

EARLY HISTORY OF BETHEL COLLEGE

By JAMES A. NEWTON

One of the most successful ventures in education in Carroll county was the establishment and development of what is now Bethel College, McKenzie, Tennessee. It was the outgrowth of the old "Brick Academy" which was in operation in McLemoresville, Tennessee, in 1840. In 1842 the school was founded as Bethel Seminary and for five years was operated without a charter. The Seminary was founded and operated under the fostering care of the West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Primarily it was devoted to the training of young men for the ministry, but was open to other young men who were interested in acquiring higher learning.

The author has not been able to establish with certainty who founded the school in 1842; but "It is thought by some that the Reverend Reuben Burrow was the principal, and in some instances the only teacher during these years (1842-1846). This view is held by Reverend John W. Dishman, an elderly minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a teacher in Bethel College."¹

There is also evidence against this theory. Richard Beard says that Burrow was appointed professor of Systematic Theology immediately after the Theological Department was established in connection with Bethel College in February of 1852. "In the fall of 1852, having moved to McLemoresville, he took charge of the Congregation there as its pastor, and continued his labors in that capacity until 1864. Some time in 1853, or 1854, he received the Degree of Doctor of Divinity from Bethel College."²

B. W. McDonnold, a missionary for several years in Kentucky and Missouri, wrote this description of Reverend Burrow:

Dr. Burrow was a man of great physical power. He had a compact, heavy, muscular frame, and heavy eyebrows. His black hair grew low down on his forehead, and his accent

betrayed just a little his German extraction. The working of his mind was like the heavy and powerful movements of some ponderous machine. His eyes and countenance slowly kindled as he advanced in his sermons, until at last his homely face grew beautiful with the glow of intellect set on fire by the Holy Ghost.³

Reverend Reuben Burrow was listed as president of the Board of Visitors in the Bethel College catalogue of 1850-1851, but he was not listed as a member of the faculty in this first catalogue of the school.⁴

The Reverend F. C. Usher became the principal of the school in 1846, the year before the charter was granted. His health failing, in 1850 he gave up his work and retired. In 1847 during the administration of Reverend Usher the charter was granted for Bethel Seminary:

Chapter LXXI

An Act to Incorporate Bethel Seminary in the County of Carroll and for other Purposes

Whereas, the West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, did by resolution, passed some three years since, determine to establish an institution of learning within its ecclesiastical jurisdiction: and whereas, said institution has been located at McLemoresville, in the County of Carroll, also suitable building has been erected for said institution, and it is now in successful operation in its fifth session, Therefore:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, that A. E. Cooper, Doctor S. Bigham, J. H. Alexander, Gilbert Hart, E. Given, A. P. Hall, J. H. Harrell, A. B. Mitchum, J. Roach, John Simon, A. H. Smith, J. B. Terry, and C. Wilder, and their successors in office, are hereby constituted, and shall forever hereafter be a body corporate and politic, by the name of and style of the Trustees of Bethel Seminary, and by that name and title shall sue and be sued, answer and be answered unto, in any Court of law or equity in this State; and shall have full power and authority to receive and make title to property, both real and personal, to receive and hold donations or legacies for the benefit of said Institution, to an amount not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars; to have and use a common seal, and to have and exercise all corporate privileges commonly granted to similar institutions of learning.

Section 2. A majority of said board shall have full power and authority to elect a Principal for said institution, also such assistants, tutors, or other officers as they may deem necessary; but that five members of said board, convened at any regular meeting or by the call of the President or any two members thereof (three days notice being given) shall constitute a quorum to do all other business.

Section 3. Said trustees shall elect, annually, a President to preside in their meetings, a Secretary to keep a fair record of all their transactions, and a Treasurer to take charge of the funds of the institution. Their officers shall be selected from their own members.

Section 4. Said Board shall have full power to form any and all by-laws and rules necessary for the government of themselves, or the Institution, not inconsistent with the Constitution of the State or of the United States; and it shall be their duty to attend the semi-annual examination of the Institution, and visit it as often as convenient; also to prepare and present an annual report of the progress of the school; the names of the Trustees, with the vacancies existing in the Board; the number of students and everything else which they may deem advantageous to the Institution, to the annual sessions of the body having the right to fill vacancies on said board, as hereinafter specified.

