

The False Reform

Cane Ridge, 1801

Salvationist, new birth hinged you
To an acrobatic genesis
Of your body in Christ,
10,000 unfurled, in physical exercise,
Clapped, shouted, and shrieked,
According to the camp-meeting rolls,
20,000 were convicted
To Christ's heart, by faith alone,
Awakened, to the evils
Of slavery, alert to falsity's tone
In the Calvinist belief in total depravity.
A "New Light" of Barton Stone,
White-hot, scoured by
Sweat, leapt and fell, leapt and fell
Again, fell, and atoned,
Barking and dancing, rolling clean,
Green with grass stains
Of mass "Communion,"
Shirt-sleeves sheer against exertion,
Newly wetted, in clear-
Sightedness, as voices, broken, in wide,
Serene arcs held an outer peace.
Denominations banded
Together, like the spray of light,
Whale-pods' holy song,
The archetypal patterns,
The autonomous promised zone
Of a salvation not to be
Abandoned, forgone fellowship,
Unled and all forgotten,
To not be without community again,

Although it did not last:
Fear waited, for the crowds to move on.
As a wind picked up, the films of sweat
Went cold with no trace
Of origin. Cane Ridge was, few intoned,
The necessary arrest of human attention.
So, when the attention
Was freed again, a great schism
Burnt through the state.

In 1804, “New Lights” published their
Apology, denying the faith-confession,
Atonement, influences
Of spirit upon the faith.
In Ohio near the Turtle
Creek meeting house a
“Shower of blood” fell.
At the first Cane Ridge
Revival, the air moved
Stone to free his slaves.
Was this ardor or order,
From revolution desire,
For the end of authority.
The second Cane Ridge
Revival was no revival,
It was, instead, a revolt.

The Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery
Was an autonomous act,
A person at reading, stood against every ecclesiastical
Authority, flesh or song:

We will, the Synod of Kentucky examine every member who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately, in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.