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A STUDY OF THE FRONTIER PREACHER IN TEXAS

APPROVED:

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May 19, 1952

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Dean of the Graduate School

# A STUDY OF THE FRONTIER PREACHER IN TEXAS

by

GEORGE WILMETH EWING, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

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EWING

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
May, 1952

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# PREFACE

I am a preacher. I believe in Christianity. I believe that the gospel of Christ in its pure form will save men's souls, and that even in a corrupted form it is as powerful a civilizing force as has been unleashed upon the world. A natural outgrowth of these beliefs is an interest in those that have proclaimed the gospel; in their lives, their successes, their failures and their contributions to the system that has produced and nurtured me.

While it cannot be said that this interest was great enough to demand the production of the following paper, yet it was sufficient to make possible the selection of a subject for a required investigation that would easily engage the attention of, and even inspire, the investigator. In particular, I wanted to study and attempt to evaluate the preacher on the frontier; because, in the first place, I must confess to enjoy reading the adventures of the pioneers; in the second place, I thought that perhaps his contribution to society had been underestimated; and in the third place, I felt that most current conceptions of the frontier preacher are not based on accurate studies of him. It seemed to me that too many of the fictional and cinematic western preachers were either rascals, or ignoramuses, or merely impotent blackrobed men who are

called in when needed to hold a Bible and intone marital and funeral ceremonies. I wanted to see the average preacher plunging into the everyday life of the Texas frontier, and seeking to do his share in whipping a civilized state out of the wilderness, so I pursued him through a considerable body of literature, and the following pages are the result of my trying to catch and weigh him, as well as check his brand and earmarks. I commend the essay with the feeling that it contributes no less to the world's stockpile of useable knowledge than many similar efforts, and that it is no drier than many another academic bone. Indeed, any aridity may be ascribed to the writer and not to his sweating, river-swimming, baptizing subject.

George Wilmeth Ewing

April, 1952

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

A Study of the English-speaking, Non-Catholic, White, Frontier Preacher in Texas as Revealed in his Memoirs, Biographies, and Autobiographies in the Texas Collection of the Library of the University of Texas is a fairly accurate definitive title for this work. In the collection referred to, there is a considerable body of material dealing with religion and religionists in Texas from the time of her discovery until the present. This material consists of church and secular histories, sermons, essays, religious periodicals, articles in secular periodicals, reminiscences and memoirs of Texas laymen and preachers, and biographies of preachers. The periodicals are largely uncataloged, and the books are for the most part poorly indexed or toally lacking in indices. The great quantity and unorganized nature of the material forced the fixing of artificial boundaries for the subject. As far as the writer was able to determine, all the sources referred to in the title above were used in the investigation; and, in addition, many other of the works mentioned in the second sentence were consulted, along with several writings dealing with American frontier religion in places other than Texas, in order that

a background against which to place the subject might be obtained.

Three words in the foregoing title require further definition that the reader may not be led to expect something not to be found in the work. By study is meant the product of an earnest endeavor to acquire information concerning the subject, with some attempt at evaluation and analysis of the information by means of careful examination, consideration and contemplation. The word was chosen to allow the reader to understand that, whereas accurate information has been presented, it is often presented as indication of the probable truth of an idea rather than proof of a definite conclusion. Some of the evaluations and analyses are to be taken as little more than suggestions by the writer concerning the significance of the information. The thesis is a study that has been purposely limited rather than concluded.

In the dissertation a preacher is one who publicly proclaims the gospel of Christ in some form or other, whether he is recognized, ordained or licensed by any ecclesiastical body or not, for, as we shall see, the frontiersman was more interested in the message than in the credentials of the bearer, however, to narrow the field of study, the investigator has excluded those preaching to the non-English speaking settlers, the Roman Catholics, and the colored preachers.

This exclusion has less overall effect than might be expected. The Spanish speaking settlers were largely already Roman Catholics and seemingly the Roman church sent few preachers out to the scattered pioneers, preferring to build and equip missions and schools, and expecting the people to come to these establishments and settle about them. Apparently the single priest appearing on the frontier to preach to the settlers and seek to convert the non-Catholics, without the support of Catholic governmental officials and a body of trained ecclesiastics, was a rare sight.[1] There were of course, some Protestant missionaries who interested themselves in the non-English speaking settlers, but these were a small minority among the evangelists. Melinda Rankin records the activities of one of these, her father, in Twenty Years Among the Mexicans. In Jose Policarpo Rodriguez, the autobiographer is a Methodist of Latin American descent. He is certainly, however, not typical of the frontier preacher, although his work among the people in the San Antonio area does not differ in a remarkable degree from that of those preachers who were born into Anglo-American families. Insomuch as the element of German and Middle European people among the pioneers in Texas was relatively small the work of ministers among them has been neglected, although not entirely overlooked.

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[1]Pierre Parisot, History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of San Antonio, Texas; Ralph Francis Bayard, Lone Star Vanguard.

The frontier is considered to be the portion of land bordering on the wilderness, newly or thinly settled by pioneers, or areas where conditions characteristic of such territory exist. These frontier conditions are generally thought of as being the lack of a duely constituted, generally recognized, and effectively functioning system of government, and the existence of active menaces from the natural forces of the land, or alien and antagonistic inhabitants of the adjoining regions. Obvious to the student of Texas history would be the fact that the frontier moved across Texas in no orderly fashion or at a regular rate of progress. Civilization utilized the systems which military strategists found so effective in World War II: long thrusts into the enemy territory, establishment and maintenance of strongholds at strategic places, by-passing and encirclement of very much of the territory, followed by "mopping-up" or consolidating activities. One or both of the conditions mentioned sometimes existed in Texas only a few miles from centers of civilization a good many years after these centers were established, far behind the front line of the frontier. These by-passed areas might be referred to as "backwoods," but the preachers that labored in them were surrounded by circumstances not greatly different from their brethren who had preached in the earlier settled placed, only a few miles away, years before. Thus in the last

three or four decades of the nineteenth century in the larger towns and cities, resident ministers were shepherding well organized congregations in fine buildings, and living amid schools and theatres under a duly recognized government, while perhaps less than a day's ride away were evangelists bringing the gospel to people who had scarcely seen a Bible and who still settled their disputes with six-shooters.

Who then was the frontier preacher? Any man who publicly proclaimed his religious beliefs under the conditions in the foregoing definition would qualify for the purposes of this article. The man of God that the frontiersman heard and came in contact with is the one investigated, whether he spent little or much time on the frontier. I have tried to determine what were the general characteristics of the preacher who actually appeared on the frontier scene, whether he appeared for a single sermon and retreated to the comforts of civilization, or followed the westward moving border of the wilderness for a lifetime. The man that the frontiersman saw should mould our conception of that preacher. The length of time that he was a frontier preacher is part of the scope of this thesis.

The use of the definite article and the singular in the title seems to indicate that there was an average or typical preacher. Actually the study forced the recognition of several

types with some overlapping characteristics in some cases. Classification was attempted from several standpoints, such as methods, education, denomination or doctrine, and personality or habits, and the results were not always satisfying. Human pegs too often have too many sides to fit into the holes the researcher makes. Averages were hard to come by. The problem might be expressed in the question, "How many Penns[2] are needed to equal one Morrell[3] in seeking the average frontier preacher?" The first was a great revivalist of the seventies and eighties in Texas, preaching sometimes in camp meetings under frontier conditions, but for the most part confining his labors to great cities in Texas, the rest of the United States and even in England. The second spent most of his long life in areas bordering on the wilderness, moving with the westward trend of the population. The frontiersman heard them both, but certainly the characteristics of the latter should carry more weight in determining the typical than the former.

Difficulty in typifying the preacher naturally leads to difficulty in measuring his influence. To avoid some of the obstacles, an attempt was made to point out some of the ways in which the whole group of frontier preachers studied

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[2]William E. Penn, The Life and Labors of Major W. E. Penn.

[3]Zenos N. Morrell, Flowers and Fruits in the Wilderness.

influenced society in general, rather than to decide on the average preacher's impression on the frontier society alone, for as civilizing forces are brought to bear upon the frontier society, that social order ceases and another takes its place, and the men creating those forces cease to be frontiersmen. Hence, the more successful the preacher's message was, the more quickly the world about him ceased to be frontier. I have tried to show in what ways the man who preached on the frontier was a civilizing force in his community.

Obviously, the materials referred to in the longer title are not to be received without question, since a human being is somewhat inclined to be biased in his own favor, and with respect to anyone that he thinks enough of to write a book about. Churchmen might be expected to be more honest than others, since they preach honesty and are inclined toward soul-searching introspection, but I am forced to admit that among my present-day pulpiteering colleagues there can be detected a proneness to exaggerate both personal ability and accomplishments. A century ago human nature was probably little different. Confidence in himself is one of the characteristics of a good public speaker.

In addition to the natural bias that the writer possessed, he was also subjected to the force of the opinion of the religious portion of the public against any disparagement

of its religion or teachers of religion, and the risk of incurring the wrath of his own church officials for indiscretion in exposing the foibles of its ministers. Then too, some of the material in the writings consulted depended upon faulty memories, or the corrupting influence of hearsay. Most of these difficulties are present in any historical study, but in the present one we are handicapped by having very little information coming from those opposed to the gospel. Perhaps this lack of opposition is a tribute to the influence of the preacher. He has held public opinion on his side.

Not all preachers were writers of books. Not all left many records of any kind. Certainly there must have been early ministers who were so insignificant that no one has bothered to hunt up the few relics of their existence, yet I am inclined to think that the material investigated may present a better picture of the average than might be at first supposed. At the offset it would be imagined that only the actions of the exceptional, the successful and the literate would be preserved for posterity, and such is true. There are, however, scattered through the writings consulted, numerous references to the effect that the preacher with which the writing is concerned was the first preacher in the area, or the only preacher for a hundred miles, or some such

indication of the scarcity of ministers on the extreme edge of the frontier. It is true that the early church records mention many evangelists that we have little other record of, but these flocked into the country after church buildings were erected and the land about was losing its frontier features. They came with the great groups of settlers who followed those who actually won the country from the Indians, Mexicans and natural foes. The real pioneering preacher was an exceptional man, he was successful, for the people were starved for religion, and, as will be shown, he was literate. The many "firsts" that appear in the materials studied gave us confidence that many of the men studied were the true frontier preachers.

Mention was made in the preface of popular conceptions of the frontier clergyman. I did not attempt to find out exactly what those conceptions are, but rather to attempt a presentation of the facts. A few observations are in order, however. When the subject of this study was mentioned to a fellow student, he immediately started to tell about a "real old pioneer preacher" that he had just read about, but on a moment's reflection decided that the old minister, who had preached sixty years to the settlers in Texas, could not be classified as a frontier preacher because "he had a college education." This expression of this idea, along with my own

early thoughts on the subject, lead me to suppose that popular opinion does not allow the early preacher an education. Probably some of the recent western historical moving pictures, of which I have read but not seen, have presented some more accurate views of all phases of western life, but I think that most of the current conceptions of early Texas life are based on the old class B western moving pictures, magazine western stories, and the earlier books on western life. In these productions the preacher is a minor character, of no great influence in the community compared to the leaders of the settlers, the Indian fighter, or the gunman. His preaching does little toward bringing in the organized church; this must await the subduing of the frontier by temporal forces. His itinerancy makes him appear an unattached being whose influence is neither great nor lasting. He is smooth shaven, above forty, tall, clothed in clerical black and riding a mule or gentle old horse. His sermons are largely eschatological, logically emphasizing the part of the doomed, since broad is the gate that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat. His demeanor in the pulpit is fiery and his conversions involve great displays of emotion. His speech is flavored with the epigrams of Solomon and the rhetorical flourishes of the Old Testament prophets. His having a family is not taken into consideration. He

might hold revivals, and one writer described a pioneer evangelist as one of the "old-fashioned, shouting, hysterical, ungrammatical, gasping sort, . . . and in his exhortations, phrases descriptive of lakes of burning brimstone and ages of endless torment abounded. . . . At times he roared with such power that he could be heard for half a mile."[4]

These foregoing characteristics seem to be those applied to all pioneer preachers by most people, but several distinct types can probably be discerned among them. One is the fighting parson who can employ fists or weapons in defense of what is right, including his own gospel of peace or his right to preach it. Hamlin Garland's Elder Pill[5] illustrates this type. Then there is the rascal preacher such as Huck Finn encountered on the Mississippi.[6] Preaching is one of his many ways to get money out of the gullible public. This type could hardly flourish before there was a considerable population in an area of operation. Another type is the staid old kill-joy who has not kept abreast of the times and Pharisaically denounces the fun-loving members of society. Owen Wister's Virginian met one of these.[7] His opposite is the

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[4]Hamlin Garland, A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 97-98.

[5]Garland, "Elder Pill, Preacher," Other Main Travelled Roads, pp. 29-62.

[6]Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn, pp. 217-284.

[7]Owen Wister, The Virginian, pp. 215-250.

hale fellow who chews tobacco, swaps yarns with the boys, may swallow some whiskey, and is generally a little uncouth, even in the pulpit.

Nothing short of a nationwide survey, I suppose, could test the accuracy of the two preceding paragraphs, so the statements are advanced as merely personal observations in order to provide a starting point for the analysis which appears in the succeeding chapters. If the reader disagrees with what has been said concerning the popular concept, let him provide his own mental picture for comparison with the facts that follow.

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## CHAPTER II

## THE PREACHER'S APPEARANCE

The study of the preacher begins as would the study of any man whom we should meet in the flesh, with an observation of his physical appearance. The evangelist's physique, his dress, age, nationality, means of transportation and demeanor are the subjects of this chapter.

The preacher was a big man. This statement would be accepted almost without argument until the plains country is reached. On the following page are listed all the references to height found in this study. Note that of the thirty-one preachers named only four are said to be small, and ten are listed as being very tall, six feet, two inches or more. When we consider the work of these men, it is not surprising that large men became preachers, or rather, that large size was a desirable quality in a preacher. They needed to speak often without platform or pulpit, and a height above average is definitely an advantage in such a circumstance. Short men would have more difficulty in commanding the respect of the audience, particularly when it was composed of men whose very existence depended upon physical prowess. Commanding presence

TABLE I

THE HEIGHT OR REMARKS PERTAINING TO HEIGHT OF SOME OF THE PREACHERS ENCOUNTERED IN THIS STUDY

| | |
|---|---|
| Bays, Joseph | 6'. |
| Huckins, James | Tall. |
| Alexander, Robert | 6'6"; Tall. |
| Hill, Noah | 6'2"; Commanding Appearance. |
| Chilton, Thomas | Tall, Manly. |
| Caskey, Thomas | 6'3". |
| Witt, Jesse | Medium Size. |
| Byars, N. T. | Over Middle Height. |
| Brown, Reuben | Very Tall; Shoulders And Upwards Higher Than The People. |
| Gillett, John | Tall. |
| De Vilbiss, John | Staunchly Built; Medium Size. |
| Poe, Daniel | 6'6 1 2"; Almost Gigantic; 6'3 1 2". |
| Penn, William | 6'. |
| Tryon, William | Medium Size. |
| Morrell, Zenos | Tall and Commanding; 6'2". |
| Wilson, Hugh | 5'10". |
| Freeman, George | About 6'. |
| Bacon, Sumner | Large Frame. |
| Burleson, Rufus | 6'2"; Tall Form. |
| Baylor, R. E. B. | 6'2 1 2". |
| Fowler, Littleton | About 6'2"; Above Ordinary Height; About Ordinary Height. |
| Carroll, Benejah | 6'4". |
| Ruter, Martin | Rather Above The Middle Size. |
| McCollough, John | 5'10". |
| Fisher, Orcenath | Below Middle Height; Little Man. |
| Stevenson, William | A Small Man. |
| Monk, William | 6'2". |
| Ferguson, James | Large. |
| Potter, Andrew | 5'8" or 5'9". |
| John, I. G. | A Little Man. |
| Denton, John | 5'10"; Almost Six Feet. |
| Parker, Daniel | Diminutive In Size. |
| Wilson, Francis | A Towering Figure. |
| Smith, M. V. | 5'10". |

was the quality needed, and those lacking in size had to depend on other features to achieve it. The Baptist preacher Tryon, who came to Texas in the thirties, was described as being "medium size, with an erect well-proportioned physical structure. His dark penetrating eye, above which appeared a full, well-formed forehead, impressed every man that looked upon it, as to his intellectual powers."[1] "With erect body and head he looked the man whom he addressed in the eye,"[2] is descriptive of Jesse Witt. Denton was said to have had "impressive mien."[3] Orceneth Fisher, one of the four "little men" on the list, held his audience's attention by his fiery delivery. When "his blue eyes flashed with the lightning of impassioned sentiment," it was said that "his very frame seemed to expand, and the little man who had gone into the pulpit with shuffling step and downcast eyes was transfigured before us."[4] Remarks concerning the impressive bearing of the large men are common in the literature consulted. The exceptions(to the rule that preachers had to be big), had to be impressive in some other way than physical.

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[1]Zenos Morrell, Flowers and Fruits in the Wilderness, pp. 134-5.

[2]Ibid., p. 265.

[3]William Allen, Captain John B. Denton, Preacher, Lawyer, and Soldier, p. 39.

[4]William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV, p. 479.

A second reason why many preachers were large might be that the huge voices required for camp meeting work are not usually found in small men. The voices of several of these men were mentioned specifically in the writings. Deep bass voices are attributed to Major Penn (he was six feet tall, and weighed 231 pounds),[5] Thomas Chilton,[6] and William Monk, who is said to have been angular and to have carried no excess weight on his six foot, two inch frame, although he weighed 250 pounds![7] The voices of Ruter,[8] Fowler,[9] and De Vilbiss[10] are all said to be musical, clear, ringing or melodious. I. G. John was "a little man with a big voice and plenty of 'spunk' mixed with his religion."[11] This may have enabled him to become an effective minister when other little men did not. "A massive head"[12] on Orcenath Fisher is probably an indication that his voice was not small, since volume of voice depends greatly upon the size of the head cavities.

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[5]Morrell, op. cit., p. 401.

[6]Harlan J. Matthews, Centenial Story of Texas Baptists, p. 90.

[7]Macum Phelan, A History of Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 73.

[8]Earnest Smith, Martin Ruter, p. 121.

[9]Laura Woolworth, Littleton Fowler, p. 8.

[10]A. H. Groves, Reminiscences and Events in the Ministerial Life of Rev. John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 174.

[11]Phelan, op. cit., p. 170.

[12]Sweet, op. cit., p. 479.

There was no comment found concerning the voice of the other small men on the list, William Stevenson and Daniel Parker.

It must be admitted, however, that people have a tendency to add an inch or two to the height of an effective and commanding public speaker who stands erect with his chest held high, so that much of his bulk is higher from the ground than that of an ordinary man. Moreover, I have noticed an inclination on the part of men of considerable self-assurance (and preachers need this quality) to think of themselves as being taller than they actually are. Littleton Fowler's biographer said that he was six feet two inches tall,[13] and yet one of his colleagues states that he was of average height.[14] Obviously, both of these statements cannot be true. Some harmony can be found, though, if we allow an inch or so for exaggeration in the first, and allow the second to refer to the average height for preachers. Even if, however, two inches or more is allowed for exaggeration in the case of most of these persons, still the average height remains well above the average height of the soldier of World War II (five feet eight inches), who was an inch or so taller than his father in World War I. By our standards today, these preachers were big fellows, but it must be remembered that it is possible that the

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[13]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 2.

[14]Macum Phelan, A History of Early Methodism in Texas, p. 257.

Westerner was taller than the national average. A good many people think this probable, but no systematic effort has been made to establish the facts in the matter, as far as I can determine.

There seems to be a change in attitude concerning the physical dimensions of preachers about the time the frontier reached the cattle country. Most of the men listed on Table I preached in the eastern portions of the state and came to Texas fairly early. The numerous descriptions of their physiques seem to emphasize the large size of the average preacher. Such descriptions fail to appear in the writings concerning the "cowboy" preachers, like A. J. Potter,[15] I. G. John,[16] J. W. Anderson,[17] Peter Gravis,[18] W. J. Joyce,[19] W. S. James,[20] and John Brown.[21] They all seem to have been unimpressive in physical size or almost certainly some reference would have been made to it. A. J. Potter[22] and I. G.

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[15]H. A. Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, A Fighting Parson of the Texas Frontier.

[16]Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[17]John Wesley Anderson, From the Plains to the Pulpit.

[18]Peter W. Gravis, Twenty-five Years on the Outside Row of the Northwest Texas Conference.

[19]W. J. Joyce, Life of W. J. Joyce.

[20]William S. James, Cowboy Life in Texas.

[21]John Brown, Twenty-five Years a Parson in the Wild West.

[22]Graves, op. cit., p. 44.

John[23] were both slight men. An explanation that may be offered as to why the western preacher did not find size so important is found in a general change of attitude relative to bodily measurements that came about with the rise of the cattle industry. Physical prowess, so often the basis for respect among the frontier people, was no longer measured in terms of the man alone, but the man and his horse. Speed and dexterity came to account for far more than mere bodily strength, when roping and skillful riding supplanted log splitting and plowing, and the sixshooter ruled out the long rifle, tommyhawk, and knife in a fight. Small size is an advantage to the horseman. This change in attitude is reflected in the selection of the characteristics of the popular rustic heroes. Lincoln, Houston, Crockett, Boone, Big-Foot Wallace, and Bowie all towered far beyond the six foot mark. The cowboy hero can be much smaller, and is almost invariably of slender build. Billy the Kid is a case in point. To be sure, the eastern heroes rode horses, but their mighty deeds were done on foot. Some of these men would appear grotesque on a cow pony, just as a cowboy's booted foot does not seem to quite fit the ground. In the Cattle West the small man did not have the difficulty of commanding the respect of the crowd that he would have experienced in the eastern frontier days.

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[23] Ibid., pp. 78-79.