Section 5. The names of said Board of Trustees, arranging in alphabetical order shall be divided into three classes, as nearly equal as may be, and that one of said classes shall go out of office annually in October, beginning at the upper class on the said list. All members going out of office being eligible to re-election at any time; and that the West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, or whatever synod of said Church includes said school within its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, shall have full power to fill the vacancies thus created, also all others. But that other vacancies occurring, may be filled by the existing board until the ensuing meeting of the Synod.

Section 6. No misnomer or misdescription of corporation herein created by any will, deed, gift or other instrument of contract or conveyance shall vitiate or defeat the same, but such instrument shall take effect as if said corporation was correctly named, provided the intentions of the parties be sufficiently explained.

Section 7. The Board of Trustees herein Corporated shall have full power and authority to organize said Seminary into a College by the name of Bethel College, having all the powers, immunities and privileges usually granted other colleges of the State or any of the United States, so soon as its friends shall raise for said institution the sum of fifty thousand dollars as an endowment, the income alone of which shall go to support the Institution.

F. Buchanan

Speaker of House of Representatives

J. M. Anderson

Speaker of Senate

Passed December 1, 1847.⁵

For the next three years Bethel was operated as a seminary. In 1850 the charter was amended and the school became an institution of college rank:

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 Section 9. Be it enacted, that so much of the seventh section of an act, passed the 1st day of December, 1847, entitled An Act to incorporate Bethel Seminary, in the County of Carroll, and for other purposes, as requiring the sum of fifty thousand dollars to be raised as an endowment, be and the same is hereby repealed.

Section 10. Be it enacted, that the Board of Trustees of said Institution shall have full power and authority to organize said seminary into a college, as by said seventh section provided, whenever, in their opinion, the Cause of education and the interest of the Institution will be advanced thereby.

Landon C. Haynes
 Speaker of House of Representatives

John F. Henry
 Speaker of Senate

Passed February 3, 1850.⁶

The Reverend J. N. Roach became the president of Bethel College in 1850, moving from Murfreesboro to McLemoresville in that year.⁷ He had been in charge of a girls' school at Lebanon, Tennessee, for a few years prior to 1848, but was forced to leave that school after some grave charges had been made against him. He later cleared himself of the charges; and Charles H. Smartt and Archie D. Smith say that "The school was made a college through the influence of J. N. Roach . . . He moved to West Tennessee determined to found a college. Through his personal influence the project of changing Bethel Seminary to Bethel College was put through the Synod."⁸

There is no available list of graduates of Bethel Seminary. W. P. Hart received the B. A. Degree in 1851, at the end of the first collegiate year. There were six graduates listed at the end of the term in 1853, but there was none the second year.⁹

In 1858, by another charter amendment, the Department of Theology was established at the college. "The Theological Department had been in operation in the college since 1852, with Reverend Reuben Burrow as the head of the department and its only teacher. He remained at the post until the college was closed by the War between the States."¹⁰

The Theological Department was founded while a movement was afoot to found a theological school in one of the other schools owned and operated by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, either Cumberland College, Princeton, Kentucky, or Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee. Both schools were bidding for the Department of Theology because it meant that there would be more support from the Church.

In 1850 the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church appointed a committee to make plans for the establishment of a Department of Theology in one of the two named schools, and report the results of their deliberations to a subsequent assembly. The committee did not report to the Assembly at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1851, but was continued and directed to report to the Assembly of 1852.¹¹

The Synod of West Tennessee made a strategic move by founding a Theological Department in Bethel College. The Synod took the action at its fall meeting of 1851, and the department was opened in February, 1852, just about three months before the planning committee was to report to the General Assembly. The department was established without the sanction of the General Assembly, and the Synod announced that it would appeal to the whole Church for funds. The Synod immediately put endowing agents into the field to secure the needed funds.

The General Assembly of 1852 was under the strong conviction that the Synod of West Tennessee and Bethel College were wrong in assuming such an important role and that there was a need for only one theological school in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Synod of West Tennessee, under the leadership of C. J. Bradley, J. N. Roach, and Reuben Burrow, threatened to secede from the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. "Mr. Bradley's announcement checked proceedings. The Assembly adopted pacific measures, simply entreating the lower judicatures to co-operate with the Assembly's school, and left Bethel College to pursue its own course."¹²

By an act of amendment in 1858 the State of Tennessee recognized the Department of Theology in Bethel College. It was to be under the control of the same Board of Incorporators as the Literary Department. Section I of the Act of the General Assembly stated that the Theological Department would be endowed with an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars. Section 2 stated that if in any event the Literary

