
pointed out that Somalia had already received "massive amounts" of U.S. assistance, especially since the beginning of Operation Provide Relief in the summer of 1992, or that death rates were declining. Journalists implied, however, that the West had to act to stop Somalia's suffering. "Here," wrote the *Washington Post's* Keith Richburg on August 12, 1992, "civil war has been compounded by a famine that is starving entire villages. But unlike the Balkans, the Somali crisis has attracted little international attention or aid, and only faint, distant calls for Western military involvement."

Reporters in Somalia, or their editors back

home, "proved incapable of altering the terms of the story they had often simplistically shaped, a tale in which the United States had to do, as *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen put it, 'the moral thing,' i.e., send in the troops."

Some 28,000 U.S. troops ultimately were dispatched by President George Bush to clear relief channels blocked by Somali gangs and to get food to the starving Somalis, a mission expanded under President Bill Clinton to building a nation. The U.S. commitment came to an abrupt and tragic end after a firefight in Mogadishu in October 1993 left 32 Americans dead or fatally wounded.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Education For What?

"Meiklejohn and Maritain: Two Views on the End of Progressive Education" by Carol Thigpen, in *Teachers College Record* (Fall 1994), Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th St., Box 103, New York, N.Y. 10027.

In his 1942 book, *Education between Two Worlds*, liberal reformer and educator Alexander Meiklejohn (1872–1964) insisted that the day of John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism was done. Pragmatism, which exalted science and saw meaning only in consequences, was unable, Meiklejohn declared, to formulate "a positive program of action for the 20th century." To provide the values, authority, and order that could serve as a foundation for Western civilization, as religion once had, Meiklejohn looked to the ideal of a democratic state. In his opinion, students should be trained, and the content of the school curriculum shaped, to serve that ideal. Pupils and teacher would be "agents of the state."

Echoes of Meiklejohn's functional conception of the curriculum are frequently heard today, argues Thigpen, a writer who

lives in Berkeley, California. High school courses are often justified in terms of the subject's "usefulness" in reaching some extrinsic goal, whether it be gaining admission to college, getting a job, living in a democracy, overcoming racism, or learning how to think critically. The idea that the subject itself might be intrinsically interesting or meaningful usually gets short shrift. No wonder that students often become bored, Thigpen says. A better approach—one based on Dewey's pedagogical theory and French Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain's conception of curriculum—could hold and keep their interest, she contends.

Dewey (1859–1952) attacked the distance that traditional teaching put between the knowledge to be imparted and the child's own experience. He thought that the teacher should draw out connections. Dewey thus offered educators "a way out of the rigidity, absolutism, and passivity of traditional pedagogy," Thigpen says. But the "narrowness" of his problem-solving pragmatism, devoid of higher purposes, "left human beings stranded as spinning gyros (processors of information) without meaningful direction or engagement."

In reaction, Meiklejohn looked to the idealized state for meaning and purpose. But in doing so, Maritain (1882–1973) argued in his 1943 critique of progressive education, *Education at the Crossroads*, the educator was only carrying pragmatism to its logical conclusion—the technocratic state in which spiritual meaning is denied.

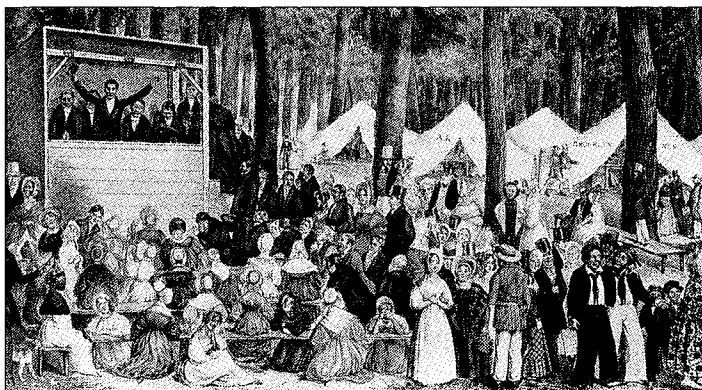
“The essence of education,” Maritain contended, “does not consist in adapting a potential citizen to the conditions and interactions of social life, but first in *making a man*, and by this very fact in preparing a citizen.” Education’s true aim, he maintained, is to guide man as “he shapes himself as a human person—armed with knowledge, strength of judgment, and moral virtues,” while simultaneously transmitting to him the spiritual heritage of his civilization.

Maritain admired Dewey’s pedagogic principles and innovations, but he faulted progressive educators for failing to stress the intrinsic importance of what is being taught. “The wrong begins,” he said, “when the *object to be taught* and the *primacy of the object* are forgotten, and when the cult of means—not to an end, but without an end—only ends up in a psychological worship of the subject”—that is, the child.

The Triumph Of Methodism

“The Puzzle of American Methodism” by Nathan O. Hatch, in *Church History* (June 1994), Swift Hall, 1025 E. 58th St., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

Historians of religion in America usually have looked askance at Methodism, finding in its bland, moralistic, and intellectually unchallenging outlook little of interest. Yet the American followers of John Wesley (1703–91) formed “the most powerful religious move-



As this 1837 drawing of a camp meeting suggests, Methodism thrived in the American backcountry, from Maine and Vermont to Tennessee and Kentucky.

ment in American history,” writes Hatch, a historian at the University of Notre Dame. The Methodists turned Christianity in America into “a mass enterprise.”

That would not have seemed likely around the time of the American Revolution. The Methodist Episcopal Church in 1771 had only four ministers and 300 lay members in the colonies, and the Revolution prompted all but one of the leaders to go back to England. Nevertheless, under the direction of Francis Asbury, the Methodists flourished in America. Unlettered itinerant preachers spread the word of “God’s free grace, the liberty of people to accept or reject that grace, and the power and validity of popular religious expression—even among servants, women, and African Americans.” When Asbury died in 1816, there were some 2,000 Methodist ministers and more than 200,000 members.

Between the Revolution and the Civil War the growth was explosive, and greatly alarmed more established denominations, Hatch says. From less than three percent of all church members in 1776, the Methodists grew to more than 34 percent by 1850. With over one million members, Methodists became “far and away the largest religious body in the nation and the most extensive national institution other than the federal government.”

“Methodism in America transcended class barriers and empowered common people to make religion their own,” Hatch writes. “Unlike Calvinism, which emphasized human