

recognize the rapid trend away from Welsh traditions, and especially from the Welsh language, in many of the communities where its churches were located. Readjustments to the new environment and linguistic changes were recognized rather tardily, so that in many a community the church perished when the Welsh language was vanishing.

But even when we concede this regrettable failure, the Calvinistic Methodist Church, beyond all question of doubt, made a valuable contribution to essential religious life in America. The Church, generally regarded as conservative, was tolerant and charitable in its attitude toward others. It swung to neither extreme, nor did it pride itself on being a middle-of-the-roader. Its ministers preached eternal truth as they conceived it, and proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. The Calvinistic Methodist Church rendered an important service and made a valuable contribution to historic Presbyterianism in America.

XII. THE ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY

(*Y Gymanva Gorphoredig*¹)

AFTER the founding of the first Calvinistic Methodist church at Penycerau, Oneida County, New York, in 1824, other churches of the denomination sprang up in rapid succession. In four years, from 1828 to 1831, seven churches were established. In the decade which followed the increase was even greater and the denomination extended its churches into Pennsylvania and Ohio. By the end of 1841 there was a total of thirty-four churches, of which seventeen were in New York, seven in Pennsylvania, and ten in Ohio.

This rapid increase, due to a steady stream of migration from Wales, with a definitely westward trek on the part of the arrivals, presented a new and urgent problem to the early leaders of the Calvinistic Methodist Church in America. Church organizations such as the presbytery and the *gymanva* had already been formed in New York, where the churches were, for the most part, closely grouped together. The New York *Gymanva* also had taken the small and weak churches in Pennsylvania under its wing. The Pennsylvania churches west of the Allegheny Mountains were included in the Ohio *Gymanva*, organized in 1838. There was a growing feeling that some organic bond was needed to unite in one body all the churches, both east and west of the Alleghenies. This need had been discussed on several occasions in the local *gymanvas*, and the conviction had matured that a comprehensive organization should be created which would embrace all and bind them together in mutual understanding and cooperative effort. Two things in particular called for this: first, the safeguarding of the doctrine of the Church; and, secondly, the necessity of maintaining a high standard of church discipline.

¹ "*Corphoredig*" means "corporate" or "embodied." This assembly was never incorporated; hence we have translated its name as "the Organized Assembly."

These standards were clearly set forth in the Confession of Faith and the Rules of Discipline handed down by the Church in Wales.

In the New York Gymanva which convened in Utica, September 1-2, 1841, a set of resolutions was presented which had for its purpose "the securing of a closer union between the various churches [of the denomination] in this country." It was also decided that these resolutions should be brought to the attention of the brethren in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Up to that time there were no churches west of the Great Lakes. So generally was the need for such an organization felt that the appeal met with immediate and favorable response. The gymanva in Pennsylvania, which met on the eleventh of the same month, September, 1841, passed a resolution to support and foster union by means of an Organized Assembly. By the time the Ohio Gymanva convened for its spring meeting in Cincinnati, in March, 1842, opinion had so crystallized that a time and a place for holding such an assembly were announced. In *The Friend* the following announcement was published:

"The first Organized Assembly of the Calvinistic Methodists in America will be held in Palmyra, Portage County, Ohio, the 17-20 of next June [1842]. It is expected that delegates will be present representing the whole Body. The project having been indorsed by several gymanvas, of both the Eastern and Western Divisions, it is confidently expected that its indorsement may be confirmed by a large assembly of delegates."

The Assembly convened as announced and its importance in cementing, at such an early day, the unity of the churches of the Calvinistic Methodist faith in America can scarcely be overestimated. Its influence was felt throughout the entire history of the denomination in this country.

The following are the resolutions submitted to the New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio churches for indorsement, upon which, as an official statement, they proceeded to form the Organized Assembly:

- "I. That the continuance of union between the members of the Calvinistic Methodists in the United States, as well as in Great Britain, is of utmost importance to us as a Body, both for our comfort and usefulness.
- "II. That it is a duty incumbent upon us, individually and collectively,

to employ the most effective means for stimulating, nourishing, and confirming that union.

"III. That the establishing of a semiannual Organized Assembly in which all delegates, representing the entire Body in America, could convene would, among other things, be a means of attaining this desired purpose.

"IV. That we recommend organizing such an assembly, as herein mentioned, to be held twice a year; once each side of the Allegheny Mountains, and continuing alternately.

"V. That one or more delegates be chosen and sent [to the Assemblies] and that their expenses be paid by the Division sending them.