Department should ever cease to exist, the funds contributed to the Theological Department should be controlled by the Synod's Incorporate Board, under the direction of the West Tennessee Synod, but always used for the purpose for which first intended:

An Act to amend the Charter of Bethel College,
and for other Purposes

PREAMBLE

Whereas, The West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, at her session in October, 1852, did create and organize a Theological Department in connection with Bethel College, at McLemoresville, and to be under the control of the same Board incorporated for the Literary Department, therefore,

Section 1. Be it enacted . . . that the Board of Trustees of Bethel College, be, and they are hereby empowered to hold and control all funds which have been or may hereafter be given in any and all ways for the endowment of said Theological Department, the same not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars, and the same authority and privilege to be given to said Board and exercised by them as in case of the Literary Departments of Bethel College.

Section 2. . . . That should the Literary Department ever fail to operate as a college, then the funds contracted for the Theological Department shall be controlled by the Synod's incorporate Board, by the direction of the West Tennessee Synod, but always for the purpose contemplated in the creation of said Theological Department, but in all events shall the above named funds be the property of West Tennessee Synod, bearing the name or holding the synodical records, and for the named purposes.

Passed March 1, 1858.¹³

The charter of Bethel College was amended on January 17, 1860, in order that the Hernando Synod and the Mississippi Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church would become joint owners and equal partners with the West Tennessee Synod. The two Synods were to have six members each on the Board of Trustees. Section 5 of the act states that the Board of Trustees may receive and hold property for the benefit and endowment of the institution in the amount of five hundred thousand dollars:

PREAMBLE

That the Charter of Bethel College, formerly Bethel Seminary at McLemoresville, in Carroll County, be amended so as to permit the Hernando Synod, and the Mississippi Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church become joint owners and equal partners, with the West Tennessee Synod, in the use, enjoyment, and possession of all the property of

said College for all educational purposes in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and that the Hernando Synod and Mississippi Synod each be entitled to six trustees in said board.

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Section 4. Be it further enacted, That S. G. Barney, James M. Harvey, Joshua Brown, John S. Topp, D. D. Herron, I. J. Meek, from the Hernando Synod, and Rev. J. B. Cherry, E. Gasten, R. L. Ross, J. I. Cooper, Rev. C. Kelley, and James Hart from the Mississippi Synod, be and they are hereby appointed Trustees additional of said College; and their successors to be chosen in the manner provided for the thirteen Trustees from the West Tennessee Synod, but the same number of trustees shall constitute a quorum as now provided by law.

Section 5. Be it further enacted, That the Board of Trustees, may receive and hold property for the benefit and endowment of the College, to the amount of five hundred thousand dollars.

Passed January 17, 1860.¹⁴

Further expansion of the charter of Bethel College was made by an act passed by the General Assembly on March 23, 1891. This act recognized the original and amendatory acts and further extended its authority by placing it under the fostering care of the Synod of Tennessee. The removal of the College from McLemoresville to McKenzie, Tennessee, was made valid by the second section of this act:

PREAMBLE

An Act to amend the charter of Bethel College, first created at McLemoresville, Tennessee, now at McKenzie, Tennessee.

Section 1. Be it enacted . . . That the Charter of Bethel College, under the care of the West Tennessee Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and all acts amendatory thereof, be and the same are hereby so amended that said institution shall be and is hereby placed under the fostering care of the Consolidated Synod, called the Synod of Tennessee.

Section 2. Be it further enacted . . . That the removal of the said institution from McLemoresville, Tennessee, to McKenzie, Tennessee, is hereby ratified and made valid. The said institution to retain all the powers, privileges and immunities granted it in its original charter as a college.

Passed March 23, 1891.¹⁵

The Theological Department continued to operate until the institution closed for the Civil War. After the conflict the doors of Bethel College opened to the public, but the Theological Department did not

reopen until 1908, when it was resumed under the direction of Reverend P. F. Johnson at McKenzie, Tennessee, its present location.

The report of the Committee on Education to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1851 said that there were four teachers and about 170 students at Bethel College, and that the institution had succeeded, thus far, to the "entire satisfaction of its friends and patrons." The report mentioned the intention of the college to purchase \$4,000 worth of apparatus in the summer of 1851. It expressed to the Church encouraging hopes for the continued prosperity of the school. "Your Committee, therefore, are cordial in recommending it to the patronage of our Church, and the friends of education generally."¹⁶

The report from the same committee to the General Assembly in 1852 said that the college was "flourishing beyond former example"; that there were seven professors employed and 175 students in the institution. There were twenty-five of these students preparing for the ministry.¹⁷

This school year, 1851-1852, was probably the most prosperous year of Bethel College before the Civil War. The reports to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church showed a decline in the total number of students each year in which there was a report, except the year 1858, in which there were five teachers and 165 students reported.

