
Dr. Sweet has performed a service to students and teachers of church history in bringing together in convenient form substantial samplings of a wide variety of source materials illustrating the history of the Presbyterian church on the trans-Appalachian frontier. The first 125 pages of the volume are devoted to a general introduction of five chapters dealing in succession with Presbyterianism at the close of the Revolution, the Presbyterians and westward expansion, their cultural and educational influence, revivalism, and frontier controversies and the operation of the plan of union between the Congregational and Presbyterian churches. The remainder of the work consists of source materials arranged in nineteen chapters, each with a brief but informative introduction. The first four contain substantial extracts from the minutes of the Synod of Kentucky and of the presbyteries of Transylvania and Cumberland and from the session records of churches in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Other chapters are arranged to illustrate specific phases of Presbyterian history—the working of the plan of union, the administration of discipline, education, Indian missions, and the Old School-New School controversy. A chapter is also devoted to correspondence of the American Home Missionary Society, and three comprise extracts from the correspondence, journals, and autobiographies of outstanding ministers. Materials in private hands and in a number of important repositories have been utilized.

The reader who would get a glimpse of frontier Presbyterianism cannot do better than to turn first to this volume. The vital quality of source materials in presenting a picture of a time or a place or a movement is nowhere better illustrated than by the selections here given. To the student who would pursue the subject further the volume will also be of assistance. The thirty-page bibliography lists the most important manuscripts and their repositories as well as the printed materials. One wonders, however, why the author fails to include statements as to the location of some of the material he prints, as in the cases of the minutes of the Presbytery of Carlisle and of the Synod of Kentucky. The index will no doubt prove satisfactory for most purposes, and to have made it more comprehensive would probably have made it of disproportionate
size; nevertheless, the inclusion of references to more of the places and men dealt with in the documents would have greatly enhanced the reference value of the volume.

Western Pennsylvania is given its full share of attention in the introductory chapters. The author follows the coming of the first Presbyterian missionaries to the region; the settlement there of the four pioneer preachers, John McMillan, Thaddeus Dod, James Power, and Joseph Smith; the founding of the Western Missionary Society in Pittsburgh in 1802 as the first of the synodical missionary societies; and the establishment of the Presbyterian educational institutions in the region (although the author errs in stating on page 72 that Pittsburgh Academy was reincorporated in 1819 as the University of Pittsburgh rather than as the Western University of Pennsylvania). Dr. Sweet fully appreciates, too, the preeminence of western Pennsylvania as a Presbyterian center. Thus, in pointing out that the Presbyterian missionaries went out looking for Presbyterians instead of seeking to make them, he states that the denomination “prospered best . . . in western Pennsylvania.”

In view of this recognition of the importance of western Pennsylvania, it is disappointing to find that only two of the documents printed in the volume have anything to do with the region and that even these do not deal with the functioning of the denomination there. Thirty pages are devoted to extracts from the records of the Western Missionary Society, 1804–1825, an interesting picture of the administration of Indian missions; and there is a three-page letter from the Presbytery of Indianapolis addressed to a convention of Old School ministers and elders meeting in Pittsburgh in May, 1835. Students of western Pennsylvania church history may find comfort, however small, in the fact that the essential features of Presbyterianism were the same everywhere and that the session records of the Duck Creek Church in Ohio differ only in detail from those of a church in the Redstone country.

*Western Pennsylvania Historical Survey*  
Marian Silveus