"VI. That the forming of this Assembly does not propose to dissolve, or diminish the power of either the monthly meeting or the quarterly meeting of the two Divisions. These meetings shall be left entirely under the jurisdiction of the Divisions within which they are included.

"VII. That the Organized Assembly shall have the power and authority in America equivalent to the power and authority of the Quarterly Assembly in Wales; and that the presbytery meetings, separately, have only the power of the monthly meetings [in Wales],

"VIII. That the Organized Assembly not only is to possess the power and authority of the Quarterly Assembly in Wales, but it is also to be maintained and planned, so far as it may be possible under different conditions, according to the form and rules of that Assembly.

"IX. That a committee of the delegates be held preceding each Assembly, at a convenient hour, to arrange a docket for that Assembly.

"X. That a record book be secured and kept for the special service of this Assembly in which all its transactions may be recorded.

"XI. That a communication be sent from each Assembly meeting to the Body in Wales, giving a statement of the condition of the churches among us; hoping for a similar report from them.

"XII. That the first meeting of the kind be held at Palmyra, Ohio, June, 1842, on days to be appointed by the local church.

"XIII. That no change—addition or reduction—be made to the above resolutions, except by the majority vote of at least two Organized Assemblies."

Those present at the first Organized Assembly, at Palmyra, Ohio, were: Rev. Edward Jones, Cincinnati; Rev. Robert Williams, Moriah, Jackson County; Rev. Hugh E. Rees, Newark; Rev. William Parry, Granville; Rev. Owen Jones and Rev. William Morgans, both of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and William Rowlands, D.D., of Utica, New York. The names of the elders present are not recorded. Dr. Rowlands represented the churches east of the Alleghenies and was elected moderator; Rev. Edward

Jones was elected clerk. The Calvinistic Methodist Church has always given the preaching of the gospel a prominent place in its gatherings, and its public services were always attended by large audiences. Seventeen sermons were delivered in this Organized Assembly. In addition to these public preaching services there were other public services: a temperance meeting, two fellowship meetings, and the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The second Organized Assembly was held in Utica, New York, September 1-2, 1842. Rev. Robert Williams, Moriah, Jackson County, Ohio, commissioned by the Palmyra Assembly to represent the churches of the Western Division, was not present at the Utica Assembly; nor was there anyone present representing the Western Division. The third Organized Assembly was scheduled to meet in Jackson County, Ohio, in late March or early April, 1843, but there is nothing to indicate that this Assembly was held. It appears that no Organized Assembly was ever held in the Western Division after the initial Assembly at Palmyra in June, 1842; nor did the Western Division participate in any way in the deliberations and proceedings of the Organized Assembly, with one or two exceptions, so far as the records show. From that time on, the Organized Assembly became three-cornered in its movements. It rotated in turn from Oneida County, New York, to Pennsylvania, and then to New York City. That was the order, but there were exceptions. The next Organized Assembly was scheduled to be held in Pennsylvania but, because of unsettled conditions in the mining districts and the consequent mobile condition of the Welsh population, it was deemed inadvisable to hold it in Pennsylvania, so this Assembly also convened at Utica, New York, in September, 1843. There is no record of an Assembly being held in 1844, but in June, 1845, it convened in New York City. The fifth Organized Assembly was held in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, in June, 1846, and the sixth in Remsen, Oneida County, New York, in July, 1847. The 1848 Assembly convened in New York City, July 10-13 of that year. The Organized Assembly of 1849 was in Harrison, now Scranton, Pennsylvania, July 6-8. The 1850 Assembly was announced to be held at Floyd, Oneida County, New York, but this evidently was

withdrawn; we have no record of it. In 1851 the Assembly went again to New York City, June 26-30. The Assembly of 1852 went to Pennsylvania. This was a serial; sessions were held in Lehigh Gap, now Slatington, July 8-9; Summit Hill, July 10-11; Tamaqua, July 12; St. Clair, July 13-14; Pottsville, July 15-16; Minersville, July 17-18. The Assembly of 1853 was also held in Pennsylvania and this too was a serial, holding sessions from August 6 to 12 at Scranton, Danville, and Carbondale.