This table shows the number of students and professors listed in the reports of the Committee on Education to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church prior to the Civil War.¹⁸

Date	Number in Faculty	Number of Students
1851	4	172 (Approx.) ¹⁹
1852	7	175 "
1853	—	150 "
1854	5	148
1855	6	135
1856	—	—
1857	—	—
1858	5	165

The next report to the General Assembly which gave any statistics on the conditions of the college is found in the *Minutes* of the General Assembly of 1887: "Bethel College matriculated for the year just ending 230 students. Of this number sixteen are preparing for the ministry

and receive tuition free. The school property is valued at \$16,000. Seven regular teachers and three lecturers are employed in the institution."²⁰

The first catalogue of Bethel College was for the collegiate year of 1850-1851. There is a typed copy of this early catalogue in the vault at Bethel College. The next catalogue that can be found is for the year 1875-1876. Except for the list of 152 students, the complete catalogue of 1850-1851 is quoted below:

A CATALOGUE OF THE OFFICERS AND
STUDENTS OF BETHEL COLLEGE

For the Collegiate year commencing on the 17th Sept. 1850,
and closing 17th July, 1851

McLemoresville, Tennessee

BOARD OF VISITORS

Rev. Reuben Burrow, Pres.	J. Jarmen
Rev. L. P. Calvert, Vice-Pres.-1st.	Hon. C. H. Williams
Rev. C. J. Bradley, Vice-Pres.-2nd.	George Fisher
E. McDavitt, Vice-Pres.-3rd.	J. M. T. Cavness
S. W. Cochran, Sec., 1st.	M. B. King
M. M. Houston, Sec., 2nd.	Rev. N. J. Haiss
Rev. W. M. Dunnaway	Gen. J. S. Dawson
T. B. Normant, Esq.	Dr. G. C. Howlett
Rev. A. A. Moorman	Dr. R. P. Cole
Dr. J. D. Porter	Rev. W. Henry
Wm. Waldron, Esq.	M. C. Casey
Rev. R. M. Searcy	G. Bright
Rev. F. C. Roberts	Dr. J. W. Blanton
Col. S. R. Brown	Gen. J. R. Smith
S. Bond	Hon. B. S. Allen
Rev. S. Dennis	David Bell
B. B. Miller	Dr. B. Wright
J. Bond	John L. Moore

Board of Trustees

Rev. A. E. Cooper, Pres.	J. H. Hassel
Dr. S. Y. Bingham, Sec.	Jas. Brannock
A. H. Smith, Treas.	J. H. Alexander
Gilbert Hart	A. B. Mitchum
China Wilder	Edward Given
J. J. Roach	John Simons
Charles O'Neil	G. C. Hurt

Faculty

Rev. J. N. Roach, President
Professor of Moral and Mental Science

Rev. B. W. McDonold
Professor of Mathematics

Rev. E. C. Trimble
Professor of Languages

Rev. A. J. Haynes
Tutor

Catalogue of Students

<i>Name</i>	<i>Parents' or Guardian's Name</i>	<i>Post Office</i>
(152 students listed)		

COURSE OF STUDY

There is a regularly organized "Preparatory Dept." connected with the College in which are taught Orthography, Reading, Penmanship, English, Latin, and Greek Grammar, Arithmetic, Modern Geography, Elementary works in Latin and Greek, Virgil and Greek Testament; upon all of which branches, the student will have to stand an approved examination, before he can enter as a regular candidate for graduation to a higher class.

Freshman Class

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|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Virgil Completed | 7. Cicero's Orations |
| 2. Algebra | 8. Rhetoric (Plair's Abridged) |
| 3. Sallust | 9. Herodotus |
| 4. Xenophr's Anabasis | 10. Escherburg's Manual |
| 5. Geometry | 11. Greek and Latin Exercises |
| 6. Greek Testament | |

Sophomore Class

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|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Philosophy and Natural History | 7. Botany |
| 2. Greek Testament | 8. Horace |
| 3. Cicero do Orators | 9. Conic Sections |
| 4. Plain and Spherical Trigonometry | 10. Livy |
| 5. Graeca Majora (1st. Volume) | 11. Declamation & Composition |
| 6. Mensuration, Surveying & Navigation | |

