

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

corruption, divine initiative, and the authority of educated clergymen and inherited ecclesiastical structures, the Methodists proclaimed the breathtaking message of individual freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and achievement." And they did not discourage "the impulses of popular religion, dreams and visions, ecstasy, unrestrained emotional release, preaching by blacks, by women, by anyone who felt the call."

For people low on the social ladder who craved respect and opportunity, Methodism had great appeal. "As a movement," Hatch says, "Methodism became a powerful symbol of social mobility, a beacon of aspiring respectability." Wilbur Fisk, who began his ministry as a

defiant outsider, ended up as president of Wesleyan University. Between 1840 and 1860 Methodists founded at least 35 institutions of higher education, and went on to establish a like number between the Civil War and the end of the century. With the election of Methodist William McKinley to the presidency in 1896, John Wesley's heirs "sealed their place as the nation's largest and wealthiest Protestant body."

Although historians have been more interested in Puritanism, Hatch concludes, Methodism reveals "much more" about religion as it came to be practiced in America: "not great, not sophisticated, not awe-inspiring, but what it is."

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Big Science Blues

"Democracy and Super Technologies: The Politics of the Space Shuttle and Space Station *Freedom*" by W. D. Kay, in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* (Spring 1994), Sage Publications, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320.

In 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon and proclaimed it a small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind. In more recent years, "big science" government projects such as the space shuttle, the Stealth fighter-bomber, the Hubble space telescope, and the *Freedom* space station have seemed more prone to stumbles than to giant leaps forward. The problems are usually blamed on poor administration. But Kay, a political scientist at Northeastern University in Boston, fingers another culprit: democratic government.

Government officials, he argues, face a Catch-22 situation: big projects require broad political support, from the public or from various interest groups. But getting that support, in ordinary times, leads to further increases in the scale, expense, risk, and uncertainty of such projects. That makes them more likely to fail.

The space shuttle, for example, was conceived during the Nixon administration as a

support system for a space station. But in the post-Apollo era, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had to delay the station, and it needed to forge a powerful political coalition just to get the shuttle built. It persuaded the U.S. Air Force to use the shuttle to deploy reconnaissance satellites. But that required a much larger cargo bay and more powerful engines to lift the payload. For military reasons, the air force also demanded that the shuttle be able to return to its launch point after a single orbit. Further changes had to be made. To gain support from scientists, NASA promised, in effect, that the shuttle would be able to perform most of the missions originally proposed for the space station. And to make approval by the president and Congress more likely, NASA unrealistically promoted the shuttle fleet as a "low-cost" way of putting payloads into orbit. Finally, to meet objections from the Office of Management and Budget, NASA "drastically scaled back the shuttle's design to minimize its initial R&D costs."

Approved in 1972, the shuttle was plagued from the start by "a long series of technical problems, delays, and cost overruns." The *Challenger* disaster in 1986 was followed by