with such a degree of engagedness and feeling as wilful hypocrisy could hardly assume -- the language of the heart when deeply impressed is very distinguishable from the language of affectation.

“Upon the whole, sir, I think the revival in Kentucky among the most extraordinary that have ever visited the church of Christ, and all things considered, peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of that country. Infidelity was triumphant and religion at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature seemed necessary to arrest the attention of a giddy people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable, and futurity a dream. This revival has done it; it has confounded infidelity, awed vice into silence, and brought numbers beyond calculation, under serious impressions.

“Whilst the Blessed Saviour was calling home his people, and building up his church in this remarkable way, opposition could not be silent. At this I hinted above; but it is proper to observe, that the clamorous opposition which assailed the work at its commencement has been in a great measure borne down before it. A large proportion of those who have fallen, were at first opposers, and their example has taught others to be cautious, if it has not taught them to be wise.

“I have written on this subject, to a greater length than I first intended, but if this account should give you any satisfaction, and be of any benefit to the common cause, I shall be fully gratified.”³⁵

³⁵ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

November 1 (SUN) “I left that country about the first of November, at which time this revival in connexion with the one in Cumberland had covered the whole state, excepting a small settlement which borders on the waters of Greenriver, in which no Presbyterian ministers are settled; and I believe very few of any denomination. The power with which this revival has spread; and its influence in moralizing the people, are difficult for you to conceive of, and more difficult for me to describe. I had heard many accounts and seen many letters respecting it before I went to that country; but my expectations, though greatly raised, were much below the reality of the work. The congregations, when engaged in worship, presented scenes of solemnity superior to what I had ever seen before; and in private houses it was no uncommon thing to hear parents relate to strangers the wonderful things which God had done in their neighbourhoods, whilst a large circle of young people would be in tears. On my way to Kentucky I was told by settlers on the road, that the character of Kentucky travellers was entirely changed and that they were now as distinguished for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissoluteness: and indeed I found Kentucky the most moral place I had ever been in, a profane expression was hardly heard; a religious awe seemed to pervade the country: and some Deistical characters had confessed that from whatever cause the revival might originate, it certainly made the people better. -- Its influence was not less visible in promoting a friendly temper; nothing could appear more amiable than that undissembled benevolence which governs the subjects of this work: I have often wished that the mere politician or Deist could observe with impartiality their peaceful and amicable spirit. He would certainly see that nothing could equal the religion of JESUS, for promoting even the temporal happiness of society -- some neighbourhoods visited by the revival had been formerly notorious for private animosities; and many petty law-suits had commenced on that ground. When the parties in these quarrels were impressed with religion, the first thing was to fend for their antagonists; and it was often very affecting to see their meeting. Both had seen their faults, and both contended that they ought to make concessions, till at last they were obliged to request each other to forbear all mention of the past, and to act as friends and brothers for the future. Now sir, let modern philosophists talk of reforming the world by banishing Christianity and introducing their licentious systems. The blessed gospel of our God and Saviour is shewing what it can do.”³⁶

Later in November “Several churches here [**Northern Georgia**] within four months past have received and baptized from twenty to fifty persons; and one in Elbert county has had an addition by baptism of about one hundred and forty. According to the best accounts from Kentucky, there has been added to the Baptist churches, since last March, near six thousand; while multitudes were joining the Methodists and Presbyterians. There are six Baptist associations in that state. Of these the Elkhorn is perhaps the smallest, and from their minutes of last August, it appears that the number is three thousand and eleven souls. -- O that instances of such large and rapid accessions to the churches may be multiplied, till not only Kentucky and our upper, but our lower country and EVEN SAVANNAHS SHALL BE FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF GOD.”³⁷

³⁶ Letter written by principal of Washington (Kentucky) Academy to a peer on Prince Edward Island on 1/1/1802.

³⁷ Letter written from northern Georgia on 11/17/1801