Junior Class

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|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Calculus and Cicero do Officiie | 6. Chemistry and Geology |
| 2. Graeca Majora | 7. Natural Philosophy |
| 3. Topography and Cicero de Amicitia | 8. Moral Philosophy |
| 4. Rhetoric (University edition) | 9. Declamation and Composition |
| 5. Analytical Geometry | |

Senior Class

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| 1. Selected portions of Latin and Greek reviewed | 7. Political Economy |
| 2. Elements of criticism | 8. Constitution of the U. S. |
| 3. Book Keeping | 9. Evidence of Christianity |
| 4. Anatomy and Physiology | 10. International Law |
| 5. Astronomy | 11. Natural Theology |
| 6. Mental Philosophy | 12. Declamation, Composition, and Forensic Disputation |

The above course of study, the Board feel confident will compare with that of any other college in our country, and in sending it out to the world, they desire it not to be regarded as mere form, but that students and patrons may know that all the honors of this institution will have to be scholars. Student who do not wish to take a regular course may pursue such branches as they or their parents or guardian may select. Any regular students who study the French, Spanish, German language will be permitted to graduate upon shorter course in Greek, if they desire.

Sessions and Examinations

The Collegiate year is divided into two sessions, of five months each. The first commences on the third Thursday in September, and closes on the Thursday before the third Monday in February. The second session commences on the third Monday in February and closes on the Thursday before the third Monday in July. It is very desirable that pupils should be ready to enter college on the first day of the session; but when this is not convenient, they can enter at any time in the session, and after the first two weeks there will be a proportional deduction in the tuition fees. At the close of each session there will be an examination of all the classes, to continue from day to day as long as the faculty may direct. In these examinations, the object will be to test the diligence and progress of each student; and to secure this end the patrons of the institution, and the public generally, will always be invited to attend and scrutinize the proceedings with every class. This course the Board feel, is the only one which will prevent the examinations in our colleges, and other schools, from becoming mere shows where the superficialness of the student is polished over, or covered up, by the deception of the teacher.

Discipline

Upon this subject, the Board feel proud of the high distinction which the president has acquired in this branch of his duties; and with every confidence can recommend this institution to all parents and guardians, who expect their sons and wards to be controlled. Many of our most promising youth have been ruined by a few sessions at a college simply because they were not governed as they should have been. It will not be so at Bethel College. Students who come here must expect to conform to the regulations of the institution. Our laws and regulations are not oppressive. They have been framed alone for the good of the pupil; and every student who obeys them, will ever have the commendation of his teachers, the approbation of his own conscience, and the esteem of the community. But he who will not obey will be directed to return home. No effort will be spared to reclaim all offenders, and to bring them to duty; but if this cannot be done by proper means the parent or guardian will be expected to take the student home. Thus far our college is almost without a parallel in regard to the deportment of its students. They have called forth the praise of all who know them, for their manly deportment and their studious habits. Our discipline is mild, but firm and grounded upon the same principles which prevail in a well-regulated and affectionate family.

A large amount of Latin and Greek was required in the course of study. However, the curriculum of Bethel College was not unlike that of other colleges of the time.

The College has from its founding been very strict in its discipline. Many rules regarding the activities of the students have been laid down and enforced. McDonnold in his *Church History* tells an incident about the first president, Reverend J. N. Roach:

It is said that the first president of this institution, the Reverend J. N. Roach, used to employ the switch as an instrument of discipline, not sparing even the young men. He was regarded by the trustees as a master disciplinarian. But when he used the switch he often took the pupil with him into the woods, where he would pray with him awhile, then whip

awhile. After whipping and praying had alternated in one case for some time, he asked the student, "What more can I do for you?" The answer was, 'I think you had better pray again.'²¹

President Roach would also spend the night looking for boys who were likely to get into some mischief. When he became too weary, or would otherwise need assistance, he would require the other members of the faculty to accompany him on these watches. "Such measures were very popular with the trustees and the people of the community of McLemoresville."²² It is doubtful if such measures were popular with the student body, but such practices remained the policy of the college for a number of years. It was stated time after time in the catalogues that the school was not one of reform, but that discipline must be maintained.²³

The intensity of the religious life of the institution was another outstanding characteristic of the college. The students would often assume responsibility for the salvation of those students who were not Christian. They would work diligently until they brought the person to a condition of salvation. In many instances there would be hardly an unsaved person to be found on the campus.²⁴

B. W. McDonnold wrote of the revivals on the Bethel College campus the following: "I witnessed so many revivals in this institution that I despair of giving them justice in these brief limits. Some of the most glorious I ever saw were there. . . . I have seen more people converted in that college and congregation than anywhere else. Many of those whose dying words of faith were whispered in my ear far away from home, mid scenes of suffering, were converts of those college meetings."²⁵

This revival spirit is still a part of the life on the campus of Bethel College. Each year some outstanding minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church is brought to the college for a week of religious services.