Nearly all the early preachers were strong athletic men; they had to be. Forceful public speaking is fatiguing physically, yet some of these men managed to average nearly two sermons a day over a great number of years.[24] Couple this activity to miles of horseback riding, manual labor, late hours of study and much exposure to the weather and the sum is a life that required a sturdy body. A few citations will be sufficient to establish this point. Bishop Freeman was "robust and vigorous."[25] John Denton was "physically strong."[26] Benejah Carroll offered freedom to any slave that could outlift him on a log pole.[27] William Stevenson was "lithe and active, and capable of great endurance."[28] "Uncommon athelete force and activity"[29] marked Daniel Poe. John McCullough[30] and Rufus Burleson[31] were exceptions, but little of their preaching was under real frontier conditions.

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[24]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 15.

[25]Du Bose Murphy, A Short History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Texas, p. 37.

[26]William Allen, op. cit., p. 103.

[27]Nellie Moore, B. H. Carroll and His Educational Values to Texas, p. 1.

[28]Phelan, op. cit., p. 18.

[29]James B. Finley, Sketches of Western Methodism, p. 506.

[30]William Wallace McCullough, John McCullough "Grandfather," 1805-1870, p. 30.

[31]Georgiana Burleson, The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson, p. 37.

Tuberculosis made Z. N. Morrell refer to himself as a "cripple,"[32] but his native strength enabled him to spend many years on the frontier. An interesting case was Daniel Baker's. When he started his work at twenty-four, he had a "sallow, slender, sickly appearance, giving no promise of the health and vigor he afterwards possessed."[33] Later it was said, "As to Dr. Baker, his incessant travels and preaching developed and strengthened his constitution to a remarkable degree. His capacity for work was unlimited."[34]

In summary, a remark of William Henry Milburn, himself a great preacher of the east of the Mississippi frontier, concerning the early preachers of that area, seems to apply to the earlier Texas ministers, as far as physique is concerned. They "were almost all men of powerful frame and possessing wonderful powers of endurance. They were men 'mighty in the scriptures and the Hymnbook,' the only works they studied."[35] Of Texas pioneer preachers' looks, James Cranfill had this to say: "The preacher of the introductory sermon was tall, gaunt, angular, and homely. He was the perfect type of old-time Primitive Baptist preacher of my boyhood years."[36] Cranfill

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[32]Morrell, op. cit., p. 107.

[33]William Mumford Baker, The Life and Labors of the Rev. Daniel Baker, D.D., p. 84.

[34]Ibid., p. 85.

[35]Charles F. Deems, ed., The Annals of Southern Methodism, 1855-1857, p. 294.

[36]From Memory, p. 25.

had seen enough of the early preachers, at least of one denomination, to be able to definitely say that tallness was characteristic.

One other bodily feature may be noted. Of all the evangelists studied, only two, William Monk,[37] and a man named Brown[38] were said to have been clean shaven. The pictures that are available show full beards, great mustaches, and every type of whiskers conceivable. This may have been in keeping with the customs of professional men as a whole during this period, but the study of such a custom was beyond the scope of this article. This study determined that it is safe to say the typical frontier preacher had some sort of crop growing on his face.

It is doubtful that the average frontier preacher in Texas could be distinguished from the average frontiersman by his dress. Joseph Tarkington described the preacher's dress on the frontier to the northeast of Texas before 1811:

> The dress of the people was as crude as their homes. It was made of homespun cotton or "linsey-woolsey." The Ministers were likewise clad in this same material, though even on the frontier there was a recognized ministerial garb. The preachers generally wore straight-

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[37]Phelan, A History of the Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 73.

[38]J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas, p. 419.

> breasted coats, high standing collars, long waist coats and the plainest of neck ties. Suspenders were a luxury which were little known on the frontier. The preachers likewise affected a peculiar mode of hairdressing; about midway between the forehead and crown of the head the hair was turned back and permitted to grow down to the shoulders.[39]

This description hardly would fit the earliest preachers in Texas. "They were of sturdy stock--not reeds shaken by the wind, not clothed in soft raiment--preferably in buckskin and blankets. They were the John the Baptist type."[40] Joseph Bays, the first Baptist to preach in Texas, "was clothed in a buckskin suit and driving a yoke of oxen, which was drawing an old fashioned sled on which was Joseph's family and household goods."[41] When the earliest of the Cumberland Presbyterian preachers wanted to come to Texas, he had to come as a lay evangelist and Bible agent, having been refused an ordination examination because of his buckskin clothes and the peculiar nature of his call, wanting to preach in a special field, Texas.[42] The first of the Presbyterians, Hugh Wilson, wore the dress of a farmer.[43] One early preacher is spoken of as

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[39]Sweet, The Risen of Methodism in the West, pp. 39-40.

[40]John McLean, "Introduction," Texas Methodist Historical Quarterly, I (July, 1909), 1.

[41]James Milton Carroll, The History of Texas Baptists, p. 18.

[42]Thomas H. Campbell, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Texas, p. 16.

[43]Thomas M. Cunningham, Hugh Wilson, A Pioneer Saint, p. 92.

being always well clothed,[44] another, plainly dressed,[45] still another "was negligent, even careless, in his dress. With unkept hair, homespun suit, his shirt collar open, his appearance was anything but clerical."[46] It seems that most of the ministers of Texas wore about the same clothes as the people among whom they worked. This would be true in particular among the Primitive Baptists and Disciples of Christ, two religious groups who have always used what others would call "lay" preachers. Some few preachers did, however, assume a peculiar dress. Wilbarger describes one who "was a tall angular man, and mounted on a tall angular horse; a tall hat set on a head covered with rather long hair together with a high choker and a long tailed coat, completed his elongated appearance."[47] In later days, when towns were becoming cities and congregations were well established it is probable that there was a recognized clerical garb, but even then some preachers refused to wear it.[48] Preachers on the frontier usually had to introduce themselves as such; their clothes did not betray them.

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[44]Carroll, op. cit., p. 197.

[45]Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV, p. 479.

[46]Homer S. Thrall, A Brief History of Methodism in Texas, p. 28.

[47]Wilbarger, op. cit., p. 419.

[48]Cranfill, Dr. J. B. Cranfill's Chronicle, p. 240; Burleson, op. cit., p. 260.

Strangely enough, the only two references to nationality that I encountered were both concerning Presbyterian ministers, Hugh Wilson and Peter Fullinwider. The first was of French, English and Scotch-Irish[49] descent and the second, Swiss.[50] Presbyterians were not common among the vanguard of frontier preachers. They came generally to the settled areas where towns existed and where a number of members of their denomination were ready to gather for the formation of a church. The majority of the real frontiersmen were not interested in ethnological background, and hence in most cases no mention is made of it. A glance at the names, however, reveal that most of the preachers, like most of the earlier settlers in Texas were probably of English, Scotch and Irish descent, but were more interested in founding a good family than springing from one.

Probably the next thing that would be noticed about a man would be his age. About the only really accurate statement that can be made is that the old preacher was rare on the frontier. On the following page is a table listing most of the information encountered concerning age. It is noticeable that frontier preachers began their public work at a

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[49]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 1.

[50]Edward Browder, Rev. Peter H. Fullinwider, the First Presbyterian Minister to Visit and Preach in Texas, p. 5.

TABLE II

AGES

| Name | Began to Preach or Exhort | In Texas |
|---|---|---|
| Alexander, Robert | 18 | 26 |
| Tryon, William | 22 | 31-38 |
| Smith, M. V. | 16 | |
| Poe, Daniel | 16 | 31-33 |
| Stevenson, James | 22 | 25 |
| James, W. S. | 29 | |
| Hanks, John | 19 | 19 |
| Hanks (his brother) | 20 | 20 |
| McCullough, John | 30 | 33 |
| Graves, G. W. | young | young |
| Gravis, Peter | 25 | 25 |
| Fowler, Littleton | 23 | 34-44 |
| Hord, Jesse | | 29 |
| Strickland, I. L. G. | | 29-30 |
| Sneed, J. P. | | 30-72 |
| Carl, Daniel | 31 | 31 |
| Stevenson, William | 32 | 49 |
| Stephenson, Henry | | 52 |
| Baylor, R. E. B. | 48 | |
| Byars, N. T. | 42 | |
| Burleson, Rufus | 17 | 24 |
| Hill, Noah | | 34 |
| Miller, John | 30 | 30 |
| Hodges, C. B. | 24 | 24 |
| Gregory, W. J. | 18-19 | |
| Golden, George | 17 | 20 |
| Sanders, Reuben | 24 | 26 |
| Smalley, Freeman | Early manhood | 31 & 57 |
| Bays, Joseph | 16 | |
| Durst, John | 23 | 23 |
| Denton, John | 20 | 30-34 |
| Ellis, Richard | 24 | In prime |
| Witt, Jesse | | 50 |
| De Vilbiss, John | 21 | 24 |
| John, E. G. | 29 | |

TABLE II (continued)

| Name | Began to Preach or Exhort | In Texas |
|---|---|---|
| Ruter, Martin | 15 | 50-52 |
| Fisher, Orcenath | | 36 |
| Baker, Job | 21 | 46 |
| Speer, Moses | | 70 |
| Wilson, Francis | | Middle-age |
| Hynie, John | | 50 |
| Crawford, Robert | 24 | 24 |
| McKenzie, J. W. P. | 32 | 32 |
| Hutchinson, John | 22 | 53 |
| Bacon, Sumner | | 36 |
| Eaton, Benjamin | | 36 |
| Ives, Caleb | | 41 |
| Freeman, George | | 55 |
| Baker, Daniel | 27 | 47 |
| Wilson, William | 35 | 35 |
| Hutson, Thomas | 24 | 32 |
| Morrell, Zenos | 20 | 32 |
| Marsh, R. | | 70 |
| | AVERAGE C. 23 | AVERAGE C. 34 |

rather early age, the average of those on the table being about twenty-three. It is also noticeable that many of these preachers (and some real pioneers are among them) came to Texas after some previous experience, so that the average age for starting work in Texas is about thirty-four. A good many preachers did some work on the frontier during their earlier years, and then retired to civilization as family obligations became greater or age begin to limit their physical powers. Some were the farmer-preachers and remained on the homestead after frontier conditions had passed on. Generally speaking, the frontier preacher did his work before he was middle aged and an older man who continued on the frontier was an exception. One of these was an itinerant, who, in thirty years of labor, "located" only one time.[51] William Wilson continued frontier preaching until superannuated,[52] and a Methodist named Childress was on the frontier all his life.[53] Morrell states that one old preacher named Marsh was still going to appointments when past seventy,[54] as was also Moses Speer.[55] These were unusual men.

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[51]Phelan, op. cit., p. 33.

[52]Ibid., p. 79.

[53]Gravis, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

[54]Op. cit., pp. 198-199.

[55]Phelan, A History of Early Methodism in Texas, p. 145.

In observing the preacher's appearance, a person would almost certainly notice his means of transportation. He usually traveled on horseback. "The beasts they ride are good ones, for they are great judges of horseflesh. I have even heard it whispered that they are a little dangerous 'at a trade'--but that, of course, is scandal."[56] This was the expression of one itinerant concerning his brethren in the pre-Texas frontier days. The same statement holds true generally for the Texas parsons. As one preacher put it, a good horse was necessary in the Indian country.[57] Morrell emphasized the need for good horses for preachers several times and stated that no Indian in the west had a horse as fast as his.[58] Escaping Indians was not the only reason why the preacher needed to be well mounted. Jesse Hord speaks of riding his horse, in less than two months time, 4,000 miles with but little intermission for rest, over muddy areas and swollen streams. "I thank God for a good horse" was his concluding remark.[59] Z. N. Morrell "rode the same

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[56]William Henry Milburn, The Pioneer Preacher; Rifle, Ax and Saddle Bags, p. 56.

[57]Gravis, op. cit., p. 14.

[58]Op. cit., p. 99.

[59]Phelan, op. cit., p. 110.

horse two hundred and forty miles [after powder and lead for soldiers] inside of four days."[60] So many of the men studied speak of their fine animals and relate incidents that show their horses prowess we can assume that, as a general rule, the preachers' means of transportation was a good horse. Several would take to mustangs when nothing better was available.[61] Sometimes preachers fared even worse. William Medford, who was in Texas as early as 1833 formed a four weeks' circuit and had to walk the first round. He was, however, the second month given a horse and bridle.[62] The good Baptist, Z. N. Morrell, once mended the shoes of a walking Methodist itinerant, Elder Carroll, although they "did not agree at all on the doctrines of depravity, baptism, communion and church polity."[63] Mules were not unknown for saddle work.[64] For moving his family the preacher, like nearly everyone else, used an ox or horse drawn wagon.[65] In the earlier days in Texas the lack of roads and bridges

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[60] Op. cit., pp. 56-58.

[61] Ibid., pp. 153, 303-4; Baker, op. cit., p. 245; Lide, op. cit., p. 50.

[62] Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 360.

[63] Morrell, op. cit., p. 151.

[64] Cranfill, op. cit., p. 61; Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, pp. 55, 224.

[65] Cunningham, op. cit., p. 56; Morrell, op. cit., pp. 39, 64; Joyce, op. cit., p. 41; Gravis, op. cit., p. 16.

made a stout horse almost indispensable to the man requiring rapid or regular transportation. In later years on the plains where roads were easily and soon made, some preachers did, as often pictured in fiction, employ the buggy.[66]

A complete picture of the frontier preacher in Texas cannot be obtained without observing his demeanor, both in the pulpit and out of it. The following quotation expresses a popular notion of the pioneer minister's conduct.

> The camp meetings were battle grounds, the powers of darkness were assaulted with sermons and songs and shouts. Sons of thunder fulminated truth from the preacher's stand, penitents wrestled in real agony of soul and converts, passing suddenly from darkness to light, rejoiced with exceeding great joy.[67]

Seemingly such behavior was common during the period of the Great Revival and in many frontier regions,[68] but I am not at all sure that the Texas frontier preacher deserves such a reputation. William W. Sweet is right when he says:

> There has been entirely too much stress placed upon the emotional excesses of camp meetings and all too little upon the routine work of the frontier churches and preachers. . . . Frontier religion was also much more

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[66]Gravis, op. cit., pp. 54, 59; Graves, op. cit., p. 232.

[67]Mrs. I. M. E. Blandin, History of the Shearn Church in Houston, pp. 23-24.

[68]Garland, A Son of the Middle Border, pp. 97-98.

> solidly based than is usually pictured. The long lists of catechisms, Bibles, testaments, hymn books, disciplines, and other religious books, which were sold by the Methodist circuit riders to the people on their circuits are evidence of the religious instruction afforded. The fact that almost all of the early Presbyterian preachers in the West were also school teachers is evidence that theirs was a teaching as well as a preaching religion.[69]

Whereas the shouting had not completely died out by the time the gospel reached Texas, apparently many of the excesses were under control, and in general, the demeanor of the preachers studied was such that the average educated person of today would not be greatly embarrassed by seeing them in the pulpit of his own chapel. On the one extreme there were two preachers, front line frontiersmen, who always read their sermons. To be sure, Z. N. Morrell was astonished that a man of James Huckins' ability should preach exclusively from manuscript, yet he knew of only one time when he spoke extemporaneously.[70] The other, William Monk, was strictly a homiletical preacher, and seldom lifted his eyes from the paper.[71]

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[69] Sweet, Revivalism in America, pp. 132-134.

[70] Morrell, op. cit., p. 137.

[71] Phelan, op. cit., p. 73.

These men were exceptional, but there were many remarks that indicate that the Texas preacher was not given to pulpit excesses. We note a few. Jesse Witt "would speak analytically and methodically for two hours."[72] "Clear and vigorous thought" was attributed to a minister named Rowland.[73] M. V. Smith was "earnest, plain, practical."[74] A series of Baptist sermons were "all cool doctrinal investigations."[75] It was said that John McCullough "would rather appeal to the mentality of his hearer than to his emotion,"[76] while Noah Hill could combine "forcible arguments and clear reasoning" with "melting and overpowering pathos."[77] Daniel Baker tells of the "fixed and solemn attention of the audience,"[78] and was said to have had "a dignity of manner, and a refinement of bearing."[79] These remarks do not seem to fit the frontier preacher of earlier days. Even the friendliest of writers admitted that the pioneer preachers in the first quarter of

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[72]Morrell, op. cit., p. 266.

[73]Ibid., p. 330.

[74]Ibid., p. 337.

[75]Ibid., p. 23.

[76]McCullough, op. cit., p. 30.

[77]Burleson, op. cit., p. 82.

[78]Baker, op. cit., p. 360.

[79]Ibid., p. 379.

the nineteenth century were often lacking not only in education but in "niceties and elegance,"[80] and had a "fierce demonstrative style"[81] of preaching. These expressions, however, do not necessarily demand that we attribute to all the early frontier preachers the pulpit excesses that a few practised. It is entirely possible that the fiery demeanor of these men has been overemphasized.[82]

There was in the Texas meetings, however, some activity both in the pulpit and on the floor that could be both exciting and quite audible. J. B. Cranfill tells this anecdote:

> All who have ever heard the Hardshell Baptists preach know that they are quite vociferous in their exhortations. . . . When the dear old minister reached the climax of his gesticulations and vociferations, he verily yelled out his text, "Lo, I come in the volume of the book!" and as the word "book" was escaping his lips, the old pulpit took a forward lurch and down came pulpit, preacher, Bible, water pitcher and all.[83]

Certainly some of the preachers were not sedate and calm in the pulpit. Orceneth Fisher was said to have "burned," and

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[80]William Milburn, The Pioneers, Preachers and People of the Mississippi Valley, p. 378.

[81]Ibid., pp. 368-369.

[82]Cf. Henry Fowler, The American Pulpit, pp. 112-118, 121-122, 128-131.

[83]Cranfill, Chronicle, pp. 11-12.

when he shouted, "'Halleluiah to God!' the tide of emotion broke all barriers, the people arose to their feet, and the church reëchoed with their responsive halleluiahs."[84] Certainly also there was crying,[85] shouting,[86] mourning,[87] and rejoicing,[88] yet the preachers contend that for the most part these things were not overdone. One minister spoke of a meeting as being "the best for order and the universal outpouring of the Spirit I ever saw."[89] During one meeting a man arose from the mourners' bench, stated that he was converted, and demanded baptism. The preacher poured water on his head with the appropriate utterance, and it was said that, "notwithstanding the shouting mingled with mourning at the altar, there was no confusion and all was done 'in decency and in order.'"[90]

Socially, it seems that most of the preachers got along well and maintained a pleasant attitude and relatively refined bearing. Littleton Fowler was "cheerful";[91] De Vilbiss was

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[84]Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV, p. 479.

[85]Phelan, op. cit., p. 169.

[86]Lyman B. Russell, Grandad's Autobiography, p. 7.

[87]Campbell, op. cit., p. 77.

[88]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 110.

[89]Ibid., p. 118.

[90]Campbell, op. cit., p. 77.

[91]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 8.

"socially . . . agreeable and pleasant, with fine conversational powers."[92] Daniel Baker was never remembered to have been anything but sunny and smiling,[93] and always well mannered,[94] although he was one of the few preachers who disapproved of jesting, punning, and the like.[95] Even when Andrew Jackson Potter was going to chastise a man, he spoke of it as "calmly as if he was going to eat a quiet meal."[96] For his day and age, the preacher on the Texas frontier seems to have had the demeanor, both in the pulpit and out, of a fairly likable, reasonable, and well-poised man. He is not exactly the same man who appeared carrying the gospel on earlier frontiers. The passing of time may have brought about this change, for a new generation had arisen since the Great Revival of 1800-1802. Then too, the character of the Texas population (to be discussed later) may have demanded a different type of preacher. It is also suggested that the Texas frontiersmen were less isolated than those in Kentucky and Tennessee and therefore less susceptible to mass emotion. Whatever the reason, it is certain that the Texas frontier

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[92]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 114.

[93]Baker, op. cit., p. 86.

[94]Ibid., p. 380.

[95]Ibid., p. 381.

[96]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, p. 186.

preacher looked about like the other large Texas frontiersmen, but he had a somewhat better mien than his associates, due perhaps to his inner feeling of well-being, his intense desire to influence others for good, and his superior education. That he possessed these last two characteristics will be shown in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PREACHER'S INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL REQUIREMENTS

The basis for the attractive and respectable demeanor discussed in the last chapter, as well as for his influence and achievements dealt with in later chapters is found in the education and preparation, the zeal and uprightness of the frontier preacher in Texas. What Paul said of his Jewish brethren, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge,"[1] was often all too applicable to the early frontier parsons. It does not fit the "typical" evangelist of Texas quite so well. There seems to have been a better balance between his zeal and knowledge and the two were made more useful by his good life.

Earlier in the study it was said that the frontier ecclesiastic was no ordinary man. He was a man with a mission, a man of zeal. To leave the safety of civilization and risk his life in a hostile region, with little hope of earthly gain, required in a man a burning desire for the welfare of human souls. A mere observation of some of the dates at which the

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[1] Rom. 10:2, R.V.

preachers entered the frontier regions in Texas will convince the reader that they had a true pioneering spirit. There may have been Protestant missionaries in Texas as early as 1812, and certainly there were in Austin's colonies all kinds of Protestants.[2] It is known that William Stevenson preached in Texas in 1819,[3] and in the days preceding the revolution there were a good many preachers who proclaimed their tidings in Texas, in spite of the fact that Catholic Mexico enacted laws to oppose such actions. J. M. Carroll has been able to trace at least twenty Baptist preachers who were in Texas between 1820 and 1836, and who, ignoring threats of the governments, were able to establish two Baptist churches and three Sunday schools.[4] A Cumberland Presbyterian church was organized in 1833, and is said to be the first Protestant church in Texas.[5] In 1820, Joseph Bays, Baptist, was temporarily forced to discontinue services in Texas because of Roman Catholic authorities,[6] and in 1823 he was arrested and was to have been taken to San Antonio for trial,

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[2]John Adolf Held, Religion a Factor in Building Texas, pp. 41-42.