The Assembly of 1853 was the last of the Organized Assemblies. Perhaps it should not be considered as an Organized Assembly, although it is so called, for all its deliberations pertained to local affairs in Pennsylvania. Why the Organized Assembly was discontinued is a matter of conjecture. It was doubtless difficult to maintain. The churches were far apart and many of them small and struggling. The Ohio Gymanva while having a prominent part in its organization, withdrew at an early date. Remoteness from the churches of the Eastern Division was no doubt a probable reason. Welsh immigrants were teeming into Ohio, and the Ohio Gymanva was fully occupied with assimilating these into the churches of its several communities. It was busily engaged also in organizing new churches and building new church edifices. Moreover, in the person of Rev. Robert Williams, the Ohio Gymanva had an organizer quite equal to the task in the Western Division. His influence and unrivaled leadership had much to do in firmly establishing Calvinistic Methodism in the state.

A disquieting communication was sent from the New York Quarterly Gymanva to the Organized Assembly which convened at Scranton, Pennsylvania, in June, 1849. In it, the New York Gymanva complained that the present Organized Assembly was "too heavy a burden to carry," and overtured to have it dissolved. This was a severe blow to the Organized Assembly, for New York was its backbone. After discussion and due deliberation, the Assembly replied that the request from the Oneida Quarterly Gymanva could not be complied with, because it tended to undermine the fundamentals of church discipline. Moreover, the Articles of the Organized Assembly had been formed and adopted by the joint authority of three state bodies after fair and full discussion. The Assembly ruled that the union now

existing could not be dissolved except by the consent of the same bodies. This overture, while frankly answered in the negative, is an evidence that disintegrating forces were at work and the very existence of the Organized Assembly was in jeopardy. The embers of the heated discussion on the overture appealing for dissolution were still smoldering when the next Assembly met in New York City in June, 1851. There the constitution was again debated, and the necessity for the maintenance of unity in doctrine and discipline received renewed emphasis. This resulted in the passing of the following resolution, which might be regarded as a last desperate effort to save the Organized Assembly:

"Resolved: That a communication be addressed to all the Calvinistic Methodist churches throughout the states imploring them to unite with this Assembly, and that the appropriate purpose of the Assembly be specified."

A committee was appointed for the task, urging all to unite.

In the Organized Assembly which convened in Slatington, Pennsylvania, in July, 1852, there is additional evidence of disintegrating tendencies. The Pennsylvania Gymanva, which for a number of years had been nourished and cared for by its sister gymanva in New York, had, in more recent years, experienced unusual growth. Welshmen were pouring into the mining regions, and Pennsylvania had come to feel that a more complete ordering of its own internal affairs was expedient for it as a gymanva. In the Organized Assembly at Slatington, which concerned itself with affairs pertaining to Pennsylvania only, a resolution prevailed to divide the churches of the gymanva into three districts or presbyteries, as follows: first, the churches of Pottsville, Minersville, and St. Clair; secondly, the churches of Carbondale, Scranton, and Danville; thirdly, the churches of Summit Hill, Tamaqua, and Lehigh Gap. These churches and any others which might be grouped about them would constitute the three presbyteries of the Pennsylvania Gymanva. The brethren in Pennsylvania wished to make it plain that, in thus creating presbyteries for the enhancement of the work among themselves, they had no desire to dissolve or even to weaken the relation then existing between them and their brethren in Oneida County and

New York City, in so far as these bodies were disposed to cooperate with them in matters of common interest in the Organized Assembly. While Pennsylvania affirmed its loyalty, one cannot but feel that there was evident an undercurrent of forces making for disintegration, and that the germs of dissolution were rapidly destroying the body of the Organized Assembly. After 1853 there was no further record of the Organized Assembly.

Some of the measures inaugurated by the Organized Assembly, which influenced the Calvinistic Methodist Church in America throughout its history, are as follows:

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1842

Missions: A Home Missionary Society was organized.

Temperance: "No one who is disciplined (suspended) by a church for drunkenness shall be reinstated without his signing a temperance pledge."

Safeguarding Church Property: "That the several state bodies consult each other regarding the best plan for the safeguarding of our churches as property of the Calvinistic Methodist Church."

The Eldership: "No person, even though formerly an elder in Wales, shall be eligible for eldership in this country, except he be elected to the office by the church of which he is a member."

Literature: The publishing of the Confession of Faith, "The Rise and Increase of Calvinistic Methodism in America," and "The Instructor," by Rev. William Rowlands, received the indorsement of the Assembly. The Friend was likewise heartily indorsed, and the Assembly pledged to do all in its power to increase its circulation.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1843

Adultery: Resolved that adultery be considered sufficient cause for divorce, and that the innocent party be free to marry again.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1845

Legislative Enactment: A committee was appointed to prepare a draft of a constitutional act to be submitted to the state legislature for the purpose of safeguarding the property of the denomination, its churches, and so forth, throughout the states.