[3]Ibid., p. 42.

[4]History of Texas Baptist, p. 17.

[5]Campbell, op. cit., p. 21.

[6]Carroll, op. cit., p. 20.

when he seized a gun one of his three guards had temporarily laid down, clubbed the Mexicans and escaped.[7] Henry Stephenson, a Methodist, was preaching as far west as the Colorado river by 1824,[8] and, assisted by two other preachers, held camp meetings west of the Trinity in 1834 and 1835.[9] At least two Presbyterian ministers[10] were also in Texas unlawfully during the pre-revolutionary days, and Z. N. Morrell demonstrated his courageous zeal in refusing to turn back with his family when told that a revolution was in progress in Texas.[11]

Devotion to duty is the second indication of the pioneering cleric's zeal. In the December 3, 1857, edition of the Texas Advocate, Francis Wilson says:

> Twenty years have I served the altars of our church with zeal, in sincerity and earnestness of soul. I have taken into her pale more than 4000 members, 30 of whom have become ministers, I have travelled 150,000 miles and preached 7,000 sermons; have lived hard and worked hard and received small allowance for my support.[12]

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[7] Ibid., p. 21.

[8] Woolworth, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

[9] Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 361.

[10] William Stuart Red, A History of The Presbyterian Church in Texas, p. 2; Browder, Rev. Peter H. Fullinwider, p. 2.

[11] Morrell, op. cit., p. 50.

[12] Woolworth, op. cit., p. 15.

Among those religious bodies whose organization allowed for the support of full-time missionaries, this statement could be considered typical of the efforts, if not of the success, of the frontier envoys of the gospel. One writer records the activities of several border missionaries sent out by the Baptists and the indications are that they preached about every other day, travelled several miles daily and visited hundreds of families yearly.[13] Having to sleep on the floor,[14] getting lost and wandering all night,[15] swimming rivers during freezing northers,[16] enduring rain and cold,[17] suffering bodily illness[18] and having to provide his own food by hunting[19] were typical of the hardships that failed to keep these evangelists from seeking to save souls. One spoke of preaching five times on one Sunday.[20] Although bleeding in the lungs and extremely weak, Z. N. Morrell singlehandedly and logically argued for what he believed to be right in the forming of a Baptist Association.[21] Andrew Jackson Potter once

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[13]Burleson, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

[14]Deems, op. cit., p. 354.

[15]Ibid., pp. 264-5.

[16]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 234-7.

[17]Deems, op. cit., pp. 366-7.

[18]Ibid., p. 286.

[19]Morrell, op. cit., p. 237.

[20]Baker, op. cit., p. 279.

[21]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

spent many sleepless nights caring for a dying soldier, slept one night, and then stayed up three more with another.[22] On another occasion he preached on crutches required by an injured hip.[23] Evidence of the willingness to serve is W. J. Joyce's assertion, "I went out of my way sixty or eighty miles, a time or two to preach to the people at old Fort Clark."[24] Perhaps such determination to perform the assigned task was not to be found in all of the early ministers, but the men mentioned in this paragraph were among those who ventured far out in the front many times, and were probably the only preachers some of the frontiersmen ever saw.

Courage was needed by the evangelist, and many of them seemed to have had it. W. J. Joyce and a companion once slept out in the open Indian country just to avoid the bed bugs in the cabin of their host for the day.[25] They were aroused by Indians and forced to retreat some seven or eight miles to a cabin. In the early days of Texas the redskins prevented many Texans from attending meetings.[26] At least one preacher had all

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[22]Graves, Potter, p. 129.

[23]Ibid., p. 207.

[24]Joyce, op. cit., p. 36.

[25]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[26]Deems, op. cit., p. 358.

his horses stolen by these people,[27] and another lost his fourteen year old son.[28] Danger seldom stopped the mouths of the gospel proclaimers, but I did find one case where it did. Isaac Reed did not preach during the years 1834 to 1836 because of the Catholic menace. Generally speaking, a man lacking courage could not be accepted into frontier society, but this idea will be discussed in more detail when the "fighting parson" is studied.

Indicative of the type of man that would carry the gospel into the frontier regions is a statement in an editorial from the Texas Advocate for November 24, 1855. The writer tells how the states of Mexico could be evangelized just as East Texas had been when it was under Mexican rule. "And yet so far is this from being the case, that we have not preachers for the frontier regions of western Texas. Oh! for an increase in the number of faithful, zealous, self-sacrificing itinerant preachers!"[29]

The average frontier preacher in Texas was not an

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[27]Lide, op. cit., p. 53.

[28]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1855, pp. 381-382.

[29]Ibid., p. 291.

ignorant man, for the nature of his field would not allow the success of the unlearned. On other frontiers in the United States ignorance could be tolerated and might even prove an asset, as is indicated in the following quotations:

> The borderer knew little or nothing or organized religion. In his faith European superstitions mingled with those of his Indian neighbors. He believed in omens, magic, witches and in the significance of bad dreams. . . . His kin had brought with them to the back country a belief in a Christian God. To him they turned instinctively and without professional ministration, as the Cherokees turned to Yo He Wah when the aspect of nature became over whelming. . . . Religion languished on the frontier and deterioated in the struggle of everyday life. When the circuit rider or minister came and a revival of spiritual life occurred, the religion of the backwoods became a primitive mysticism.[30]

> I have found that the deeper I got into the Brush, and the denser the ignorance of the people, the greater was the number of the preachers. I have seen a surprisingly large number of people who knew very little of the world, and a great deal less of books, to whom the honors of a preacher were very attractive, I say "honors" for the emoluments were so small that they had very little weight in the matter. . . . Some of them could not read at all, and many could read a verse or chapter only with greatest difficulty, and miscalled a large number of the larger words.[31]

> There are many thousands of people who rarely, if ever hear a sermon from an educated minister. These people have strong and well defined notions of the kind of preaching that suits them. If a preacher ranges extensively over the Bible, and quotes a great deal of scripture without any regard to its appropriateness or connection with the text, they say of him approvingly: "He's a Scripter preacher, He's not a lernt man, but he's a real Scripter preacher."[32]

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[30] Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Lure of the Frontier, p. 21.

[31] H. W. Pierson, In the Brush, pp. 238-239.

[32] Ibid., pp. 250-251.

The author of these last two quotations does not make clear the time and place beyond that it was in the antebellum southern backwoods. The conditions described above did exist sometimes on the Texas frontier, but they were not common. Several reasons may be given for the difference in Texas and the earlier frontier regions. First would be the type of settlers that came to Texas. There had been a class of frontier family that for several generations had moved with the frontier as it traversed the Alleghanies, the southern coastal plains and the eastern and northern Mississippi River basin. These borderers were the ones described above; they had suffered the cultural deterioration that was the natural result of staying several generations beyond civilization. When the borders of Texas were reached, however, the movement slowed or virtually stopped, for Texas was under the rule of a government whose principles were not at all compatible with those of the freedom loving frontiersman. As the westward movement halted for a good portion of a generation (1815-1830), civilization's agents, in the form of schools, organized churches, and recognized government began to catch up with the buckskin wearers. Some families of the backwoods type did sneak across the border and set up housekeeping in Texas, and those preachers who were in Texas in the twenties encountered people of the type described in the quotations. Two long letters from a Methodist in Texas quoted in The Annals of

Southern Methodism[33] for 1855, told of a fifteen year old boy, who had never seen school or church, knew little besides Indian fighting, had never heard that there was a Savior, but came and was converted at the preaching of Henry Stephenson. It can be affirmed, however, that before long the real backwoods type was in a minority, for the empresarios were bringing in settlers from the more civilized portions of the United States during this period. Texas was enjoying the planting of whole colonies, which could quickly set up governments and offer opportunities for rapid cultural development, rather than the slow infiltration of a pioneering backwoodsman pushed westward by the resentment toward a more complex society.

During and after the Texas Revolution, when immigration to the vast new area began in earnest, settlers from all walks of life came in with such rapidity that there were 212,000 persons in the state by 1850.[34] This means that in one generation Texas had grown to the extent that many of the so-called "cultural" institutions had come into being. The children of most of the settlers were able to find schools if they wanted to learn to read and write.

Immediately following this period came the era of railroad building which moved civilization westward at a frantic pace compared to earlier times. There was no "dark age" of

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[34]McCullough, op. cit., p. 22.

two or three generations on the Texas frontier, although at times the preachers could not keep up with the westward swing of the population. This failure will be discussed in a later chapter.

Another great reason that Texas received the benefits of an educated clergy is the fact that 1810 to 1850 was a period of great organization of churches. Churches were organizing missionary societies; the Methodists in 1819, Baptists, 1832, the Episcopalians, 1828. The Episcopalian educational society came in 1818, and the Methodists and Baptists followed suit shortly afterward. At least twenty-five theological seminaries were established in America between 1808 and 1840. Colleges sponsored by churches were springing up everywhere during this period, the Baptists and Methodists giving increasing attention to education in the thirties. The American Society, organized in 1816, tried to put a Bible in every American home in 1829-30. The American Tract Society (1825) put out such works as a twenty-five volume religious library and a fifteen volume home library, in addition to its newspaper and tracts. The Methodist Book Concern was established in 1789, and the Baptists founded a tract society in 1824 and a publishing house in 1840. These institutions, together with the American Sunday School Union, which was established in 1824 and sought to put a Sunday School in every western community by

1839, were a great factor in preparing the West for educated preachers, and the preachers for the West.[35]

The people of Texas were of a type that demanded a reasonably well educated clergy. There were schools in Texas by 1830.[36] From the beginning there was a "town-building mania"[37] in Texas. Lawyers, doctors, statesmen, planters, merchants and mechanics migrated to Texas along with the backwoodsman.[38] A British traveler testified that the great mass of Texans were people of talent and integrity, were courteous and obliging, warm-hearted intelligent people with a taste for refinement, who had already (1841) organized churches, enacted severe laws to suppress gaming, duelling and other immorality, had a college with more than seventy students, and "there is scarcely a free person in Texas unable to read and write."[39] T. A. Morris in the same year visited Texas and made a very similar statement.[40] Ten years later, young James Simmons was advised to take the full theological

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[35]All the material in this paragraph is found in William Warren Sweet's Story of Religion, pp. 350-368.

[36]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 10.

[37]Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[38]Ibid., p. 5.

[39]Arthur Ikin, Texas, pp. 74-77.

[40]Miscellany, p. 345.

course before he went West. His advisor said, "The brightest and most enterprising of our citizens go west; if you would succeed there, you will need all the preparation you can acquire."[41] Daniel Baker sounded forth the need for better preachers and stated that in Texas the people would not come out very well unless they thought that the preacher was "worth hearing."[42] Robert Alexander, one of the first Methodist missionaries in Texas "also stated that it would be necessary to send educated and talented young preachers, as 'Texas is composed of the shrewdest and most intelligent population of any new country on earth.'"[43] Later, in the western cow country, both John W. Anderson[44] and A. J. Potter[45] emphasized that the West Texans were refined and educated, and as Potter put it, had "listened to the ablest preachers in the older states."

Preachers of all faiths were about this time realizing the need for an education. The Baptists, Cumberland Presbyterian and Methodists could licence an uneducated man to preach, and the Disciples of Christ recognized the right of any Christian to preach, but these groups realized the advantage of an education, if only to facilitate argument among themselves. About 1850, one Baptist writer was contrasting the contemporary

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[41]Robert Stuart MacArthur, A Foundation Builder, pp. 24-25.

[42]W. M. Baker, op. cit., p. 351.

[43]Lide, op. cit., p. 23.

[44]From the Plains to the Pulpit, pp. 149-150.

[45]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 178.

conditions of the denomination with that of fifty years before, when "the number of educated ministers of the Baptist Church was very small."[46] Rufus Burleson was humiliated that there could even be an excuse for a Methodists' preacher ridiculing the Baptists for their lack of knowledge of the Greek upon which they based their arguments for immersion.[47] Preachers east of the Mississippi may have used only Bible and hymn book almost exclusively,[48] but as the frontier advanced toward Texas the need for wider learning grew.

Among those preachers in Texas about whose education any information was obtained, almost twice as many had attended college as had not. A few were outstanding scholars. Martin Ruter, the head of the first Methodist missionary team in Texas and a real frontiersman "was reputed to be the best educated man of his day in Methodism. This distinction is the more commendable from the fact that this erudition was the product of his own persistent private study."[49] He held an M.A. and an honorary D.D. degree, and had ability to read the scriptures in nine languages.[50] Several showed their scholarly bent by

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[46]David Benedict, Fifty Years Among the Baptists, p. 17.

[47]Burleson, op. cit., p. 38.

[48]Milburn, The Pioneers, Preachers, and People of the Mississippi Valley, p. 366.

[49]Smith, Martin Ruter, p. 29.

[50]Ibid., p. 124.

habitual private study after their college years were ended.[51] Some were educated for law,[52] and as will be shown in later chapters, many taught school. Eight of the ten preachers whose biographical sketches are included in Z. N. Morrell's book were college trained, and the others had some schooling.

An inspection of the indications of erudition among those who did not attend college reveals quite a wide variation, with the odds still in favor of the frontier minister's being a relatively well-educated man, even though he may have been his own teacher. On the lower end of the scale is a blacksmith preacher with a library which he never studied,[53] and Daniel Parker, who was something of a hangover from the earlier days (he was licensed in 1806),[54] along with a preacher named Parr who grew up on the frontier.[55] There were still some "one Book" men,[56] but then, all these could not be branded as ignorant, for there were some who had virtually or actually

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[51]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 10; John Russell Hutchinson, Reminiscences, Sketches, and Addresses, p. 13; Cunningham, op. cit., p. 81.

[52]Randolph Clark, Reminiscences, Biographical and Historical, pp. 10-11; Campbell, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 11; Carroll, op. cit., p. 113.

[53]William Allen, Five Years in the West, pp. 179-180.

[54]Carroll, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

[55]Campbell, op. cit., p. 66.

[56]Ibid., p. 76.

memorized the Bible,[57] which is conceded by many to contain the material for a fairly liberal education. A. J. Potter could scarcely read when he was converted, but became a class leader immediately, and within three years was licensed to preach.[58] W. L. Harris, a missionary on the plains, in one of his letters displays some rather unorthodox spelling and grammar.[59] Bad spelling may not be a sure indication of ignorance when we consider that these men were speakers and not writers, and would have the tendency to place the emphasis on the knowledge rather than the exact form of the words expressing it. Peter W. Gravis, a self-taught man who "was looked upon as a man with some literary erudition, and sufficiently acquainted with the scriptures and church history,"[60] and who displays a knowledge of the Greek historians,[61] had evidently neglected his speller. Another individualistic orthographer was W. J. Joyce, who had read law, showed some ability at logic and was familiar with Socrates, Rousseau, Ingersoll, and Darwin.

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[57] Carroll, op. cit., p. 18.

[58] Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 112-116.

[59] Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, pp. 245-246.

[60] Gravis, op. cit., p. 39.

[61] Ibid., p. 23.

A few of these self-taught men were evidently good teachers, for it was said of Littleton Fowler:

> His Style of speaking, both in the pulpit and in the social circle, was rigidly correct, and I was surprised to learn from his own lips that he had never had the benefits of scholastic training, but his attainments were almost entirely self-acquired.[82]

W. J. Gregory, through hard study had "acquired a good practical education and became a strong preacher and profound theologian."[83] A contemporary said of Hosea Garrett that he was "the closest student I ever saw," although "he was probably never inside of a college till he became a trustee."[84]

Becoming licensed to preach, however, certainly did not always involve demonstrating a theological education. In 1837, one writer states, "Preachers of every cult, most of them self-licensed, had begun, they indignantly complained, to roam the West, pillaging the remains of the pre-revolutionary church."[85] Such self-licensing was condoned among the Disciples of Christ and the Primitive Baptists, and the frontier people apparently did not oppose a man's preaching, for they were religion hungry. Jose Rodriguez was licensed to preach even before he joined the Methodist church, and when he had

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[82] Arthur, Jottings from an Old Journal of Littleton Fowler, p. 76.

[83] Campbell, op. cit., p. 130.

[84] Burleson, op. cit., p. 701.

[85] Ralph Francis Bayard, Lone Star Vanguard, p. 18.

only a Catholic baptism.[66] The private secretary to President Lamar was not a member of any church, but in 1841 he

> resolved to do what he could for the moral and religious welfare of his fellow-citizens. He organized a Sunday School of one hundred and forty scholars, and also 'preached to the whole population of the city every Sunday, to the white people in the capitol, and to the negroes in a beautiful grove of evergreen oaks.'"[67]

If such a reception could be afforded a man in the capital, it is not unlikely that in the rural areas where the need would seem greater, an unlicensed preacher would not lack an audience. J. B. Cranfill, a Baptist, said he was licensed when "just past eighteen, an uncouth obscure country lad, unequipped with any literary or expert training of any kind."[68] Certainly the large majority of the ministers studied were duly licensed or ordained, at least by a local congregation. In the more highly organized denominations they were subjected to some form of examination, but the examination itself sometimes failed to do much in the way of checking the qualifications of the candidate. W. J. Joyce tells of appearing before the Methodist board and upon answering that the fall of man was the first doctrine taught in the Bible, brought about

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[66] Rodriguiz, op. cit., pp. 98-100.

[67] Du Bose Murphy, op. cit., p. 27.

[68] Op. cit., pp. 178-179.

an argument between the members of the board, some of whom agreed with him while others held that the existence of God was the first doctrine, so that he was passed without another question.[69] Preachers were needed on the frontier, and when a man was found who would preach, if he were conscientious, he probably found little formality to stand in his way. One Baptist church, moreover, revoked two licenses to preach because they were not being "profitably used."[70]

The preachers who remained at their work on the frontier were for the most part men of high morality and great piety. Those who were not will be discussed when "the rascal preacher" is dealt with. A good life was a necessity for the successful frontier minister because generally speaking the frontiersman had little respect for religious men who led inconsistent lives. W. S. James said that this was particularly true of the cowboys.[71] Illustrative of the high moral concepts that some of the churchmen had is Zenos N. Morrell's worry over his pretense that he had confederates waiting in the brush when he was riding for his life from the Comanches.

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[69]Joyce, op. cit., p. 28.

[70]Carroll, op. cit., p. 50.

[71]Op. cit., p. 154.

He grieved that he had led the Indians to believe an untruth.[72] This same man once felt uneasy for travelling on Sunday in order to reach a preaching appointment,[73] would not let himself take time off from preaching to patent some wheeled plows and planters he had invented,[74] and once gave his last provisions to some soldiers, who in turn aided him in hunting game and honey.[75] The references to family worship and daily prayers among preachers are numerous. When John B. Denton heard that Littleton Fowler and Robert Alexander had taken up land speculation he was deeply grieved and gave up his own holdings (worth $600) so as not to be accused of the same thing.[76] The preacher's good works sometimes brought rewards immediately. A. J. Potter once gave a poor man a beef and received a twenty dollar gift from a woman soon afterward; then gave a widow a dollar's worth of coffee and before long received five dollars from a reformed drunkard.[77]

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[72] Op. cit., pp. 101-102.

[73] Ibid., p. 47.

[74] Ibid., pp. 311-313.

[75] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[76] Woolworth, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

[77] Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 315-317.

Numerous references indicate that most of the early ministers opposed dancing and sometimes received persecution for it. One went a little further and considered the fiddle used at dances to be "wholly an instrument of evil, and he abominated it with an unspeakable aversion."[78] The same man also abhorred fiction as lies and deception. W. J. Joyce agreed to be quiet during a dance at a wedding at which he had just officiated if the boys would behave in church, and receiving a promise that they would, he slept on a pallet while the couples tripped about him.[79] Several preachers mention the fact that they were teetotalers,[80] and some also opposed cards, horse racing, and the theater.[81] Smoking was not approved of by some preachers, particularly during services, and when one preacher asked some young men to stop smoking they went out, gathered trash and old leather and proceeded to smoke the preacher out of the building.[82] When a few young men tried to break up a meeting by smoking cigars, Rufus Burleson preached on Hell and "smoked them out."[83]

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[78]Cranfill, op. cit., p. 55.

[79]Joyce, op. cit., pp. 37-39.

[80]James, op. cit., p. 13; William Baker, op. cit., p. 85; Burleson, op. cit., p. 32.

[81]Ibid., p. 32; Cunningham, op. cit., p. 66.

[82]Thrall, op. cit., p. 51.

[83]Burleson, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

Of course, not all preachers were so strict, or so successful in controlling their own desires. It is recorded that "ministers were often tempted to imbibe too freely of the 'ardent spirits' and subject themselves to the censure of the Presbytery."[84] Hardshell or Primitive Baptists believed that whiskey, temperately used, was not dangerous or deleterious. "I have rarely known a Hardshell preacher who was not an anti-prohibitionist," writes J. B. Cranfill, and adds this story:

> When the old Providence association met with the church near Luling, where Uncle Jim Baker was pastor, . . . following the convocation, the young men picked up two wagon loads of empty whiskey bottles. Uncle Jim Baker, however, vociferously and emphatically averred that it was a lie. He said that there was only one wagon load of bottles picked up.[85]

In the same class with the imbibing minister, I suppose, would be J. W. Miller, a Presbyterian who came to Texas in 1844, and who believed that dancing was a fine exercise and tended to improve the female graces, and so had the girls at his school give a weekly dance.[86] Similar worldliness was exhibited by a group of itinerant ministers who went to the circus, to the horror of their bishop.[87]

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[84] Cunningham, op. cit., p. 15.

[85] Op. cit., p. 284.

[86] Robert Finney Miller, "Early Presbyterianism in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XIX (October, 1915), 165.

[87] Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 41.

All in all, it would seem that the most of the evangelists were pious, upright men, although probably few were as dedicated as John Mark, the one colored preacher encountered, who, when purchased from his master by the Methodist church, insisted that they hold his deed, for he belonged to the Lord.[88]

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[88]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 136.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE FRONTIER PREACHER'S WAY OF LIFE

After seeing what the preacher looked like and how he acted, the next task was to determine something about how he lived and worked. An attempt to reveal these findings follows in the discussion of his financial conditions, his family, and his methods of doing the task he set himself to.

The frontier evangelist in Texas was supported in three different ways. There was the missionary who received support from a board or society, the preacher who was financed by the people to whom he preached, and the one who supported himself. A preacher might fall into one or two or all of these classes at various times during his lifetime, or even at one time.[1] Usually, self-support proved to be the most profitable, though the most laborious, of the methods. Few preachers ever acquired much wealth, but probably just as few ever actually went hungry.

Perhaps the most generous offer made to a missionary coming to Texas was that suggested to Hugh Wilson by the

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[1]Joyce, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

Presbyterian Board of Missions. He was to receive "whatever he would find necessary for his comfortable support, without limiting him to any fixed salary."[2] This was in 1837 and he served twelve months for $800. He did not depend entirely upon this support, however, for he acquired a farm and taught school also.[3] Later, when the Presbytery cut him off, he received five dollars a year from his congregation. Another Presbyterian received $1500 a year as a missionary.[4] Other Presbyterian boards were not so generous. John McCullough was paid $200 in 1838,[5] and together with two other missionaries only $598.50 for 1849, so he accepted some help from his brother and opened a school,[6] and, from 1865 on, depended upon ranching.[7]

The Methodist itinerant system allowed for the support of the traveling preacher, but kept him poor. About 1837:

> The maximum annual salary permitted an unmarried Methodist itinerant preacher was $100.00, plus traveling expenses.

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[2]Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

[3]Ibid., p. 73.

[4]William Baker, op. cit., p. 220.

[5]McCullough, op. cit., p. 21.

[6]Ibid., p. 39.

[7]Ibid., p. 34.

> For a married man the allowance was increased to $200.00 and traveling expenses, with a pittance for each child. . . . Upon marriage many ministers "located" in order to earn a better support for their families.[8]

Note that the $100.00 was maximum for Methodists. J. W. P. McKenzie received but $56.75 in 1839,[9] while a few years before, in 1835, when one Methodist preacher was asked at a Quarterly Conference what compensation he would require to give his full time to the ministry, his reply was "a sum sufficient to hire a laborer on his farm," and the money was raised on the spot.[10] The next year was harder; the subscription was thought to have been insufficient to pay even the hire of his horse; and a friend wrote of his great poverty, and his happiness amid destitution.[11] A Cumberland Presbyterian, R. O. Watkins, had a similar experience, when his churches urged him to devote his full time to the ministry, promising to pay the wages of a farm hand for him. The hand was hired, but unfortunately Watkins ended up paying him himself from the proceeds of his little farm.[12] John De Vilbiss found that the support from the board of missions

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[8]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 40.

[9]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 188.

[10]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 362.

[11]Ibid., p. 364.

[12]Campbell, op. cit., p. 46.

would provide a twelve by fourteen unfloored log cabin, and a fare of coffee, cornbread and bacon, but little more. Some people gave a cow to him and a San Antonio Hotel granted him free lodging and meals,[13] but his living in later years required his working as a surveyor, teacher and saddle maker.[14]

The passing of years did not greatly help the plight of the Methodist itinerant, for the country was "so impoverished by the late [Civil] war [that] the conference cut up the circuits into small convenient territories, contiguous to each preacher's home, so that he might raise a crop, or do something else to aid the church, in the support of his family."[15] Andrew Jackson Potter said that 1871 was his best year financially; he received $525 and a number of gifts.[16] This "Fighting Parson" split rails,[17] sold a "Soother of Pain,"[18] sold horses,[19] received a cow and calf from a confirmed infidel who liked his sincerity,[20] and a load of corn from a sinful old

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[13]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, pp. 49-57.

[14]Ibid., p. 96.

[15]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, p. 188.

[16]Ibid., p. 228.

[17]Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[18]Ibid., p. 219.

[19]Ibid., pp. 192-194.

[20]Ibid., p. 183.

man,[21] during his preaching career. During these sixties, seventies and eighties the western Methodist itinerants encountered in this study, with one exception, received less than $200 yearly, and some less than $100, and managed to eke out a poverty-ridden existence by receiving gifts and doing a little farming.[22] To avoid undue censure of the Methodists, let it be remembered that during this period some religious groups did far less toward supporting their ministers, and one Baptist preacher, many years later, said that he received more the four years he preached for the Methodists during the seventies than he had in the sixty-three years since.[23] Remember also, to the glory of these pioneers, that most of them could have retreated eastward to well-paying "located" preaching jobs.

Among the Baptists the Missionary Society was just becoming accepted about the time Texas was being settled, although a good many Baptist churches were still in opposition to it. Z. N. Morrell was supported by the society in Texas with a salary of $250 from 1846-1848. This stipend lacked fifty dollars of paying for his horses the last year.[24]

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[21] Ibid., p. 213.

[22] Joyce, op. cit., pp. 33-34; Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, pp. 125, 126, 224; Gravis, op. cit., pp. 14, 15, 19, 20-21, 41.

[23] Edward Baxter Featherston, A Pioneer Speaks, p. 28.

[24] Morrell, op. cit., p. 238.

During his career, he farmed, kept a store,[25] taught school (receiving tuition in provisions and stock),[26] once had to give his coat for ferry charges,[27] and was once forced to sell his property to make ends meet.[28] He tells of another Baptist, S. G. O'Brien, who quit a job at Baylor University paying $1200 a year in order to do missionary work for half that.[29] During the fifties, a Baptist missionary would receive from $100 to $600 per year.[30]

Naturally, the people among whom the preachers worked would help them to some degree rather than be guilty of allowing the starvation of one having supposedly good connections with the higher powers. In 1838, when a camp meeting was breaking up because there was no money, all was "provided for in Texas style; the horses were sent to grass, and after the bills at the hotels were paid the preachers were all provided for at private homes."[31] Afterward a contribution was made. Several gifts to A. J. Potter have already been mentioned, and John W. Anderson tells of a non-church man who lent him a horse and gave liberally in cash that the gospel might be preached.[32]

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[25] Ibid., pp. 62, 88.

[26] Ibid., p. 160.

[27] Ibid., p. 209.

[28] Ibid., p. 114.

[29] Ibid., p. 283.

[30] Ibid., p. 289; Burleson, op. cit., pp. 259, 261, 269.

[31] Morrell, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

[32] Anderson, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

Another generous soul was the man who donated a hundred pounds of bacon at fifteen cents a pound (when the market price was ten) in order to lay up more treasure in heaven.[33]

As has been pointed out, the early Baptists were opposed to paying preachers,[34] and the Primitive Baptists remained so.[35] Consequently, the frontier saw many of both kinds of Baptists, together with Cumberland Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ and located Methodist preachers, who were making a living in some other way while they preached. One old time Baptist, in speaking of the farmer preachers, was grieved that so many of them were doing so well in their worldly concerns.[36] A farm, most places on the frontier, was not hard to acquire, consequently, farming was the occupation most frequently turned to, but it was by no means the only one that provided for the preacher's family. One "Hardshell" was "a splendid barber";[37] R. E. B. Baylor, was a judge[38]; some of the less conscientious "ministers took advantage of the bargain prices on land and acquired thousands of acres,"[39] for speculation purposes;

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[33]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 42.

[34]Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. I, pp. 38-40.

[35]Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 179.

[36]Benedict, op. cit., p. 46.

[37]Cranfill, op. cit., p. 60.

[38]Carroll, op. cit., p. 49.

[39]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 65.

another lectured on phrenology;[40] and a great many taught school.[41] Other occupations at which evangelists employed themselves were blacksmithing,[42] Bible selling,[43] practise of medicine,[44] and the practise of law.[45] A doctor preacher managed to support himself and aid another parson also,[46] while another let his wife supply his needs by teaching school.[47] A few prospered. Isaac Reed was said to have owned, by 1834, 7000 acres and numerous slaves.[48] A larger number were hard pressed and handicapped in their work by having to provide their worldly needs, for "such are the claims of business and their families that they do not preach more than once a week."[49] The financial affairs of the early minister can hardly be left without the comment of one who could remember many of these pioneers, and who spoke of the conditions all over the South during the period under discussion. He said:

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[40]Cranfill, op. cit., p. 179.

[41]Campbell, op. cit., p. 17. Cunningham, op. cit., p. 73.

[42]Burleson, op. cit., p. 696.

[43]Anderson, op. cit., p. 103.

[44]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 93, 144-145; Campbell, op. cit., p. 81.

[45]William Allen, Captain John B. Denton, p. 39.

[46]Lide, op. cit., p. 50.

[47]Browder, Fullenwider, p. 5.

[48]Carroll, op. cit., pp. 199-120.

[49]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 24.

> The figures named now, seem to be a very low price for gospel work, but a preacher came out about as well financially then as now. If married, his wife made him clothes, and the neighborhood cobbler gave him his shoes. If single, the women of the church made him clothes, and the people gave him his board and washing. Preachers passed ferries, bridges and toll gates free, and blacksmiths charged them nothing for shoeing their horses. They really had but little use for money. They feasted on the very fat of the land free of charge, wherever they went.[50]

That the frontier preacher might be married and have a family is an idea that seems to be ignored in the popular concept of the man. Probably the reason that the minister would be thought of as a single man is that in the earlier days of the frontier this was true, at least, among the Methodist itinerants. In the days before the great immigration to Texas,

> Most of the early preachers in the West were unmarried men; and according to William Burke, the secretary of the Western Conference, he was the first preacher to travel as a married man west of the mountains. Not only were the circuit preachers unmarried, but Bishop Asbury as well as all of the bishops until Robert R. Roberts was elected in 1816 were likewise bachelors. When a preacher married he was usually advised to locate, for it was considered impossible for a Western Circuit to support a married preacher.[51]

Bishop Asbury, "the master genius of Methodism in this country . . . discountenanced matrimony as a hindrance," and if a young itinerant "was so rash or unfortunate as to become entangled in the bonds of wedlock," he was advised to retire from his itinerancy and support himself, preaching in only one place, and not burdening the church.[52] Even in the settled regions marriage was not

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[50]Thomas W. Caskey, Seventy Years in Dixie, p. 213.

[51]Sweet, Rise of Methodism in the West, pp. 44-45.

[52]Henry Fowler, The American Pulpit, p. 112.

the rule among these early preachers, for in 1809, of the eighty-four preachers in the Virginia conference only three had wives.[53]

The style was changed when Texas was evangelized. One of the early pioneers, Orceneth Fischer, had at least five children when he reached Texas,[54] and in the years after the Civil War Bishop Marvin complained that Texas was getting too many old men with families.[55] Of all the preachers studied, only one, Judge Baylor, never married,[56] and most of them had really large families by our standards today. It is true that as a man acquired a family he had a tendency to retire from the frontier and move toward the larger, well-established congregations, and yet there were a good number of preachers who remained on the front line long after their families were growing to a considerable household. After all, if a man were farming and preaching, a houseful of half-grown children could solve his labor problem. Then too, it has already been noted that after the Civil War the Methodist circuits were arranged to enable a man to travel in an area about his home. It is probably safe to say that the most of the preachers that the Texas frontiersman saw were married and already had a few children. Several preachers, well out on the frontier, had large

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[53] Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV, p. 50.

[54] Ibid., p. 476.

[55] Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 41.

[56] Burleson, op. cit., p. 694.

families, that is, six, of nine children.[57]

It was not unknown for a traveling preacher to carry part of his family with him. J. M. Baker and his wife toured his circuit on a span of mules, each riding one.[58] Peter Gravis, an "outside row" parson, first left his family in Burleson County when he went west, but later brought them also, and at least one time took his daughter Maggie with him on his circuit.[59] Other preachers had their wives with them sometimes.[60] For family, though, Andrew Jackson Potter was not to be bested. His wife managed to bear him fifteen children, and to rear twelve of them, and somehow or other keep the farm going while her devoted husband was riding his circuits.

When Luke said, "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word,"[61] he very aptly described the method of the frontier preachers in Texas. They preached at every opportunity, and many times when modern day preachers would think no opportunity was presented. Martin Ruter addressed the passengers on the boat that carried him to Texas,[62] and

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[57]Carroll, op. cit., pp. 119-120; Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, pp. 359-360; William Allen, Captain John B. Denton, p. 42.

[58]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 224.

[59]Gravis, op. cit., pp. 13, 14, 54-57.

[60]Gravis, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 30.

[61]Acts 8:4.

[62]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, p. 350.

Daniel Baker mentions sermons to soldiers standing in military order, to sailors on shipboard, in homes, and in a Masonic Lodge.[63] "It was the habitual practise of Dr. Baker to urge the salvation of the soul wherever and whenever it was possible."[64] "It was his invariable custom in traveling to preach every night wherever he might happen to stop, if the smallest congregation could be got together . . ."[65] Robert Alexander, even in 1838, was asked by the first family he met in Texas to preach that night to them and their neighbors.[66] Such family meetings seem to have been fairly common. When W. J. Joyce said, "I used every method in my reach to build up the cause of Christ in those new and scattered settlements,"[67] he included such efforts as preaching to a condemned murderer in prison.[68] One preacher rode for miles through a blizzard to preach to two people, an old German and his daughter, and enjoyed the pleasure of seeing one converted.[69] During the forties, John Wesley De Vilbiss and Homer Thrall

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[63]William M. Baker, op. cit., pp. 230, 234, 245, 253-257, 259.

[64]Ibid., p. 362.

[65]Ibid., pp. 363-364.

[66]Lide, op. cit., p. 28.

[67]Joyce, op. cit., p. 37.

[68]Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[69]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, pp. 22-23.

managed to preach even in a theatre,[70] which might have seemed to many to be bearding the lion in his den.

Unless, as was many times the case, the minister was invited to speak in the home of some hospitable Texan, he might encounter some difficulty in gaining a foothold in the community. Of course, the farmer preacher who moved in with his family could always set up a meeting place on his own property and take his time in getting into operation, but the missionary who came into a new territory alone, with little money or supplies, would have to go to work immediately attempting to get an audience. When Zenos Morrell reached Houston in 1837 and found out that there had never been a sermon preached there, he encouraged a group to put seats in the shade of a tree and preached to an attentive audience.[71] A procedure generally followed was something like this. The preacher upon arriving in a place would first secure a public building. It was the courthouse,[72] saloon,[73] school[74] or on rare occasions, a community church house.[75] Then lights would be procured,

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[70]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 23.

[71]Morrell, op. cit., p. 66.

[72]Campbell, op. cit., p. 86; Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 350.

[73]Ibid., p. 86; Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 66; Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 293-294.

[74]Carroll, op. cit., p. 195; Deems, op. cit., p. 360.

[75]Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, pp. 84-85.

people invited personally, and a bell or triangle rung to attract a crowd.[76]

> The people would flock to the place, some from curiosity to hear the preacher, but most of the congregation entirely ignorant, until the services were actually begun, whether the person who stood before them was a lecturer on phrenology, animal magnetism, mesmerism, temperance, or a candidate about to make a stump speech; or if a preacher, whether he was evangelical, Universalist, Campbellite or Mormon.[77]

This same writer also records that usually some latent Christian would turn up, and, though the preacher came to town a stranger, he would leave remembered by someone with love. One time Rufus Burleson prepared to preach when he found but one man in the audience. To remedy the deplorable situation he threatened to preach on the text, "Thou Art the Man," so that his audience, requesting a few minutes leave, went out and brought back a crowd.[78]

One of the most interesting accounts of a preacher's introducing himself into a community is found in Z. N. Morrell's book. It tells of the preaching of one of the first of the sermons in Texas by this very early missionary.

> An election was in progress when I reached town . . . My mule was soon tied, and after consultation with my great Master--for I had no one else to consult with--

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[76] Deems, op. cit., p. 350; William Baker, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

[77] Loc. cit.

[78] Burleson, op. cit., pp. 85-87.

> I decided to preach, and begin looking around for a suitable place. Near by the vast crowd I saw the foundation timbers of a large framed building already laid. No floor had been laid, nor upright pieces raised. No sooner discovered than I selected one corner of this for a pulpit,--the sills and sleepers already laid and well adjusted would answer for seats. I help up my watch in my hand, and cried at the top of my voice, "O-yes!, O-yes!, O-yes! everybody that wants to buy, without money and without price, come this way,"--and commenced singing the old battle song: "Am I a soldier of the Cross?" Before I finished my song there was around me a large crowd of all sorts and sizes and colors. A brief prayer was offered, and the two verses sung, "Tis religion that can give" amidst profound silence. Astonishment, rather than reverence, was stamped upon their features. Across the street was a large upper gallery, and by this time it was full of ladies and gentlemen. . . . Never did a cane-brake preacher receive better attention. God blessed me with great liberty for one hour, amid many tears shed all around me.[78]

The preacher of most of the larger religious groups could expect to find a few members of his party in almost any large gathering of people; consequently, the initial work of the pioneer ministers was to locate those of like faith and get them to start meeting together and organize a congregation. Zenos Morrell would ask at the end of every service if any Baptists were present. If there could be found eight or nine members, he would organize a church.[80] At Washington on the Brazos, in 1837, eight Baptists organized themselves into a church, sent letters to mission boards in the North and East asking that Texas be recognized as a mission field, and then subscribed money and built a building.[81] Similar methods were used by the

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[78] Op. cit., pp. 47-48.

[80] Morrell, op. cit., p. 228.

[81] Ibid., p. 77.

Presbyterians,[82] and the first Episcopalian missionary to Texas, a man named Ives, in 1840 went a step further by appealing to churches of the United States for money for a church building which was built in New York and sent to Matagorda by boat.[83] The ultimate in church organization was demonstrated by W. J. Joyce when he

> organized a church at one place under a spreading live oak tree, with one member, a poor widow. My successors kept up the appointment, and now, after forty-six years, a fine congregation worships in a good church near the tree.[84]

In several denominations the circuit rider was the chief frontier worker. The missionary, upon entering a new field would select several points at which he could preach and repeatedly went from one to another in order. Among the Methodists, when several missionaries had established circuits or itineraries, a conference of the preachers would be formed, a presiding elder be placed over it, and thereafter the bishop of the area would appoint men each year to preach in the various circuits already set up.

Typical of the Methodist missionaries, but probably more energetic than most, was Jesse Hord, who in 1838-1839 set up an itinerancy near Houston with twenty or twenty-one appointments and requiring 500 miles of travel.[85] In the following years

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[82]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 57.

[83]Murphy, op. cit., p? 3.

[84]Joyce, op. cit., p. 37.

[85]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 109. Woolworth, op. cit., p. 74.

this was divided into several smaller circuits. William Monk made a round of his circuit every three months on horseback with a Winchester rifle hanging to the horn of his saddle, in preparation for the Indians he never met.[86] In 1868-1869 the conditions under which the itinerant labored were described by Horace Bishop:

> I had no home. I lived with the people. A few of them were in good circumstances. More of them were poor. I had fourteen regular appointments. I preached twenty-eight times a month. I never took breakfast and dinner at the same place except Friday, which was laundry day in the country. . . . My wardrobe was one end of my saddle bags; my book case the other end. I had a small trunk at Colonel Philpott's containing some surplus clothing. I had a few books there also. My 'study' was the shade of any tree on the way to my appointment, where there was grass for my horse. I visited every home on my circuit, and when it seemed appropriate had a short prayer before leaving. I slept wherever it was convenient, sometimes on a sheepskin or my Mexican blanket, occasionally on a dirt or puncheon floor. I preferred the dirt as it was not quite so hard. . . .[87]

This seems like a pretty heavy schedule, but it is probably typical for a full-time itinerant on the frontier. Peter Gravis speaks of having seventeen appointments on a 180 mile monthly circuit.[88]

> There came in also, with the tide of immigration in the earliest days, a few Methodist local preachers and former members of conference who brought their families to Texas to find a new home and improve their condition. The

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[86] Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 73.

[87] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

[88] Gravis, op. cit., p. 41.

> most of these, moved by the destitution of the settlements into which they had come, began to excercise their gifts here.[89]

Among these were William Medford, who in 1833 was granted permission to preach by Austin and began in a school he had organized. He formed a four weeks' circuit, walking to his appointments each Saturday, preaching twice on Sunday, and returning to school on Monday, until, in the second month, he was given a horse and bridle.[90] This method of forming a circuit about one's home seems to have been adopted by many of the self-supporting preachers of all the frontier religious bodies.

Frontier preaching methods cannot be discussed without introducing the camp meetings and revivals. Such meetings are one of the most effective types of work wherever a religious group is particularly interested in adult conversions, as would certainly be the case on the frontier. As the sect becomes more firmly established so that the children grow up surrounded by the institutions of the parents' religion, revivalism declines. As has been pointed out, the Texas camp meetings were, for the most part, a little more orderly than the earlier ones, but they still remained one of the most effective works of the frontier preacher. When John Denton and Littleton Fowler,

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[89] Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 39-40.

[90] Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 360.

Methodists, entered Texas at Clarksville, they immediately held a camp meeting.[91] About the same time Robert Alexander, with only a little help, cleared a place, made a few rough seats of logs and poles and a preacher's stand, and proceeded to hold a meeting.[92] These were not "revivals," as the earlier camp meetings had been, so much as tools used to open up a new field. The people responded to this form of service. In one camp meeting,

> The congregation showed an intense desire to hear all the preacher had to say. On Sunday, during the service, rain fell gently for over an hour on an unsheltered audience, yet no one left.[93]

The camp meeting was one way in which several preachers could work as a team. Sometimes a half-dozen[94] or more ministers could be found at such a meeting. Yet, we are not to suppose that all frontier preachers were camp meeting men. The "very Hardshell" Baptists did not believe in camp meetings, but the "softer" ones would assist in them.[95] Although the Presbyterians had originated the camp meeting, the excesses of the

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[91]Woolworth, op. cit., p. 21.