Home Missions: Rev. Thomas T. Evans was authorized to write an article to The Friend giving complete information regarding the "Oneida County Home Missionary Society," so that, if acceptable, the plan might be adopted by the entire Body.

Sabbath Observance: A resolution prevailed condemning the buying and selling of milk on the Sabbath.

Foreign Missions: Up to this time, Rev. William Rowlands had per-

sonally looked after the foreign mission phase of the work, but now a committee was organized known as "The American Branch of the Foreign Missionary Society of the Calvinistic Methodists."

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1847

The Union of Churches: In the interest of doctrine and discipline everywhere it is necessary for us to continue the union (i.e., the Organized Assembly) of the Calvinistic Methodists.

Music: The importance of congregational singing was stressed.

Home Missions: Resolved that home missionary societies be organized in all the churches of our denomination in America.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1848

The Ordination of Ministers: The ordination of ministers shall take place in the Organized Assembly only, except when unusual circumstances call for it, and then only with the consent of the Assembly.

Rules and Resolutions: No rule or resolution pertaining to us as a denomination (i.e., which may affect the denomination in general) shall be made in one Organized Assembly. The matter shall be under consideration in at least two Assemblies, unless the cause considered suffer from such delay.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1849

Dissolution: A communication from the Oneida Quarterly Gymanva complaining that the Organized Assembly (now existing between the two gymanvas, New York and Pennsylvania) was too heavy a burden to carry. They overtured its dissolution. The overture was not sustained.

Union with the Presbyterians: On the suggestion of one or more brethren of the Presbyterian (Calvinistic) body for a closer union with them, a vigorous discussion ensued which resulted in the following resolution: "Though many advantages, in outward matters, might come to us from union with these brethren, we cannot sacrifice our Rules of Discipline, et cetera, and consequently we cannot enter a closer union than that which now exists between us, viz., a fraternal union."

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1851

The Organized Assembly Itself Discussed: The constitution and the maintenance of unity in doctrine and discipline were stressed as essential to the success of the entire Body in America. A resolution was adopted that a communication be addressed to all Methodist churches throughout the states imploring them to unite with this Assembly, and that the appropriate purpose of the Assembly be specified. A committee was appointed for the task, urging all to unite.

Church Membership: No church shall be permitted to receive a brother or sister who shall move from a community where there is a

church belonging to our denomination, on the basis of an English letter from a church of a different denomination. The unity, peace, and honor of the denomination calls for this.

THE ASSEMBLY OF 1853

Hymnals: Congregational singing, it was stated, was handicapped by a scarcity of hymnals. Too large a variety of hymnals were employed by the various congregations. This discussion resulted in the following resolution: "That we endeavor to publish an American collection, superior to all others in several respects, besides brevity." A committee was appointed to the task, consisting of men prominent in musical circles in each gymanva.

OFFICERS OF THE ORGANIZED ASSEMBLIES

Place	Date	Moderator	Clerk
Palmyra, Ohio	June, 1842	Dr. William Rowlands	Rev. Edward Jones
Utica, N. Y.	Sept., 1842	Dr. William Rowlands	John S. Williams
Utica, N. Y.	Sept., 1843	Name not recorded	John S. Williams
Pottsville, Pa.	June, 1845	Dr. William Rowlands	Daniel Scurry
Pottsville, Pa.	July, 1846	Dr. William Rowlands	Thomas R. Jones
Remsen, N. Y.	July, 1847	Rev. Thomas T. Evans	D. Williams
New York City	June, 1848	Rev. John Davies	Thomas Foulkes
Hyde Park, Pa.	July, 1849	Dr. William Rowlands	John J. Davies
New York City	June, 1851	Dr. William Rowlands	David Williams
Danville, Pa.	July, 1852	Dr. William Rowlands	John R. Williams
Carbondale, Pa.	Aug., 1853	Rev. David Lewis	Thomas H. Roberts

The place and importance of the Organized Assembly in the development and guidance of the Calvinistic Methodist denomination in America can hardly be exaggerated. The pervasiveness of its influence is beyond question. It had, for all intents and purposes, the function and controlling influence of a General Assembly, and there is no doubt that Dr. Rowlands, who started it and guided it, intended it so to be. It may well be looked upon as the forerunner of the General Assembly of the Calvinistic Methodists in America, which was organized in 1869. Many of the principles which guided and safeguarded the General Assembly were laid down by the early fathers of the Church when the Organized Assembly was formed, and during the ten or twelve years of its career under the guiding hand and master spirit of the venerable Dr. William Rowlands.