[92]Lide, op. cit., p. 33.

[93]Ibid., p. 28.

[94]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 51.

[95]Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 165.

earlier ones caused many of this denomination to look upon them with disfavor,[96] but in Texas the three earliest Presbyterian missionaries held revivals in log cabins, or in the open air camps, and even furnished the beef and mutton for those attending.[97]

Cooperation between the preachers of several denominations seems to have been the rule at camp meetings. In 1835 a Presbyterian was helping the Methodist ministers,[98] and in 1838 a Methodist Episcopal preacher, a Protestant Methodist, two Cumberland Presbyterians and a Baptist were all working together and fighting together for a protracted meeting.[99] At one time a Methodist preacher cared for a Baptist's family while he assisted another Methodist in a meeting![100] At a later date there are two records of Baptist and Methodist preachers taking time about in conducting the services rather than work together in the same service.[101]

This brings up the subject of how well the frontier preachers worked together and their general attitude toward one another. In general, there seems to have been fair cooperation between a good many of the religious bodies, but there are

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[96]Sweet, Revivalism in America, pp. 122-124.

[97]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 362; Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

[98]Deems, op. cit., p. 362.

[99]Morrell, op. cit., p. 82.

[100]Ibid., p. 89.

[101]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 67; Gravis, op. cit., p. 43.

some records of bitterness and striving between some groups. We should expect to find good feeling existing between the preachers of the same denomination, and unless some minister started weakening on his denomination's doctrines, the expectation is justified. Little jealousy is evident in the writings, although J. W. Anderson received some persecution from preachers of his own sect in the more settled areas.[102] On the frontier, though, brotherly kindness generally prevailed. Probably no preachers worked together better than the Primitive Baptists, who often had sermons by three or four, or even more preachers in a single service.[103]

Outside of the camp meetings, probably the best examples of inter-denominational cooperation is found in the sharing of the buildings. In 1856, when Frederick Olmsted was touring Texas, in one town he asked a local man what denomination owned the church building. The reply was, "Oh none in particular. They let anyone preach that comes along."[104] In San Antonio in the forties the Methodists shared a building with the Presbyterians after having furnished some of the materials for it,[105] and in Marshall the Cumberland Presbyterians and Baptists "worshiped together with great fraternal

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[102]Anderson, op. cit., pp. 132-141.

[103]Cranfill, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

[104]Op. cit., pp. 84-85.

[105]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 58.

harmony."[106] Several other references to shared buildings were found, but the most extreme case was when a Baptist preacher was allowed to preach in a Roman Catholic building at Goliad.[107] He commented, "This was the first gospel sermon they had ever heard, and in all probability it was the last."

For a man of one denomination to be invited to preach to an audience of another was apparently not uncommon in those preacher-scarce days. A Presbyterian, Daniel Baker, once preached "a long doctrinal sermon to a large and attentive audience" of the Cumberland Presbyterians and had "good reason to believe that many prejudices were removed."[108] One of the converts of this same man became a Baptist preacher, and another, a Cumberland Presbyterian elder.[109] A Methodist preaching for the Baptists,[110] a Presbyterian exhorting for the Methodists,[111] and a Presbyterian reading responses for an Episcopalian[112] are among the examples of ministerial cooperation found in this study. A final example of the laying aside of denominational

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[106]Campbell, op. cit., p. 60.

[107]Morrell, op. cit., p. 95.

[108]William Baker, op. cit., p. 253.

[109]Ibid., pp. 513, 249.

[110]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 135-136.

[111]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, p. 152.

[112]Murphy, op. cit., p. 37.

differences occurred in Matagorda. The only three professors of Christianity, a Baptist, a Methodist, and a Presbyterian, united and formed an Episcopal church.[113]

To leave the impression that things always went well between the preachers and that denominational differences were ignored upon the frontier would be wrong. In the very early days of Texas' evangelizing, one Methodist preacher "had hard Work to get to stay at a Baptist brother's house" and before he left the next morning was required to pay a dollar and twenty-five cents.[114] Such a charge was unusual on the frontier and no doubt was brought about because of denominational differences. Daniel Baker once had to ask for the vote of the audience in order to get the floor away from a preacher who had for a long time been ridiculing and abusing a "doctrine held dear to all branches of the Church of Christ, save the Ishmaelitish one to which the intruding minister belonged."[115] On another occasion a long yawn that made the rafters ring during a sermon was found to have come from a preacher of another denomination who took this method to express his opinion of the speaker.[116] There were some B ptist preachers who refused to worship with

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[113]Baker, op. cit., p. 263.

[114]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 78.

[115]Baker, op. cit., p. 366.

[116]Ibid., p. 360.

any other group or work with any other type of preacher.[117] When Methodist A. J. Potter put a young Baptist preacher to flight by exposing the inconsistency of the doctrines of impossibility of apostasy and the necessity of obedience, the Episcopalians were grateful to him and gave him warm welcome.[118] Peter Gravis tells of how a Baptist church was broken up when its preacher, "Chotaw Bill," was badly beaten in a debate with a Methodist.[119] Perhaps indicative of the state of affairs on the late western frontier in Texas was a letter from A. B. Blue of Fort Griffin, which was on the extreme frontier in that year, 1877.

> . . . here each prominent church sect are using strenuous efforts to impress upon the minds of the people their peculiar tenets, and build broad and deep the foundations of their future edifices. . . . It is now that the battle of our denominational supremacy must be fought.[120]

Besides invading the frontier alone to work with or against the other ministers in seeking to build a church, the early preacher had another method of establishing the cause that was attempted at least three times. This was to move to the frontier with a group already organized. Richard Salmon, with fifteen families of his parishioners and friends left

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[117]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 189-190.

[118]Ibid., pp. 161-162.

[119]Gravis, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

[120]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 124.

Syracuse, New York in 1836, "to found a church colony in Texas."[121] The experiment failed. Similarly, Joseph Bays came to Texas with a company of thirty-two families, presumably many of them Baptists.[122] No great result was seen from this operation. The other effort referred to was that of Daniel Parker, who, in 1833, organized the "Pilgrim Church of Predestinarian Regular Baptists" in Illinois and moved it to Texas, where it continued to exist and function on the frontier for a long time.

Before leaving the subject of the preachers' methods, a word about the order of services is in order. It has already been shown that the Primitive Baptists used several preachers during each service, and mention has been made of the Episcopalian service being read, but the following quotation concerning the Methodist service seems to be fairly typical of the majority of meetings on the frontier. First would come the news report and then,

> When the preacher had concluded the news, he would read the scripture selected for the service and then line a hymn. In lining a hymn, he would read two lines, then he would lead the congregation in the singing; two more would be lined and sung until the entire hymn was finished. This method was used because the minister usually had the only song book. . . . When the song was

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[121]Murphy, op. cit., p. 2.

[122]Carroll, op. cit., p. 18.

> finished, a prayer was offered which often lasted for twenty or thirty minutes. Then came the sermon which consumed two to three hours.[123]

From this and other references we would conclude that the average frontier service was simple and informal, but by no means short. The preacher had great faith in the power of his message, as did many of the people also, so that he was willing to use every opportunity available to bring the settlers together to hear his word, and having acquired an audience, he was not willing to let them go without a full measure of doctrine and exhortation.

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[123] Lide, op. cit., p. 39.

## CHAPTER V

## THE PREACHER AND THE PEOPLE

In order to be able more accurately to visualize the frontier preacher in Texas, it is necessary to determine something about his reception by the people who settled this state. It has already been shown that the Texas settlers were somewhat different from the people of the frontier in the states east of the Mississippi, in that they were generally better educated and were ambitious to bring civilization and a more complex society into the territory very rapidly. The purpose of the present chapter is to present some examples of the way the preacher was received into the frontier community, and a few instances in which his entrance was opposed by those he sought to influence.

Conditions were such on the Texas frontier that the preacher generally had an encouraging reception. Before and during the early stages of Anglo-American immigration to Texas, the area, being under the rulership of Spain and Mexico, had no religious freedom, but only a sort of toleration allowed by the state religion, Roman Catholicism.

> From 1783 to 1798 religious toleration was granted, insofar as liberty of conscience in private worship was concerned, but public worship was not allowed except to the Roman

> Catholics. From January 1798 the following restrictions were imposed: "Liberty of conscience is not to be extended beyond the first generation; the children of immigrants must be Catholics, and the immigrants not agreeing to this must not be admitted but removed, even when they bring property with them. This is to be explained to the settlers who do not profess the Catholic religion. It is especially recommended to commandants to watch that no preacher of any religion, but the Catholic comes to the province."[1]

This edict was severe enough, if administered, certainly to discourage the ministers from approaching the Texas frontier, yet its tone was so antagonistic to the ideas of religious freedom of the borderers who were edging into Texas from the United States, and of the early settlers under the empresarios, that it probably made them more sympathetic toward the Protestant missionaries than they would otherwise have been. Accepting the non-Catholic churchmen into the society, particularly after feeling between the settlers and the Mexicans became unfriendly, and also after the revolution, might well have been a natural result of the desire to show the love for freedom of which the former citizens of the United States were justly proud.

Under the Mexican rule the religious situation remained much the same as that described in the previous quotation. The Mexican constitution read:

> The religion of the Mexican nation is, and will be perpetually, the Roman Catholic Apostolic. The nation will protect it by wise and just laws, and prohibit the exer-

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[1]W. S. Red, Texas Colonists and Religion, p. 3.

cise of any other whatsoever.[2]

More than legislation, however, was required to make a Catholic out of a settler from the United States. Vigilance was evidently not exercised in keeping the non-Catholic settlers out of Texas, and the Roman Catholic Church neglected her responsibility of converting all who came in, so that by 1831, Lucas Alaman, the Mexican Secretary of State, felt the need to urge the passing of a law to prohibit immigration, for, he said,

> . . . we find that, besides this territory having been occupied by colonists who never ought to have been admitted into it, there is not one among them, in Texas, who is a Roman Catholic.[3]

This statement, exaggerated as it may be, is indicative of the fact that the Roman Church had failed to put forth the effort to supply the spiritual needs of the colonists, for surely some few could have been converted to that institution that claims to be the Mother Church, had priests and equipment been supplied. One historian records that the colonists were expected to erect buildings, supply them, and then apply for priests.[4] People are often reluctant to build and equip buildings for the religious bodies in which they

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[2]W. Roy Smith, "The Quarrel Between Governor Smith and the Council of the Provisional Government of the Republic," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, V (April, 1902), 272.

[3]Edna Rowe, "The Disturbances at Anahuac in 1832," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, VI (April, 1903), 267.

[4]Carroll, op. cit., p. 9.

have grown up; it is ridiculous to suppose they would eagerly provide a chapel and then invite a representative of an alien religion to come in and convert them. Catholicism reached a very low ebb in Texas in those days. In 1840 it was said that there had been no confessions heard in fourteen years, and the exorbitant fees charged for burials and marriages was certainly not strengthening the position of the few priests in the eyes of the people.[5] In 1831, a woman colonist who lived on the Brazos River wrote to a friend in the states:

> How often do we attend church? Don't be too shocked when I tell you we heard our last sermon in Virginia. . . . I have heard that in other portions of the country, a few preachers, in spite of the laws, do live and hold services, but we have not even a Catholic Church any where near us . . .[6]

This neglect on the part of the Roman Catholics was, of course, preparing the way for the non-Catholic preachers. Many of these colonists felt a need for religion more than just the intrinsic religious feeling in human beings, for they had been brought up to attend worship. Even some Mexican magistrates recognized that the colonists had to be provided for spiritually, and adopted a policy far more tolerant than the constitution. In 1832, when a Protestant minister began to unlawfully hold a meeting in Texas, the commandant at Nacogdoches, "Col. Piedras, was informed of it. He asked if they

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[5]Held, Religion a Factor in Building Texas, pp. 101-102.

[6]Lide, op. cit., p. 13.

were stealing horses. The answer was 'No.' Are they killing anybody? No. Then he said, 'Let them alone.' . . ."[7] If this toleration was exhibited by a Mexican, who was presumably a Roman Catholic, then we can rightly suspect that the Anglo-American leaders of the colonists would not be very strict in the interpretation and enforcing of Mexican law opposing Protestant preaching. Two instances to illustrate this fact will suffice:

> As by Mexican laws we were liable to fine and imprisonment for holding or attending any but Catholic religious services in Texas. Mr. Kinney had previously consulted with Col. Wm. Travis, Dr. Miller and other leading men, who said, "Go on and hold your meeting; we will be there, and we pledge ourselves that you shall not be disturbed"; and nobly did they redeem their pledge.[8]

> On another occasion as he [Somner Bacon, Cumberland Presbyterian] and some others were preparing to hold religious services near San Antonio certain persons sent him word that they intended to come and break up the meeting. Col. James Bowie, being in the neighborhood and hearing of their purpose, went to the place where the meeting was to be held. He made the sign of the cross on the ground, and informed them that he was captain in those parts and that the meeting should take place. Knowing the character of Bowie, and fearing his wrath, the opposers of the meeting withdrew, and Bacon and his friends proceeded with their services.[9]

The chief result of the Catholic intolerance and neglect seems to have been that the population got far ahead of the evangelizing forces, creating a great need for representatives of organized religion on the frontier, for only a few

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[7]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 25-26.

[8]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, pp. 361-362.

[9]John Russell Hutchinson, Reminiscences, Sketches and Addresses, pp. 210-211.

hardy souls among the preachers could push into Mexican dominated Texas, and they could by no means reach the multitudes. This need, and the accompanying desire for religion, did not cease with the declaration of religious freedom in the Republic of Texas, for the incoming preachers could not keep up with the westward swing of the rapidly expanding population. Bishop Freeman of the Episcopal Church, in 1841, said:

> The missionary in his travels will find no roads or turnpikes and very few bridges. On the other hand, he may be assured that he will find men everywhere ready to hear the Gospel, showing great respect for religion, intelligent, kindhearted, and hospitable.[10]

A little earlier Daniel Baker expressed the same opinion, and was amazed at the number of people who would turn out to hear him preach. He attributed the eagerness to early training by the parents, to a disposition to roll away the reproach cast upon them, that they were a set of outlaws and demi-savages, and to a realization of the scarcity of a precious comodity, religious teaching.[11] "O it is pleasant to preach to a people who seem so eager to hear the word of life,"[12] was another comment by the same man.

There is indication that Texans as a whole desired that religious bodies be brought in and encouraged, even

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[10]Murphy, op. cit., p. 15.

[11]William Baker, op. cit., p. 271.

[12]Ibid., p. 331.

though many of the ones holding this view were not themselves religious. Concerning contributions to a missionary fund the following was remarked:

> A large number of those who composed this society were not members of any Church, and many of them far from being religious at all, which indicates that, from the very earliest times, the people of Texas have encouraged the preaching of the gospel, and the labors of the Christian Church, for the good of the people and the country.[13]

The same idea was expressed again many years later by a Baptist writer:

> It is a remarkable fact that in the wildest sections of this State in its wildest period the men who themselves are in the thick of the most desperate criminalities are nominal believers in the Christian religion. Not that they practise it, but they have a contempt for the atheists and infidels.[14]

Because of this attitude, the preacher moving onto the frontier of Texas had plenty of work before him, a country filled with people eager to hear, and many a one in pretty obvious need of some preaching, and hard preaching at that. One wrote:

> I soon found I would have no excuse for idleness in Texas. Applications were made from various neighborhoods for preaching, and I soon had as many appointments as I could fill a month on Sabbath.[15]

Robert Alexander, the pioneer Methodist, once dismissed a group early in the evening, planning to rest, but they waited for

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[13]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 356.

[14]Cranfill, Chronicle, pp. 310-311.

[15]Deems, op. cit., p. 366.

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over an hour until he came out and preached again.[16] Mention is made of families coming forty miles in wagons to camp meetings even before the revolution,[17] and another writer tells that some people made a habit of going ten or twenty miles to hear preaching.[18] The fact that almost every community had some church members might account for many of the pleasant receptions the preacher received,[19] but "ministers of the gospel were honored for their work's sake in Texas as they are not up . . . in the North."[20] Texans as a whole were crying for instruction in things of the spirit and there is more than one case, where, when the religious body was not prompt enough to send its clergymen, a lay member (I am speaking now of the groups with a more complicated organization) would attempt to conduct the services and seek to teach the word.[21] Texas was ready for the preacher when he came.

As has been stated, the preacher could not catch up with the frontiersman's need. Much later than the cases referred to so far is the account by Andrew Jackson Potter:

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[16]Lide, op. cit., p. 29.

[17]Deems, op. cit., p. 362.

[18]Phelan, op. cit., p. 113.

[19]Loc. cit.

[20]John Brown, Twenty-five Years a Parson in The Wild West, p. 134.

[21]Murphy, op. cit., p. 6.

> As I was the first preacher who had ever visited that region [San Felipe], the people were all agog about preaching. I preached to a crowded house on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, at 11 o'clock A.M., and at twilight in the evening. At times the whole audience was moved to tears. I was about to dismiss the meeting, when an old man slammed his heavy fist on the table, saying, "Hold on; this brother has come a long and dangerous road to preach to us, and he is entitled to some remuneration." He then passed the hat around. A tall dark man rose up and said, "I owe the hat four dollars, and the preacher is going home with me and I will pay it." The collection amounted to twenty-three dollars.[22]

Still many years later, in the nineties, ministers were coming to places in Texas when preaching had not been done before. After John Wesley Anderson had reached the pulpit and started back for the plains he was holding a meeting when a gentleman came to him and was very anxious for the preacher to go home with him and preach a few sermons. The man had no money, but promised a hundred pounds of bacon and ten gallons of fine honey, besides what the neighbors might contribute, if Anderson could preach but two or three sermons, because the children of the neighborhood had never heard a sermon. The preacher "stood in a deep study and silent prayer, the tears running down my cheeks."[23] Even at this late date Anderson more than once met grateful young men and women in Liberty and Chambers counties who had never heard a sermon before.[24]

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[22]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 249-250.

[23]Anderson, From the Plains to the Pulpit, pp. 106-107.

[24]Ibid., p. 111.

The great poverty of spiritual instruction that came as the result of the frontier getting ahead of the churches, together with the religious nature and early training of the settlers, guaranteed a rich field for the preacher to labor in. The evidence is that he was well received by the most of the people.

Simply because several factors were in favor of the evangelist, it must not be supposed that these missionaries entered the frontier regions unchallenged or unopposed by at least some elements of the population. The preacher was subjected to the efforts of the rowdies to drive him away, the dangerous threats of some seriously opposed to Christianity, and the mockery of the godless. When W. S. James said that cowboys did not respect those religious men who led inconsistent lives,[25] and were respectful of women, old people and anything real, he expressed the spirit of the frontiersman everywhere. He adds that even among the ungodly there were many men who would oppose the mock religious services that proved to be about the strongest weapon the anti-religionist had. Evidently, everywhere on the frontier, if a preacher could show himself to be courageous and sincere, those opposing him would soon be a minority. The minister

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[25]James, op. cit., p. 154.

needed to show that his reason for being on the frontier was a genuine interest in the welfare of the people. His respect for them engendered respect for himself. A story concerning a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher, R. O. Watkins, illustrates the last point.

> Going into a community that did not have a very good reputation for honesty he sought out the leading man and asked the liberty of preaching at his house. The man said, "Have you not heard of the bad character of the settlement, and are you not afraid to come here lest your horse be stolen?" Watkins told him that he had heard he was a very bad man and the settlement dangerous to travel through, but he had known of setttlements that had been too badly slandered, and he did not believe there was a man mean enough to steal his horse and make him walk to his appointments, as his only object was to persuade them to do right and be religious. The man allowed Watkins to hold services in his house and treated him with the utmost respect.[26]

One underlying reason for the opposition was the fear that the morality preached by most of the frontier preachers would do away with favorite pastimes of many of the pioneers, whiskey drinking, horse racing, chicken fighting, card playing and dancing. Not all preachers opposed all these things. It has been observed that few Primitive Baptists were teetotalers and one writer says that the Episcopalians did not object to dancing.[27] Enough preachers, however, preached against enough of these things to get into trouble now and then. John Wesley De Vilbiss, when he came to San Antonio in 1845, objected to the

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[26]Campbell, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

[27]Cranfill, Chronicle, p. 164.

Sunday chicken fighting, which was no moisy that it disturbed the worship. Some Rangers, hearing a rumor that he had berated them for their share in the matter, plotted to duck him, but when he heard of the plot and explained to them that he had not done what was reported, many of them started attending his services.[28] The preachers won out in another case. When the second camp meeting ever held in Texas started, "A whiskey shanty was set up, but the audience, with great unanimity drove the owner, with his liquors, away."[29]

In the discussion of the preacher's methods mention was made of preaching in the saloons. John Wesley Anderson used similar invasive tactics.

> I rented big dance halls. . . .I had the pleasure of seeing one of these dance halls turned into a church, others were forsaken and rotted down, while one was burned up after I preached against the dance. Some people became enraged when I preached against the dance and said they were going to whip me. I told them to kiss their wives good-bye, make peace with God and order their coffins before they went to whip me because if I had to fight I would die before I give an inch.[30]

Anderson was not bothered, but an earlier preacher did not get off so light. When John McCullough preached against sin in San Antonio about 1845, six or eight men came to murder

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[28]Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, pp. 54-55.

[29]Lide, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

[30]Anderson, op. cit., p. 159.

him. He barricaded himself in his room, armed with a hatchet. They shot at him, grazing his scalp and cutting his clothes, but failed to do him real damage. That night he was back at his preaching without a guard.[31] Still earlier, in 1832, a Mr. Johnson came on the grounds of a camp meeting with a long cow whip, declaring that he would whip the first man who entered the stand. When "the Bull-dog preacher," a man named Alford, was told of the situation, he said, "'I am as able to take a whipping as any man on this ground--I'll go on the stand and see if he will pull me out and whip me.' So he walked in and looked over on Johnson, who soon left the ground and died soon after."[32] The writer does not make clear whether there was a retributive supernatural connection between the threat and the death or not.

There were some occasions when the preacher's piety won over his opposition. Somner Bacon was once attacked by some ruffians who knocked him from his horse and were preparing to dispatch him when he asked for a brief reprieve for prayer. The assassins were so touched by his including them in his earnest petitions that they declared they would not kill so good a man. Later, when Bacon was preparing to hold the first camp meeting in Texas, and a band of men threatened to

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[31]McCullough, op. cit., p. 36.

[32]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 25-26.

kill him, one of these same men took up his defense with a drawn gun, and guarded the preacher throughout the sermon.[33]

Much of the opposition against the minister was the work of rowdy, fun-loving young men who were not endeavoring to actually seriously injure or kill the subject of their attentions. Probably their attitude toward the evangelist was not greatly different from what it would have been toward any stranger who came in and tried to influence them in some way before he had proved his mettle. Their rowdyism might take the form of gun fire during the service,[34] or, as was mentioned previously, smoking the preacher out of the building. Once plans were laid to duck Robert Alexander in the river, but when the plotters viewed the six and a half foot frame of the missionary, they abandoned the scheme.[35] The citizens of Jonesboro threatened to throw a preacher in the river after having nailed him in a barrel,[36] an embellishment that almost takes the action out of the class of pranks.

If the preacher could beat the jokesters at their own game he could win them to his side. In 1844 when the men

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[33]B. W. McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 265.

[34]Campbell, op. cit., p. 146.

[35]Thrall, History of Methodism in Texas, p. 50.

[36]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 19.

gathered outside the church door in Huntsville to tell anecdotes during the sermon, Z. N. Morrell challenged them to a contest and told them such a good story that he gained a crowd and had no more trouble.[37] The common frontier joke of calling a preacher to conduct a wedding ceremony where there was no couple to marry backfired at least once, for J. W. Anderson, after a long ride, forcibly collected his regular wedding fee from the joker.[38] Rowdiness and practical joking were not always even moderately successful in hindering the preacher. When the study of the fighting parson is undertaken, more of this sort of opposition will be discussed.

The strongest weapon the adversaries had against the preacher, I believe, was mockery. This form of rowdyism often succeeded, where outright opposition failed, in disturbing the services and keeping the young men especially from attending. A mild form of irreverence, reminiscence of Owen Wister's Virginian, was exhibited by a backwoodsman, who, when the preacher launched into a vivid description of "the exceeding sinfulness of the impenitent, arose and withdrew, with a long shrill whistle of utter incredulity."[39] Indicative of more pronounced disrespect is the fact that the first prayer meeting in Washington, in 1836, was held in a little shed-room in the rear part of the house to prevent disturbance from a "crowd of wicked men who were keeping guard over a little grocery opposite,

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[37]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 201-205.

[38]Anderson, op. cit., p. 105.

[39]William Baker, op. cit., p. 359.

and who were in the habit of making mock of anything like religion."[40] The worst conditions of this sort encountered in the study was described by Z. N. Morrell:

> . . . in the principal grocery of the town, an opposition prayer meeting was organized. At first they did not interfere with our meeting. All the crowd (of young furloughed soldiers) would attend ours, and immediately after it closed they would gather in the grocery, and the leader of the band would open in due form. Our services were imitated to the best of their ability. Our names, who led at public prayer, were called at the grocery with a loud clear voice, and the parties there responded with prayers and exhortations. Under this trial the tempter sorely distressed me; sometimes with a spirit like that of Peter when he smote off the servant's ear; sometimes with misgivings; and sometimes with the pains of deep mortification and grief. Under all this, kept up regularly during successive weeks, I resorted much to prayer around my family altar and in secret. There was no law that we could use to break down this great evil, that was so fearfully contagious in its character. The bread and wine, emblems of a Savior's love, were frequently administered by these mocker's of God and religion, before the public gaze.[41]

Another writer records that mock prayer meetings were held in Washington in 1839 regularly every Friday night, and even the accidental killing of a man at one of them failed to terminate the desecration.[42]

The preacher was not always helpless in situations like this. When a group of rowdies met in a grove for the purpose of holding a mock service in order to break up a meeting, the

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[40]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1857, p. 365.

[41]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

[42]William Baker, op. cit., p. 246.

preacher, "Francis Wilson, a towering figure, appeared among them and proposed to lead their service. The gang dispersed without further trouble."[43] Much later than this, Andrew Jackson Potter had a service disturbed by sham mourners at the bench, so he resorted to their own tactics, knelt beside one and as they prayed, Potter, in pretended fervor, beat the man's back with his fist until the will to mock religion left him.[44]

Opposition evidently was at some times strong and even dangerous on the Texas frontier, but the courageous minister, with the help of the many religiously inclined citizens, could succeed in spite of it. W. S. James remarked that at the time of his writing, nearly all the old frontiersmen had become Christians.[45]

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[43]Phelan, op. cit., p. 145.

[44]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 358-359.

[45]James, op. cit., p. 112.

# CHAPTER VI

## THREE TYPES OF FRONTIER PREACHER

A personality or character which seems to exhibit incongruities catches the fancy of the public. Curiosity has an eye open for inharmonious personal characteristics, whether real or imagined, and the interest of the average person is held by these characteristics, at least until they become grotesque. For example, women wrestlers are currently enjoying great popularity, probably because extreme physical strength, prowess or pugnacity is inharmonious with the submissiveness required by the very physical constitution of the truly and delightfully feminine woman. Similarly, the soft-spoken killer, the timid giant, the noble bandit, and the tall man named Short, all, to a greater or lesser degree, attract the attention of the ever-curious public because of some inconsistency in their make-up. If this idea is true (and certainly the proof of it would be no more difficult or satisfying than the disproof), then here lies the explanation as to why three types of preachers have caught and held the imaginations of the crowd. The three types are the cowboy preacher, the rascal, and the fighting parson.

Once it is recognized that the cowboy was not a gun-slinging desperado who might incidentally pause from his mad dashings over the prairie long enough in the spring to round up a few steers, but rather a hard working, generally sober ranch hand, who often possessed some rather noble inclinations, it is not hard to see how he might become a preacher. The alertness, the steadiness in emergencies, and the willingness to stand for what he believed was right, are features often attributed to the cowboy, and certainly these characteristics would be no hindrance to the preacher. Yet even in the heydey of the range rider, the cowboy preacher was looked upon as a curiosity, or, at least, advertising a man as a cowboy preacher would not hurt the attendance. Since the cowboy was, as far as cowboys themselves were concerned, just another type of workman, it seems strange that the fact that the preacher had been, or was yet, a cowboy, should attract any more attention than the fact that others had been farmers, lawyers, or schoolteachers. Advertising these last three types for what they were would scarcely attract attention, but the title of "cowboy preacher" was coveted by many an aspiring young cleric, for publicity reasons.[1]

Three things about the cowboy may have seemed inconsistent with his being a preacher. In ascending order of importance they are: a certain recklessness of character, his

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[1]James, op. cit., p. 28.

speech, and his dress. The first trait is currently attributed to the cowboy, and I think rightly so, for the timid and extremely careful man would hardly be able to do the type of riding and work that was required of the cowboy. People generally do not associate a daring, or even rash, nature with preachers, hence, the cowpoke who turned minister would attract attention.

The cowhand's speech, except for a few yells upon occasion, seems to have been quiet, because sudden noises are not appreciated by cattle, and perhaps his being much alone developed a tendency toward taciturnity, a trait not generally found in preachers. It is hard to visualize a cowboy engaged in a long public harangue. Then too, his speech was filled with idiomatic expressions, and his vocabulary lacking in theological terms. Certainly he could have acquired the needed expressions as readily as any other man, but generally the cowboy of fiction and folklore does not quote scripture or use Biblical references as easily as the farmer or blacksmith in the same literature. At any rate, the ranch language was so different from the average American way of speaking that the great evangelist Sam Jones was said to have used cowboy slang in preaching to cowboys in order to be understood.[2] It may be that the manner of speaking of the average

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[2]James, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

cowboy made it seem unusual that he should become a preacher.

Probably the chief incongruity of the cowboy preacher was his dress. We have seen that the frontier preacher generally dressed like the class of people with whom he associated, and it should seem normal that the evangelists in the West should adopt the dress of his audience. The cowhand, however, was fast developing a costume of his own, adapted to his trade. The tendency for the cowboy to choose a wide-brimmed hat of some sort, boots designed for riding, a kerchief to keep the dust from the herd out of his nose, developed fairly early in the cattle country. The cowboy became identified with this attire, an occupational uniform, and one not associated with ecclesiastical activities in any way. When the cowboy turned preacher and retained this garb, he became a somewhat incongruous figure, in the eyes of the listeners, and was an interesting departure from the norm.

He was so interesting, apparently, almost from the beginning that many preachers who had never even seen a ranch began to pose as cow country ministers. W. S. James, a true "cowboy preacher" wrote, "one of the most disgusting features of counterfeiting the 'cowboy' is that class of young preachers who covet the appellation. . . . He usually procures a ten ounce hat with a leather band, a pair of high-heeled boots, and then he is sailing."[3] Not all this class are dead yet,

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[3]James, op. cit., p. 28.

as any regular observation of the church page of a large newspaper will verify. I suppose the current popularity of the cowboy will account for the desire of many evangelists to advertise as such.

The reverse of this situation was discovered in a Catholic writing:

> One day I took breakfast with a young man, who a year previous had been a cow-boy, but who was now a licensed preacher. "Preaching," as a lady remarked, "was a better paying business for him than running after cows, and required less effort."[4]

Here, if the prejudice of the witness has not influenced the accuracy of his report, the "cowboy" was genuine and the "preacher" the hypocrite, but the opposite was probably the case many more times.

Actually, of course, there was no real inconsistency in the combination of the cowboy and minister. It could be argued that daring, and even a certain amount of recklessness, are the result of a deep and trusting faith, and Paul, David, or John the Baptist could be cited as examples. God also has sought to deliver his message in the language of the receivers, hence the cowboy's speech habits were perfectly suitable for preaching to cowboys. The departure from the norm in dress is not to be considered objectionable, since true religion has nothing to do with clothes, beyond discouraging ostentation,

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[4]Parisot, Reminiscences of a Texas Missionary, p. 35.

extravagance and immodesty.

There were some real cowboy preachers, but probably not very many. W. S. James and John Wesley Anderson are the two best examples discovered, and both have left books that are listed in the bibliography. As has already been noted, the cowboy preacher could be smaller in size and more wiry in build than the eastern frontier preacher, and he rode a smaller, tougher horse, the standard cowpony. His circuits were longer, his flock more scattered, and his dress more colorful, but other than that he differed little from his eastern counterpart. He emerges as a separate type because he came to the pulpit from an occupation that had produced a unique type. He is the same colorful character as the common cowboy, with the added heroic qualities of faith and zeal. He would make a good fiction hero, and perhaps has. Insomuch as there was nothing incomprehensible or inexplicable about a cowboy's turning to evangelism, we go on to discuss the other two types, which attract attention because of real incongruity between their ways of life and the expected behavior of the minister.

There are probably two main reasons why tales concerning scoundrels who posed as preachers, or preachers who behaved like scoundrels, on the frontier are so commonly accepted and retold. First is because of the natural interest in the

incongruity of an immoral man preaching morality, and the second is the fact that by pointing out real or supposed imperfections in a preacher, we can ease the sting of his indictment of us. At any rate, it is likely that the average person today imagines that the frontier was teeming with rascals of the cloth, or scoundrels who claimed to be preachers, much like the previously mentioned one in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. I was actually surprised to encounter mention of so few men of this category. One church historian expressed my feeling thus:

> There has been scarcely nothing of a scandalous nature which has found its way into these pages, simply because our minutes reveal very little to record. One thing that has forcibly struck this writer after the most exhaustive examination of the lives and labors of the ministry in Texas, is the uniformity with which they come and go, through toils innumerable, through hardships and privations without end, and that with the very rarest exceptions, always with "nothing against them."[5]

The preaching scamp was evidently the exception to the rule, and probably a rare exception at that. This was true on the Texas frontier whether so on earlier borderlands or not. Why are there many anecdotes concerning this class? Probably because the aforementioned interest in ministerial misdemeanors has kept alive the history of events that happened on earlier frontiers, or maybe Mark Anthony was right concerning the relative longevity of good deeds and evil. There are two good

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[5]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, p. 149.

reasons why the ecclesiastical rascals were scarce in Texas. The first was the presence in almost every community of persons with the educational backgrounds to enable them to more quickly recognize a fraud, and the determination to oppose that which was not good for the community, and the other was the scarcity of money on the Texas frontier. The economy of Texas in its various stages of development is not familiar ground to me, but it is my impression that money was seldom in abundance on the Texas frontier, and hence the man seeking to gain a quick dollar by the use of skulduggery could find greener pastures elsewhere. At least, the pay of preachers that was noted in this study would indicate that evangelizing was a poor way to get rich quick.

There are two more considerations not to be overlooked in seeking to evaluate the testimony concerning the morality of preachers. First of all, most of the works investigated during this study were, as has been noticed, written from the viewpoint of the churchman, and certainly his bias would tend to eliminate reports of unbecoming clerical conduct from his productions. Yet, many of the books were written during a period of bitter denominational controversy and surely reports concerning misbehavior among rival ministers might have been included if there were such. The other consideration is a fact that favors the preacher in estimating the truth of

reports of his misconduct. Few ministers in any age have escaped the pain of being misrepresented and slandered. "I was persecuted, slandered, and insulted. . . . I was even accused of passing counterfeit money," wrote John McCullough.[6] Peter Gravis said the Campbellites accused him of neglecting his wife and children.[7] John Anderson was charged, by jealous preachers who would not venture out on the frontier, with not paying his debts;[8] and when he married, the story was circulated that he had a wife and two children elsewhere, which caused a mob to form, from which he was saved by his own quick action in facing down the man who started the rumor.[9] Things like this moved the aging Zenos Morrell to tell the Baylor students, "Young brethren, we old worn out preachers have had all kinds of lies told on us. . . ."[10] In addition to actual calumny, there is always the possibility that some injurious first impressions or snap judgments of preachers may have not been corrected and continued to malign the character of the profession. John Anderson recalls several typical remarks illustrating this point:

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[6]McCullough, op. cit., p. 36.

[7]Gravis, op. cit., p. 14.

[8]Anderson, op. cit., pp. 132-141.

[9]Ibid., pp. 96-99.

[10]Ibid., p. 100.

> Well, when I first saw that man I knew he was a rotten chicken, a bad egg, if he does claim to be a preacher. . . . When you see one of those fellows so polite and always smiling, you can just count on it he's no good.[11] He certainly has preached some fine sermons, but that man is certainly a refugee from justice, because if he was alright some city church would call him and pay him a good salary, but he is certainly a bad man or he would not be out here preaching to these poor people who are able to pay but little.[12]

The preachers could not please everyone, evidently.

Exception or not, there were rascal preachers on the Texas frontier. The study did not catch up with many of them, but a good many times their footprints were around and sometimes fairly fresh. The first hint encountered was the Catholic Bayard's assertion that the citizens of Texas about 1837 were complaining that self-licensed preachers of every cult were roaming the West, "pillaging the remains of the pre-revolution church."[13] Of course, self-licensing would certainly not imply that a minister was a fraud, for a man might with complete sincerity set out to preach righteousness without the sanction of any religious organization. Jesus himself did not have his papers, and certainly several religious bodies, whose representatives were on the frontier, practised what almost amounted to self-licensing, yet the quotation infers that all was not on the level among the preachers. In May of the same

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[11] Ibid., p. 99.

[12] Ibid., pp. 130-131.

[13] Bayard, op. cit., p. 18.

year,

> a "Committee of Vigilence" was organized . . . to prevent impostors from securing the confidence of the people, in the exercise of ministerial functions. . . . After this no minister was recognized by any of us until he exhibited unmistakable credentials of authority from his denomination. The effect was very beneficial to the cause of religion in the republic. . . . An impostor, a short time before, came to the town of Washington, in my absence, and preached under Baptist colors. He represented himself as sadly in need of pecuniary assistance. Some person kindly circulated a subscription which procured the amount of funds called for. He was soon seen at the grocery [meal and hominy were not the only forms of corn at these early groceries] and then on the race-track, as one of the standard bearers of that immense number of sportsmen that gathered about the town of Washington.[14]

Some time later, the same writer refers to an impostor who "had thrown us into some confusion."[15] Zenos Morrell was a stanch Baptist, however, and his idea of an impostor included any preacher claiming to be a Baptist who did not preach the commonly accepted Baptist doctrine. He greatly feared these preachers leaning toward what he called "Campbellism" and once had to hasten to a congregation whose preacher, T. W. Cox, had tendencies in that direction. Luckily for the Baptists, Morrell got there before Cox got the majority vote of the congregation. Cox, though, may have actually been the scoundrel Morrell thought he was, for he states that Cox had been guilty of fraud in Alabama and of lying three times during the trial.[16]

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[14] Morrell, op. cit., p. 74.

[15] Ibid., p. 280.

[16] Ibid., pp. 144-147.

That knaves were present during this era is further attested by Martin Ruter, one of the earliest Methodist missionaries in Texas.

> The immoralities of some that have come here, professing to be ministers of Christ, have created prejudices, and caused some of the people to act cautiously toward preachers of the gospel. But it is a remarkable fact that impostors in this community are very soon known, and persons of good standing in their own country are very soon duly estimated.[17]

Another writer affirmed virtually the same thing.[18]

One of the worst cases encountered concerned a Baptist preacher named Stovall, a man of superior literary attainment and a very fine preacher. When reports came in to the effect that he drank and gave himself over to passion he was denied the right to preach. He went on to San Antonio, kept up his waywardness and finally paid the penalty for murder on a gallows in New Orleans.[19] Another preacher was charged with being assessory to murder,[20] and Isaac Reed (who earlier was mentioned because he allowed Catholic oppression to keep him from preaching) late in life was driven to drink, and

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[17]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 183.

[18]Carroll, op. cit., p. 193.

[19]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

[20]Ibid., p. 200.

> in his struggles with John Barleycorn, was wallowed like a brute in the streets. With all his education, he walked through the town in his frenzy, and, in the presence of the people, imagined himself a steam engine to the great amusement of the wicked, and to the great mortification and discouragement of the few pious souls. . . ,[21]

as well we can imagine. Two more of the ministers who labored in Texas during the earlier and harder years got into trouble in later years. William Medford fell into disrepute "due to some unnamed improper conduct" but was in large measure exonerated before his death,[22] and Robert Green became a moral wreck because of family troubles.[23] The journal of one of the early Baptist preachers contains an account of a preacher whose influence would never be for good, for,

> when this man preaches, drunkards, blacklegs and the vile of every description are sure to attend. During the service they will applaud by clapping their hands and stamping with their feet, and at the conclusion will take him by the arm and proceed to the grogshop, where they are accustomed to treat him. At the meeting of the last Congress, amongst the different individuals proposed as chaplains, an infidel proposed this man, as he said, because he was more liberal than most ministers. Said the infidel, "My minister will eat with us, and talk with us, and get drunk with us."[24]

There were two practises on the moral borderline that were indulged in by preachers. The first, land speculation,

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[21] Ibid., p. 201.

[22] Phelan, op. cit., p. 40.

[23] Carroll, op. cit., p. 113.

[24] Ibid., pp. 154-155.

has already been referred to. No outright examples of this enterprise were found but it is certain from the references cited that speculation took place. The evangelists guilty of such, of course, could argue that buying and selling of real estate is an honorable business, and probably many of them avoided the excesses of such activity. The ethical problem involved in the second operation, the branding of mavericks, is by no means solved. Even with our present knowledge of genetics, the parentage of a given individual is hard, or even impossible, to determine exactly, so how could a scientifically unequipped frontiersman be able to tell whether a calf belonged to the cow he was following, or to determine how far an unbranded yearling would have to be from a cow in order to be classified as an orphan? Two examples of preacher's mavericking were encountered. One writer tells of a certain Bill Taylor who took to preaching and branding mavericks during the Civil War when most of the men were away and herds were left unattended.[25] The other example is too good to fail to repeat, and probably too good to be true, since the old preacher often told it on himself:

> I remember a story told on an old vinegaroon preacher, one of those old fellow who branded mavericks during the week, or hired it done, and preached on Sunday to pay for it. As some of the boys put it, he had to do something to

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[25]Brown, op. cit., p. 127.

> square accounts with the Lord. He was a great stickler for water. One Sunday while preaching on the subject of baptism, he related what some Methodist brother had to say about the work of John the Baptist at Jordan. He became very much exercised over it. The brother had said that maybe John had a long handled dipper with which he dipped the water out of Jordan and poured it on the people. The old preacher called out in stentorian tones (and he had a voice like a Spanish burro), "How long was that dipper handle?" After a pause, "How long was that dipper handle?" after a longer pause in louder tones than before, he called out again, "How long was the dipper handle I say?" An old lady of the Methodist persuasion rose to her feet and pointing a fat, chubby finger at the preacher said: "About as long as your branding iron handle you branded my calves with, parson."
>
> The old fellow stood rooted to the spot for a moment and then said, "Let us pray."[26]

Besides the case mentioned by Morrell and quoted earlier in this chapter, only one case of outright dishonesty among preachers on the frontier was found. When John Brown was seeking lodging at the home of a Scotch settler,

> I told him that I was a Presbyterian minister, and a Scotch one at that; but the crushing response was: "Then gae wa aboot yer business, and may the muckle de'il catch you, for the last preacher wha was here stole my Bible."[27]

Later Brown gained admittance when he told him he was a Free Mason.

At least one preacher testifies that when he went back behind the frontier he crossed the trails of fraudulent ministers.

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[26] James, op. cit., p. 75.

[27] Brown, op. cit., p. 157.

He wrote:

> Brother-----went over the country here and raised one hundred and seventy-five dollars to go to China as a missionary, but never went; but instead bought a fine suit of clothes and married and quit preaching. Also another brother went to the different churches here and raised quite a sum to aid him to go to the frontier of Texas to preach to the people there. He also got married and never went to the frontier to preach.[28]

These two stories sound about like those we expect to hear about the frontier preacher, but on the frontier of Texas pickings were too slim, and justice inclined to be too quick to attract the sharp character. In a well ordered state a man might swindle others of a few dollars apiece and none would want to be involved in the expense of a lawsuit against him, but on the Texas frontier accounts could be settled by other means even more discouraging to the swindler. Factual basis for the belief that there was any great number of rascal preachers on the Texas frontier was not found in this research.

The use of physical force has never been considered in the province of the clergyman by most people, and many can argue convincing that the gospel of Jesus Christ leaves no room for the use of violence. Hence the incongruity of a preacher's fighting with fists or weapons while trying to spread the news of peace

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[28a] Anderson, op. cit., p. 112.

on earth attracts attention, and the "fighting parson" has emerged as a very interesting character. Among the Texas frontier preachers, the man who did not carry arms, at least upon occasion, was seldom found, and the one who would not fight in self-defense or defense of his people, or the right to preach was a rare, rare, specimen. The average frontier minister of Texas was a fighting parson, in that he was willing to fight if the need arose, a good many did some actual fighting, and the few that acquired the reputation of being "fighting parsons" could almost be accused of going about looking for a fight. The following paragraphs will review and illustrate some of the attitudes and actions found among the preachers studied.

To begin with, the frontier was a hard place, and violence was common enough to destroy the repulsion to it that can be found among people living sheltered lives. Illustrating the attitude toward murder that could develop in a frontiersman is the remark of an old Methodist preacher, J. W. Shook, upon viewing the victim of a killing. James Cranfill reported:

> Shook looked up into my face. I expected him to say, "Great pity, wasn't it?" or some such remark as that, but he didn't. He raised his hat a little, and looking up from under the brim, he said, "Fine shot, wasn't it?"[29]

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[29] Chronicle, pp. 300-301.

In addition to the callousness toward bloodshed that was the result of living on the frontier, many, and probably most of the ministers assumed that physical force was an absolute necessity under some conditions. The following quotation from the "fightin'est" of the parsons, A. J. Potter, expresses the feeling well:

> When I embraced religion and joined the Church, I felt it a duty to use the necessary means to preserve and protect my body as well as my soul. . . . We cannot fight spiritual foes with temporal weapons, neither can we war against our earthly enemies with spiritual instrumentalities. We cannot attack Satan with a Winchester gun, nor are faith and prayer the divinely-appointed implements to be used in a contest with Indians and desperados. . . . It is no evidence of a preacher's want of trust in God when he carries a gun to shield his life in the time of peril. It would be most sinful presumption not to do so. Indeed, I do not carry a gun because I am <u>afraid to die</u>, but because it is a <u>duty to use means to preserve life</u>. It is not a sin to resort to a doctor's skill or the virtue of medicine to prevent or cure disease; nor do lightning-rods on homes and churches argue a distrust in Providence, but are <u>means of security</u>.[30]

Without investigating the soundness of scripturality of his reasoning we accept this statement as an explanation of the preacher's justification for his bearing arms. Certainly it is to be admitted that it was a lot safer to have weapons handy, for these were perilous times. Morrell tells us that even his eleven and thirteen year olds sons were expected to bear arms and stand ready to ward off Indian attacks.[31] Churchgoers sat with their

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[30]Graves, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 247.

[31]Morrell, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 52.

guns on their knees, and once during a service an infidel was killed by Indians less than 200 yards away.[32] W. J. Joyce relates that 200 miles of his circuit lay in Indian country, so that he was obliged to carry pistols and shot-gun and to ride without sleeping as much as he could.

> I remember one time I rode up as near as I could to some buzzards perched on an old tree; slipped off my horse, lay down on the flat of me back (I am an Irishman you know) with the bridle rein in one hand, so that my horse could graze a little and my pistol in the other so that I could arise fighting if the Indians should happen to come that way and frighten the birds to flight--the noise made by them would wake me up for flight or fight.[33]

Robert Alexander wrote in to the Texas Christian Advocate that,

> On some parts of my work I not only carried a brace of pistols but a double-barrel shot gun, and sought company of others well armed. It was deemed prudent to carry fire arms on our disturbed and dangerous frontier, and not to do so would have been considered rash.[34]

Yet in this same article he declared that he did not carry his arms to the pulpit. The elder Cranfill would lay his guns by his Bible as he preached,[35] and Peter Gravis spoke to an attentive audience with two revolvers buckled to his person and a gun within reach, "that the hardy frontiersman might have the gospel,"[36] yet he admitted that he had never heard of a person being molested by Indians while at church.

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[32] Ibid., pp. 151-152.

[33] Joyce, op. cit., p. 35.

[34] Lide, op. cit., p. 63.

[35] Cranfill, op. cit., p. 97.

[36] Gravis, op. cit., p. 40.

Whereas the examples of parsons carrying weapons could be multiplied, it is not to be supposed that all did. A pre-Texas frontier preacher testifies that the circuit riders in his day did not carry rifle or axe,[37] and some ministers of this caliber entered Texas. Oddly enough, they got along just as well, with just as low a mortality rate as the more warlike brethren, once they indicated that they were courageous. Notable among these ministers was Martin Ruter, a trail-blazer for the Methodists who entered Texas at a time when outlaws were everywhere and the Indians were a constant menace. He wrote back:

> Those who go at this time into that part of Texas generally go in companies of five, six or more, armed with pistols or rifles on account of the Indians; but whether in company or alone, I carry no weapons made with hands.[38]

Hard work, rather than Indians, finally accounted for this good doctor. Another one of the pacifists was Daniel Baker. On one occasion, in preparing to go from San Antonio to Austin, and having heard of the raids and murders by the Indians, he did borrow a gun, but then considering his lack of training in its use, he returned it and chose to go unarmed,[39] a feat not as dangerous as might at first be supposed, since the long-

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[37]Milburn, Rifle, Axe and Saddlebag, p. 56.

[38]Phelan, op. cit., p. 83.

[39]William Baker, op. cit., p. 348.

legged eastern horses of the preachers could usually outdistance the Indian ponies. He relates an interesting story illustrating the respect men generally have for unarmed courage.

> "As I was riding last week across the prairie to an appointment," said a preacher to the writer, "I saw a Comanche, feathered and painted, coming right down upon me, fast as his horse would travel, lance in rest. I had nothing but an old umbrella; so I committed my soul to God, and rode steadily on, looking right in his face. He came full speed down upon me; but just as his lance was at my breast, he turned it aside and rode on, without drawing rein. I never looked behind, but blessed the Lord, and rode on to my appointment."[40]

Probably he left behind a pretty confused Indian.

The Indian was seemingly the chief means of bringing out the Mars in the preacher. A. J. Potter's bishop once asked him, "Brother Potter, what do you do with that scripture which says the weapons of our warfare are not carnal?" To which a colleague of Potter's replied, "There were no Indians when that was written."[41] Potter was so effective in fighting Indians and robbers that he was given a Winchester rifle as a token of appreciation from the citizenry.[42] Some preachers would fight only in self-defense. Among these was Zenos Morrell who

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[40] Ibid., p. 411.

[41] Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, p. 235.

[42] Ibid., p. 236.

refused to shoot retreating Indians[43] and befriended an Indian boy whom he could have killed. Later, because of his gratitude to Morrell, the boy saved a whole camp of white men.[44] Yet the idea of self-defense was soon stretched to include retributive warfare against the Indians, and even to going on campaigns against them, for this action could be considered anticipatory self-defense. Morrell quickly took up arms and joined the party pursuing some Indians who had murdered two men within sight of the worshippers.[45] He mentions that three Baptist preachers were in one Indian fight.[46] The Methodist John Denton led a charge on an Indian village, and later died leading men into an ambush, against his better judgment, because someone had inferred that he was afraid.[47] R. O. Watkins, a Cumberland Presbyterian, had temporarily to give up regular preaching to join the rangers and protect the people from the Indians.[48] Once he and one other man found themselves within an Indian camp, so they yelled "Charge!

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[43]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

[44]Ibid., pp. 103-105.

[45]Ibid., p. 69.

[46]Ibid., p. 131.

[47]Allen, op. cit., pp. 134-140.

[48]Campbell, op. cit., p. 32.

Charge!" and rode to safety through the scattering Indians.[48] My notes show that at least six other preachers were actively, effectively, and some regularly, engaged in Indian warfare.[50] None were more active at this game, however, than A. J. Potter, who was known to go out of his way to attack Indians if he had a chance.[51]

Service in the country's army was another warlike activity that the average Texas frontier preacher did not avoid. Although Z. N. Morrell disapproved of M. V. Smith's entering the Confederate Army, it was probably because he was forsaking his preaching rather than because he was entering military service, for Morrell himself had aided in the Texas revolution and served in the army during the Mexican War, and urged the pursuit of General Woll when his son had been captured. He did admit, when his troup was setting out to engage the enemy on Sunday, "My position . . . gave me some anxiety."[52] R. E. B. Baylor was also active in this war.[53] Before this time Freeman Smalley had fought in the War of 1812,[54] and Daniel

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[48] Ibid., p. 34.

[50] Gravis, op. cit., pp. 16, 32, 33, 38, 41; Thrall, op. cit., p. 62; Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 52.

[51] Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 242, 278-279.

[52] Morrell, op. cit., pp. 168-178.

[53] Burleson, op. cit., p. 692.

[54] Carroll, op. cit., p. 24.

Baker had tried to.[55] In Ambrosio de Letinez, an 1842 publication, A. T. Myrth says that two Baptist preachers died with Fannin at Goliad, leading in prayer.[56] At least one other Baptist,[57] two Methodists,[58] and a Cumberland Presbyterian[59] fought in the Texas Revolution.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, few frontier preachers of military age escaped duty in the Army, nor did they want to, apparently. Peter Gravis reports:

> The preachers caught the spirit and entered the army as generals, colonels, and captains and some as chaplains. . . . It became necessary for a man to either join the Confederate Army, or, if he was for the Union, to leave the state, or to be ambushed and hung as an enemy to the South. . . .At this conference 1862 the preachers made war speeches and talked of killing men as though they were beasts of prey.[60]

The outcome was, that Gravis joined up like most of the others. The attitude of many was probably expressed by John Wesley Bowden,

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[55] William Baker, op. cit., p. 63.

[56] Carroll, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

[57] Ibid., p122.

[58] Phelan, op. cit., p. 65.

[59] Morrell, op. cit., p. 82.

[60] Gravis, op. cit., p. 20.

> If I killed anyone I did not know it. I shot a good many bullets at the enemy, and if I did kill anyone, it was not murder, according to my understandings of things.[61]

At any rate, to be conscientiously opposed to participation in warfare was not typical of the Texas frontier preacher.

Ethically closely akin to fighting in the army is the administration of punishment for criminal acts. The frontier preacher was active here, also. One "fighting parson" dismissed services to take a rifle and go after sheep thieves;[62] another led the horse out from under a thief, leaving him dangling by his neck.[63] A Methodist, James Gill, was one of the Regulators who would deal out forty stripes save one with a hickory stick to law breakers,[64] and Y. H. Hamilton horsewhipped a man for insulting an aged preacher by leading him about by his grey beard.[65] A Baptist preacher took such an active, shooting part in the fight against the wire cutters that he broke up the habit in those parts.[66]

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[61] Autobiography and Else, p. 23.

[62] J. M. Pollock, The Unvarnished West, p. 235 ff.

[63] Brown, op. cit., p. 142.

[64] Phelan, op. cit., p. 141.

[65] Campbell, op. cit., pp. 146-148.

[66] Featherston, A Pioneer Speaks, p. 81.

The frontier preachers seemed to feel that the action of Jesus in cleansing the temple was sufficient to justify the use of force to enable them to preach their message. At least, on many occasions they demonstrated a willingness to fight for the right to preach, although violence had to be resorted to few times. Zenos Morrell tells of a time when a meeting was being held in a billiard hall, and the hecklers stationed a man with a squalling chicken just behind the preacher's stand, and had a score of fellows to shout "Amen and Amen" whenever a big negro would stick his head in through the window and shout, "Glory to God!" Morrell, his bosom heaving with "holy indignation," took a place by the window, and the second time the head came in, he struck it with a buckhorn-headed walking stick just above the eye, "making a scar that he carried to his grave." The preacher afterward made an appeal to the citizens, and the next day they passed a resolution that such rowdyism must cease, and it did.[67] Andrew Jackson Potter once went into a town that had a very bad reputation of running preachers off, and as he prepared to preach, an armed party entered the audience. He announced that he had come there prepared to both preach and fight, but he wanted to preach first and would be willing to fight later. "He then proceeded to read, and sing, and pray, and preach, no one disturbing him in the least, and

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[67]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 82-85.

perfect good order reigning throughout the entire service." Afterwards, he challenged anyone in the crowd to fight, but he had already won over the opposition. The would-be preacher chasers became his friends.[68] When a similar situation presented itself to Y. H. Hamilton he dared the young fellows to come in and sit on the front seat and listen to him preach a sermon. When they took his dare, he pulled his six-shooter and held it on them until he finished preaching, and at the singing of "Amazing Grace," the penitent youths were the first to the mourners' bench. They were "converted" and became part of the preacher's bodyguard.[69] The father of Governor James Ferguson was preaching when some wild young men planned to "get religion" and hug the girls. He heard of the plan and knelt by the ringleader, patting him so hard on the back that the breath was knocked out and the boy had to leave. He gave the preacher a hat the next day.[70] Several tales are told on the giant Robert Alexander, who was able to preach to gamblers in their own saloon without having any disturbance,[71] and who offered to thrash the man who broke up his meeting by blowing a steerhorn when the preacher sang the hymn, "Blow Ye the

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[68]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 186-187.

[69]Campbell, op. cit., p. 148.

[70]Phelan, Expansion of Methodism in Texas, pp. 173-174.

[71]J. K. Holland, "Reminiscences of Austin and Old Washington," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, I (October, 1897), 92-95.

Trumpet."[72] Although this man preached in some of the roughest places, there is no record of personal violence ever being attempted against him.[73] The survey of these examples indicates that if the minister was willing to fight for his right to preach, the trouble makers could be won over to his side. The Texan wanted to prove the sincerity of his preachers.

The man who earned the name of "fighting parson," though, did not limit his combatting to Indians, war, or the strivings for the right to preach; he went through life finding wrongs that needed righting by fists or guns. One preacher whipped a lawyer for prolonging a stolen cow case until the fees exceeded the price of the cow.[74] Andrew Jackson Potter thrashed a man for insulting a woman,[75] another for abusing his daughter-in-law,[76] a third for not remaining quiet during a negro's lecture. He disarmed a man he thought was planning to rob him,[77] made the company bully admit he was a coward,[78]

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[72]Wallis and Hill, op. cit., p. 53.

[73]Lide, op. cit., p. 116.

[74]Brown, op. cit., p. 150.

[75]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 296-298.

[76]Ibid., p. 123.

[77]Ibid., pp. 193-194.

[78]Ibid., pp. 126-128.

and slapped an editor, threatening to throw his press into the river, for slandering his regiment.[79] All this was in addition to his Indian and bandit fighting, and the innumerable times he demonstrated his willingness to fight. He was a real "fighting parson." Perhaps others would have been more belligerent had they been in his circumstances, or were as quick to feel or imagine offense, for Benejah Carroll once said that no one could call him a liar and live,[80] and Rufus Burleson reports stopping a duel between a preacher and drummer,[81] which indicates that there was another preacher willing to fight over a personal offense. Generally, however, the Texas frontier preacher, quick to fight as he was in a community endeavor, was not soon driven to his weapons by personal abuse, but even in this sphere, he had his limits. The attitude of most of the preachers is probably pretty well expressed in the following anecdote, which closes the discussion of the "Fighting Parson."

> The question was raised as to how much it was a christian [sic] man's duty to bear from the wicked without resistance. I remember asking him [William Mulkey] the question direct: Bro. Mulkey, suppose a wicked fellow should come up to you and say, "Bro. Mulkey, I am going to whip you"--

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[79] Ibid., p. 140.

[80] Nellie Moore, B. H. Carroll and his Educational Values to Texas, p. 1.

[81] Burleson, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

what would you do? To which Bro. Mulkey replied, "I would say to him--'Sir, if the Lord gives me grace I will bear it; but if not, woe be to your hide.'"[82]

[82] Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 186.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE PREACHER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

To specify with accuracy the total of the preacher's contributions to the society in which he lived and its posterity is beyond both the abilities of the writer and the scope of this article. The evaluation attempted in this concluding chapter is limited to a pointing out of some of the ways in which the frontier preacher influenced the growing society in Texas, and the conclusion reached is that if, as it seems to this writer, Texas historians have ignored the part the preacher played in the development of the frontier, or failed to give him considerable attention in their histories of the evolution of an ordered society in that region, their works are not according to the facts. Many historians in other areas of the United States have made the same error. A church historian made the following statement:

> It has only been in recent years, however, that the historian has even begun to give credit to the rude preachers of righteousness on the frontier. Recently American history textbooks have been published in which Cartwright's "Autobiography" and Brunson's "Western Pioneer" have been cited as reading references.[1]

The preachers themselves believed that they deserved more attention than this quotation would indicate they have received, and

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[1]Sweet, The Rise of Methodism in the West, pp. 58-59.

the facts uncovered in this study imply that they are right. A. J. Potter said, concerning the coming of the educational forces to the borderlands, "Usually, we believe, the preacher leads the van; then follow the school and the press."[2] What Theodore Roosevelt so beautifully said concerning the Methodist frontier ministers could very well be applied to all the conscientious pioneer evangelists:

> The whole country is under a debt of gratitude to the Methodist circuit riders, the Methodist pioneer preachers, whose movement westward kept pace with the movement of the frontier, who shared all the hardships of the frontiersman, while at the same time ministering to the frontiersman's spiritual needs and seeing that his pressing material cares and the hard and grinding poverty of his life did not extinguish the divine fire within his soul.[3]

Some of the contributions for which we are indebted to these men will be presented in the following paragraphs. With the realization that the categories overlap, the bequests of the Texas frontier preacher to society will be discussed under the headings of <u>social</u>, <u>religious and moral</u>, <u>educational</u>, <u>and literary</u>.

Not the least important of the preacher's activities in bringing about a better way of life for the frontiersman was his getting the people together in a peaceful gathering. The fact

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[2]Graves, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 11.

[3]Luther Allen Weigle, <u>American Idealism</u>, p. 150.

that often, in the records consulted, the home of one of the settlers was the only available meeting place in the community indicates that there was no force ahead of the preacher on the frontier that demanded the regular assembling of the populace. In some few instances noted, the courthouse preceded the church building as the first community assembly hall, but usually the only real rivals that the church had for this distinction were the saloon and gambling room, and these can hardly be thought of as civilizing forces, although it must be admitted that they exerted a strong influence on Texas society. Then too, these last named institutions were shunned by the gentler of the gentler sex, as were also the political gatherings, so that the religious congregation, except in those seemingly rare instances in which the schoolteacher preceded even the foremost of the frontier preachers, was the earliest meeting in which all the members of the community could be associated, unless we consider the irregular gatherings for quilting, corn husking, log rolling and the like, which seem to have declined or even disappeared as the frontier moved farther west.

Besides getting the people together so that social activity and community spirit could be aroused, the preacher operated as a news-gathering agency, linking the various individuals together, and, if he were an itinerant person, a connection between the different communities with which he was associated.

> There was no local newspaper, and letters were a rarity. There was a craving for news. The preacher served as teacher, newspaper, lecturer, and very often as mail carrier. Before the real service began, the preacher would give the news thus: "Brother Jones lost on last Wednesday night a bay mule with one eye out and a scar on his shoulder." If anything had been found, it was published in the same way.[4]

Because of the contacts that the circuit riding preacher made, he was almost sure to occupy an important place in any gathering that the people might have, and since he was the presider at all religious assemblies, including weddings and funerals, it is obvious that he was no small force in the community. Indicative of the recognition of the preachers' standing is the fact that many entered the Confederate army as officers.[5]

The preacher's sphere of influence was larger than the local community, however. The camp meeting, at which he was the predominant figure, brought the representatives of several neighborhoods together.

> The camp meeting supplied a splendid opportunity for the renewing of old friendship and the making of new ones. For weeks previous to the time set for the meeting to begin, the circuit rider would announce the time and place for the community event at each of his appointments. A

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[4] Lide, op. cit., p. 39.

[5] Gravis, op. cit., p. 20.

few days before the meeting some of the men who lived in the neighborhood would meet to make the necessary preparation.[6]

To deny that a camp meeting was a powerful force working toward the development of an organized society would be foolish, and when it is considered that all of the preachers studied emphasized that orderliness was the rule at all their meetings, the fact becomes even more evident.

The preacher stood for law and order, and according to the records already discussed under "demeanor," "opposition," and "the fighting parson," was usually able to bring it about while he was present. To be especially noted is Z. N. Morrell's statement that after he appealed to the citizens of Washington not to allow the hoodlums of the town to disturb the gatherings and to drive off the preachers, they immediately passed a resolution to that effect, and the preacher stated that in over thirty years' work after that time, he never again encountered such violence.[7] After all, the gospel that the preachers were urging the people to accept teaches the recognition of, and the submission to, established authority, and, as it points out the rights of the individual to freedom, also emphasizes his responsibility to the community.

Closely connected to, and here considered one of, the preacher's social contributions, was his influence in political

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[6]Lide, op. cit., p. 49.

[7]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 82-85.

affairs. It has already been noticed[8] that the earliest evangelists were able to get permission from the commandants and empresarios to hold meetings contrary to law before the revolution. Surely these services influenced some people to realize a desire to sever themselves from Catholic Mexico. The Texas Independence Convention was held in the backsmith shop of the Baptist preacher, N. T. Byars, who became the armourer for the Texas army.[9] A Cumberland Presbyterian minister, Sumner Bacon, supplied thirty-four fifty pound kegs of powder to the revolutionists, for which he was never paid.[10] The size of this donation, $561, was about equal to five years' cash income for many preachers of that period. Several of the Texas evangelists were active during the revolution, but only two more will be mentioned. Zenos Morrell hauled powder and lead for the soldiers at the fort at the Falls of the Brazos,[11] and George W. Slaughter, a pioneer preacher and scout, brought to Sam Houston's headquarters the first news of the Alamo's fall.[12]

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[8]See pp. 96-97.

[9]Carroll, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

[10]Campbell, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

[11]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

[12]Cranfill, From Memory, p. 85.

It is, of course, hard to estimate anyone's influence over politicians, since their success depends upon their appearing to be influenced by as many of their constituents as possible, but several biographers emphasize how the minister of whom they are writing was able to exercise considerable control over public figures. Robert Alexander was said to have been very successful in this field.[13] We can be more sure that the political influence of those frontier preachers who were also lawyers was considerable. John Durst was the county judge of Kimble County for eight years,[14] and R. E. B. Baylor served in a similar capacity,[15] and was also a congressman.[16] Lawyer-preacher John Denton, for whom the town, creek, and county were named, was a great influence in his area during the short time he lived in Texas. However, it must not be supposed that all the cloth-wearing lawyers and judges were successful. Frederick Olmsted reported that the "Bench in _____ County was filled entirely by ministers of the gospel, and men of bigoted piety."[17] They barred drinkers, card players and the like from jury duty. The result was a riot, and after the next election,

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[13]Robert Fitzgerald, Emminent Methodists, p. 151.

[14]Marvin Hunter, "Elder John Durst," Frontier Times, I (March, 1923), 32.

[15]Morrell, op. cit., p. 148.

[16]Burleson, op. cit., p. 162.

[17]Olmsted, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

church members were barred from court. This reference needs to be given due consideration, for it is one of the few that we have from disinterested observers, but it is not enough to outweigh the considerable evidence that the preacher exerted a fairly great social and political influence.

Without attempting the impossible (an accurate evaluation of the moral and religious influence of the frontier preacher on the Texas society) I will point out some of the indications that the pioneer evangelist was not impotent in attempting to mold the character of the Texan. The closing of the dance halls after A. J. Potter preached against the dance has been mentioned.[18] So has Y. H. Hamilton's winning over a gang of young ruffians so that they became his supporters and protectors.[19] If a preacher was not enjoying some success in his efforts against vice, then its exponents would feel no need for opposing him, but it has been shown that many times they did. Concerning the coming of the first Episcopalian preacher to Matagorda in 1838, his funeral eulogist said, "His advent into the place was soon marked by a marked change in the tone of society and manners and morals of the people."[20]

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[18]See p. 104.

[19]See p. 136.

[20]Murphy, op. cit., p. 3.

Naturally, in considering the accuracy of this statement, some allowance must be made for the occasion on which it was made. The very fact, however, that a governor spoke at the funeral of Zenos Morrell[21] would indicate that the man was not a complete failure. That Texas was the only southern state with a prohibitory law in 1855[22] is even surer evidence of the power of the pioneer clergyman.

Success was not always achieved, by any means. Morrell himself admits to having converted no one during his first two years in Texas,[23] and states that young men would attend the prayer meeting, behave and sing well, and then go out to drink and gamble,[24] and Daniel Baker spoke at a meeting that was arranged entirely by a liquor seller.[25] This must have been quite discouraging to teetotaler Daniel.

The most convincing proof of the preacher's potency, however, lies in the examination of the church records of the frontier period. The records of all the religious bodies were not consulted, but a few facts from the Baptist and Methodist reports will indicate the reception that the frontier preacher

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[21]Morrell, op. cit., p. 414.

[22]Weigle, op. cit., p. 175.

[23]Morrell, op. cit., p. 90.

[24]Ibid., p. 76.

[25]William Baker, op. cit., p. 355.

received, and the things he accomplished. Texas was in dire need of preaching and responded with enthusiasm to the minister's efforts.[26] In 1837 there were no churches and few preachers in Texas; while in 1848 there were 328 churches, and among the Methodists alone, seventy-seven traveling and ninety-two local preachers.[27] The same denomination in 1855 listed 19,864 members and 398 preachers.[28] Within five weeks after entering Texas, one Methodist missionary had organized the San Augustine circuit, held his first Quarterly Conference in connection with a camp meeting, and licensed two men to exhort, both of them afterwards became traveling preachers. He left these two in charge, and hurried on to Austin where he held another camp meeting and organized the Washington circuit.[29] It is said that Orceneth Fisher had 2,400 members added to the Methodist church during his fourteen years in Texas.[30] Littleton Fowler was successful in securing deeds for churches in many places the first year, and once, within two weeks after entering a town, had obtained the deed to a lot, raised $3500, appointed trustees,

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[26]Held, Religion a Factor in Building Texas, pp. 101, 106-108.

[27]Lide, op. cit., p. 71.

[28]Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1855, p. 90.

[29]Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 146.

[30]Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. IV,

and arranged a written contract to have a building finished within a year.[31] These quotations indicate other successes:

> In 1840, we note that the vast coast country through which Jesse Hord had splashed on horseback the year before, is now divided into five appointments--Matagorda, Brazoria, Victoria, Houston, and Galveston.[32]

> And the rapidity with which the work had advanced in Texas it is worthwhile to recall--a Texas mission circuit first officially appearing in the records in 1837; a Texas district in 1838; two districts in 1839; and an Annual Conference in 1840. Whether a parallel in development--from a circuit to an Annual Conference in four years--can be found in our history is doubtful.[33]

Wonderful results were not unknown even on the west Texas frontier. Many years after the times referred to in the quotation above, Peter Gravis reported seventy-five conversions and ninety accessions to the church during his first year on a sparsely settled frontier circuit.[34]

The Baptist preachers reported successes also. N. T. Byars "was largely instrumental in organizing three associations, covering at that time all Western Texas and sixty churches."[35] Another preacher of that denomination writes of the response that

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[31]Woolworth, op. cit., pp. 4, 5, 21.

[32]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, p. 132.

[33]Ibid., p. 149.

[34]Gravis, op. cit., p. 15.

[35]Burleson, op. cit., p. 696.

he had had in Houston in 1842--an able lawyer prostrate in the dust, infidels wavering, everyone interested.[36] One Baptist historian also recalls a revival that same year in Montgomery County at which 600 people were present.[37]

When all these facts are considered together, along with the preacher's activity in establishing schools and publishing papers (to be discussed later) it becomes evident that the frontier preacher was far from powerless in influencing the moral and religious views of his hearers. It may well be that his work is the elementary cause for the large portions of Texas having strict prohibitory laws, and for the prevalence of orthodox and fundamental religious views in this state at the present time.

The educational contributions of the frontier preacher to be mentioned here are four: school teaching, establishment of schools, book distribution, and singing instruction. Little more than mere mention can be made of this last, although it constituted a precious endowment from the parson to the frontiersman. The former brought with him his hymn book; many of the evangelists were said to have had good voices; and it is probable that he was the first to introduce any music other than the folk ballads and fiddle tunes in many places. He taught the people to sing wherever he went, and this must have been a valuable

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[36]Carroll, op. cit., p. 192.

[37]Ibid., p. 191.

service to the borderer who had so few opportunities to enjoy the elevating effects of music.

Many, if not most, of the frontier preachers in Texas were book agents or carried some books with them. Several were primarily book agents and secondarily preachers when they entered Texas.[38] The land which they entered was destitute of books. Sumner Bacon stated that the ratio of families without Bibles was nine to one in the Nacogdoches area, and worse farther west.[39] David Ayres was moved to give his Bibles away, so great was the need.[40] As a Bible agent, John De Vilbiss, in ten and a half months, had

> traveled over 3500 miles, delivered 148 addresses and preached 76 sermons; visited thirty-six counties, and nine of these twice; collected $2,416.20; written 216 letters; and sent out 112 printed documents; ordered $10,000 worth of Bibles and testaments; organized and revised forty-three societies, and nine Bible committees. . . .[41]

Since the cost of a Bible at that time was forty-five cents,[42] it is evident that this man had succeeded in putting a literary masterpiece in the hands of many people who had had no book before.

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[38]Campbell, op. cit., pp. 17-18; Lide, op. cit., p. 15; Graves, John Wesley De Vilbiss, p. 75.

[39]Campbell, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

[40]Lide, op. cit., p. 15.

[41]Graves, op. cit., p. 75.

The preacher undoubtedly, in his capacity as book distributor, provided the beginning of an education for numerous frontiersmen, and opened the door before him to the world of books.

It has already been shown that most of the frontier preachers were relatively well-educated men,[43] and that many of them taught school in order to support themselves.[44] Their school teaching was sometimes about the earliest in the area. As early as 1833 William Medford was teaching school at Chappell Hill in a log hut.[45] The influence of the teaching preacher over the children in his charge five days a week during the formative years of this state must not be overlooked.

Besides teaching in weekday secular schools, the minister, as might be expected, organized and taught Sunday Schools, with books and other printed material amounting to quite a library supplied from the States in the earlier days.[46] Virtually all the religious bodies, including some of the Primitive Baptist and Disciples of Christ groups, had recognized the value of instruction to children by the time that Texas was being settled, and many of them were organizing Sunday School unions on a

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[43]See pp. 50-61.

[44]See p. 39.

[45]Phelan, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

[46]William Baker, op. cit., p. 336; Lide, op. cit., p. 47.

national scale, with standardized instruction. The frontier preacher who worked in this field was contributing materially to the education of the pioneer.

The pioneer evangelist was not only a school teacher but a school builder and college founder as well. The various church histories have done the tedious task of tracing the establishment and growth, and in some cases, the decline and fall, of their numerous colleges in Texas, and it is not the purpose of this article to repeat these statistics. I merely point out that among the most energetic of the school promoters were some of the frontier preachers who led the van. The earliest Methodist missionaries had as one of their goals the establishment of a college, and it became a reality only three years after they entered Texas, when in 1840 Rutersville College, the first Protestant college in Texas, was opened.[47] The same denomination had established five more colleges by 1852,[48] and most of the preachers connected with them could be considered frontier parsons. The Baptists were not far behind, for in 1840, as soon as the first association was formed, an "Education Society" was set up,[49] and the wheels that brought Baylor University into being began to turn. Among the foremost promoters of this school was a

[47]Held, op. cit., p. 63.

[48]Loc. cit.

[49]Morrell, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

frontiersman, James Huckins.[50] Two of the earliest Presbyterian missionaries, Daniel Baker and Hugh Wilson, worked together in the founding of Austin College.[51] More examples could be found, but these are sufficient to indicate the contribution to the educational program of this state that its pioneer preachers made in urging and working for the establishment of institutions of higher learning in Texas. Texas was reaping the benefit of a trend among all religious bodies to the development of educational facilities, a benefit that the earlier frontiers did not receive.

Three literary contributions of the Texas frontier preacher will be pointed out in the next few paragraphs: his oratory, his work with periodicals, and his books. Since his distribution of books has already been mentioned under another heading, it will be ignored here.

In the areas on the extreme frontier where schools and books were scarce or nonexistent, it is quite possible that the preacher's sermons and conversations were a considerable contribution to the literary life of the community. It has been shown that in Texas the frontier preacher was a relatively well-educated man,[52] and that his sermons were more apt to be logical,

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[50] Ibid., p. 137.

[51] William Baker, op. cit., pp. 394, 416; Cunningham, op. cit., p. 82.

[52] See pp. 50-61.

clearly expressed and grammatical than those of preachers on earlier frontiers.[53] In addition, numerous references were found that indicate that the frontier evangelist in Texas was by no means behind his colleagues in the settled areas in oratorical powers, but that probably he was somewhat superior in this field.[54] Effective oratory, that is, the type that stimulates the audience to action, generally requires a somewhat dramatic arrangement of material, a certain amount of rhythm or poetry in the delivery, and a fair display of rhetoric. Certainly, also, some of these preachers could embellish their sermons with references from the classics of Greece, Rome and England. These men were probably the most voluble representatives of the world of letters that the frontier possessed. The sermons of the frontier preacher in Texas were, perhaps, more than once the first introduction that many of the pioneers had to the field of literature and rhetoric.

A second literary contribution of the pioneering parson in Texas was his work in publishing periodicals, and in writing for and distributing the existing church papers. The investigation of these periodicals was not a part of this study, but the following facts were encountered that indicate something of the

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[53]See pp. 40-41.

[54]Graves, Andrew Jackson Potter, pp. 320-321; 330; Morrell, op. cit., pp. 135, 259; Deems, Annals of Southern Methodism, 1855, p. 361; Burleson, op. cit., pp. 608, 609, 672, 677, 690, 701; Woolworth, op. cit., p. 1.

preacher's activity in this field. The Cumberland Presbyterians led the way by bringing out a large four page weekly at Victoria, Texas, in 1846.[55] It was edited and published by A. J. McGown, one of the foremost of their pioneering preachers. "McGown and his paper received strong commendations from members of other churches, from old soldiers of San Jacinto, and from authors of stately volumes."[56]

The Methodist frontier preachers of this period were also eager that their denomination should have a paper, and in 1847 Orceneth Fisher, Homer Thrall and others were able to finance the publication of a combination church and secular periodical, The Texas Christian Advocate and Brenham Advertiser, edited by R. S. Wells the first year, and by his father-in-law, Orceneth Fisher, in 1848, when the last half of the name was dropped.[57] That same year it was taken over by the denomination and renamed The Texas Wesleyan Banner.[58] However, in The Annals of Southern Methodism for 1855, there is mention of a Texas Christian Advocate that had twenty-five hundred subscribers.[59] Whether this was the same paper or not I have not discovered, but in any case, it is certain that the efforts of these pioneer preachers

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[55]McDonnold, History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, p. 60.

[56]Ibid., p. 602.

[57]Phelan, Early Methodism in Texas, pp. 308-309.

[58]Loc. cit.

[59]P. 360.

in publishing had some impact upon the community.

The Baptist and Presbyterian pioneers depended largely on the existing out-of-state publications before the Civil War. In 1840, the Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, of Louisville, Kentucky, gave the Texas Baptists one column, which was edited by James Huckins, a true frontier preacher.[60] This paper was distributed by Texas preachers. In 1847 the Baptist associations recommended the Southwestern Baptist, published in New Orleans,[61] and in 1855 the Texas Baptist came into being.[62] This same year the Presbyterians asked one J. P. Wilson, who was privately publishing The Panopolist and Presbyterian of Texas, to produce an official organ for them, but the suggestion came to naught.[63] Out-of-state periodicals received their official recommendation until 1875 when the Texas Presbyterian (the paper that was started by A. J. McGown for the Cumberland Presbyterians in 1847) passed into their hands.[64]

Among the other religious groups whose preachers were studied, the Disciples of Christ seem to have been most active

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[60] Carroll, op. cit., p. 273.

[61] Ibid., p. 278.

[62] Ibid., p. 280.

[63] W. S. Red, History of the Presbyterian Church in Texas, p. 100.

[64] Ibid., p. 127.

in the publishing field. The Episcopalians had no Texas periodical before 1906,[65] and nothing concerning early Lutheran publications was encountered. Carroll Kendrick, an early preacher for the Disciples, was publishing The Philanthropist in 1855,[66] and perhaps put out a paper called The Christian Messenger in 1861.[67] B. F. Hall started to publish The Christian Banner in 1860, but it is not certain that he succeeded.[68] The Christian Preacher, Christian Messenger, Olive Branch, Texas Christian, Christian Courier, and the Firm Foundation were all started in the seventies and eighties,[69] and the last two continue until today. Pioneer preachers were active both in publishing and writing for these and other periodicals, and produced a considerable body of written matter for consumption on the Texas frontier.

The last contribution of the Texas frontier preacher to be considered is his book writing. Although no attempt was made to count the number of productions, my impression is that the frontier preachers wrote more than any other type of frontiersman in Texas. It is naturally to be expected that the professional classes would be more likely to attempt to record their

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[65]Murphy, op. cit., p. 91.

[66]Claude E. Spenser, comp., Periodicals of the Disciples of Christ and Related Religious Groups, p. 112.

[67]Ibid., p. 36.

[68]Ibid., p. 24.

[69]Ibid., pp. 27-129.

experiences than those whose educational advantages were not so great, but the preacher seems to surpass the lawyer, doctor and schoolteacher in the production of memoirs and other books. One possible explanation is that he was more likely to be able to get his works published than other professional men, since some of the religious groups maintained publishing houses that would be interested in the writings of their ministers, and many of the preachers themselves, or their friends in the ministry, were connected with printing and publishing concerns. Also, in his own congregation the preacher had an already organized group of supporters who might be interested in subsidizing the publication of the writings of their spiritual leader. The doctor or lawyer might have had just as many friends as the preacher, but they could not be so easily induced to act as a group in supporting his literary efforts. A second reason for the preacher's writing a great deal was probably his belief in the timelessness of his message. He may have felt, to a greater extent than other professional men, that his life would be of interest to future generations, for it was a practical demonstration of his religion, and the religion proclaimed by the preachers was to remain the same throughout all ages. Still a third reason might be that the preacher had seen that his expressing himself orally had changed the lives of many, so that he felt that his putting his thoughts on paper might help many more.

Most of the preachers limited their efforts to autobiographical works, polemic writings and speeches, although a few did not. Among these few were Homer Thrall, a Methodist pioneer who wrote some fair histories, and Abel Stevens, who appeared but briefly on the Texas frontier, and who wrote church histories, biographies of preachers, and a study of Madame de Stael. Apparently only a very small number of the frontier preachers were so versatile, however. Actually, only a handful of the preachers undertook large autobiographical works; the rest limited themselves to a sketch of their lives, with a few reminiscences inserted here and there. They had difficulty in refraining from preaching and seemed to hasten through their lives in order to get to what they considered important--their religious views and the history and doctrine of the religious body with which they were affiliated. This material is usually presented in the form of sermons, lectures, or some similar form of oratory. Speeches suffer when committed to paper. The preacher (or his publisher) seemed to be unable to resist editing their speeches until the spontaneity and fire are gone from them, leaving an essay that is of interest only to students of religion or preachers. It is not to be supposed that these frontier preachers did not write sermons as good as those of their colleagues in the settled areas; the truth is that books of sermons are not on the best-seller lists.

Works of a similar nature, and of similar interest, are the essays in which the preacher defends his own group's tenets and attacks all others. Sometimes these works will contain attempts at humor, chiefly satire or ridicule, that brighten their appearance, but generally they are rightfully doomed to occupy the shelves of libraries, unmolested except by theological students or those seeking to determine the thought trends of the period. Subject matter and didactic style prevent their acceptance by the casual reader.

Even this reader, however, would not be disappointed if he turned to the autobiographical efforts of the preachers for amusement. While it is not to be expected that the preacher be a master of narrative style, yet many of the works consulted are definitely readable. The preacher had a life rich in varied experience. He had the confidence of many people, and received the outpourings of hearts as no other man. This knowledge of his fellows made it possible for him to fill his memoirs with interesting material. His insight into human nature and his belief that the things of this life are of small importance in comparison with those of the post mortem existence gave him a sense of humor that is reflected in his writings. It is true that some of his attempts at humor leave something to be desired, but a few of the preachers succeeded very well in amusing the reader. John Brown, R. C. Horn, J. D. Tant, and

T. W. Caskey probably are about the best examples. Caskey's works are characterized by a florid style, but in telling about himself he is definitely comical. J. D. Tant had that rare facility for combining the humorous with the pathetic, but unfortunately limited himself to but a few pages of autobiography, making the mistake that so many preachers made in failing to realize the interest that future generations would have in their way of life, and that of the society in which they lived.

Those preachers who actually devoted their books to the stories of their lives produced some biographies which are as interesting and well written as similar works of the time and place. The works of W. S. James, R. C. Horn, John W. Anderson, Z. N. Morrell, and J. B. Cranfill are well known and considered valuable as sources for material concerning frontier life and times. John Brown's Twenty-five Years a Parson in the Wild West is good reading, and Edward Featherston's A Pioneer Speaks, although uneven in interest, is mostly well written and contains some good information about the strife over fence cutting. The Reminiscences of Rev. John H. McLean has some fine historical data on the "Regulators" and "Moderators," but the reader loses interest when the writer begins to discuss the family trees of his associates. Evidently, the records that Andrew Jackson Potter left behind, which were utilized by H. A. Graves, would

have been even better reading with less editing. Although Jose Rodriguez does not actually fall within the limits of this study, I will mention that he is one of the best story tellers of all the writing frontier preachers.

In summary, we can say that the preachers' efforts at speaking and writing played a great part in introducing the world's great literature to the frontiersman, provided for posterity a valuable store of facts concerning conditions of that time, and left us with some very interesting reading material. When these things are considered along with the minister's social, moral, religious and educational contributions already discussed, the Texas frontier preacher is seen to have been a powerful force in the civilizing of the frontier.

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# VITA

George Wilmeth Ewing was born in Robstown, Texas, January 12, 1923. He is the son of Patelford Poindexter and Eugenia Wilmeth Ewing. Following graduation from the public high school in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1940, he attended Corpus Christi Junior College one semester. Then came a few months on a pipe-line crew and a semester at Abiline Christian College in 1941. Some months of carpentering preceded employment in the Civil Service, where he was engaged in the study of radio mechanics for thirteen months. From August, 1943 until March, 1946, he served in the Army Air Force, most of the time teaching radar mechanics. Upon being discharged he again entered Abilene Christian College and received from that institution the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1948. His major field of study was Bible. He worked as a preacher and building contractor in Corpus Christi from July, 1948, until February, 1949, at which time he entered the Graduate School of the University of Texas.

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