Another characteristic of the college has been its interest in the poor boys who have come to her campus for higher learning. The institution has always attempted to help those who come to it without adequate support. Camps were built around McLemoresville during camp meeting time, and the students of the college were allowed to use the cabins. Here they were permitted to cook their own meals and to

keep up with their own housework. A number of students were able to get jobs in the community, thus making themselves entirely self-supporting. Many of the boys preferred to live in the camps and do their own work to securing the aid which was available in the college. There was a small fund available for aid to students, but many of the boys could not use it. J. M. B. Roach was one of these students. He was highly honored by the faculty, the students, and the people of the community for his industry and good work in the school. He also served the school as a janitor.²⁶

In 1853 Reverend J. N. Roach resigned as head of the school, and the presidency changed rather rapidly until the Civil War forced the institution to close. There were five presidents from 1853 until the closing of the college in 1861. P. K. Wiley, Azel Freeman, and C. J. Bradley served one year each. Reverend Felix John served two years. He left in 1858, and Reverend M. Liles took over the duties of the presidency until the college closed for the Civil War.

Two literary societies were active on the campus at this time, and, judging from the graduating classes, the college was making some progress despite the rapid succession of presidents. No graduating class was very large, but there was a gradual increase until 1858, when fourteen were graduated. Eleven of this class received the B. A. degree and three received the Bachelor of Philosophy degree.

C. H. Smartt and A. D. Smith say that the college closed in 1861 for the Civil War.²⁷ The school term of 1860-1861 was probably interrupted for the conflict because the Alumni List at Bethel College does not show any graduates for the year 1861; there were only four shown for the year 1860.

Other than this there is not much known of the history of Bethel College before the Civil War. The exact date of its closing is not recorded, but the school was opened for matriculation of students at the beginning of the 1865-1866 term with Reverend B. W. McDonnold as the President. He served one year and was called by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to the presidency of Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee.

The country around McMoresville seems to have suffered considerably more from the war than other parts of West Tennessee. The

population of that section was about equally divided between the Union and the Confederacy, and at times the site of the college was occupied by each of the armies. The buildings were used as barracks, and much physical equipment was destroyed by the soldiers. Not only was the laboratory and classroom equipment lost, but the student body was also taken from the college. Most of the boys were serving in one or other of the armies. When the war was over, it was found that the endowment was gone. It had reached several thousand dollars before the outbreak of the conflict.²⁸

Among other things lost during the war was the large refracting telescope that was captured by the Federal troops who thought it the barrel of a brass cannon. This telescope had been bought by C. J. Bradley in 1852. "In the announcement of the college for that year the boast was made that the college would have the best telescope west of the mountains, even if the president had to go to Europe for it. The cost of the instrument was near three thousand dollars."²⁹ The laboratory building was refinished and so arranged that it could be used as an observatory. The telescope was later returned to the college by the Federal troops and is now in the vault at Bethel College. It was used until very recent years.³⁰ The legend on the telescope reads as follows:

Purchased by C. J. Bradley, D.D., 1852
 Captured by Federal Soldiers, 1862
 Returned by Federal Soldiers, 1865
 Repaired through efforts of W. W. Hendrix, D.D., 1872
 Repaired through efforts of Will N. Calhoun, 1912.³¹

The task of rebuilding after the war was a hard one. However, the buildings of the college were left with little damage to them. The loss of the endowment and equipment was the greatest loss sustained by the school. The institution did manage to open for the school year, 1865-1866; but the minutes of the General Assembly did not mention Bethel College again until 1869: "From Lincoln University, Bethel College, . . . and other private or public schools, we have only the general information that they are doing well."³²

In 1871 Bethel was not mentioned in the General Assembly Minutes, but it appears that the college was not doing very well financially: "Our principal institutions of learning are all sadly in need of money. The most of them are without sufficient buildings. None of them are sufficiently endowed. Some have hardly a nominal endow-

ment. They can not fulfill the great objects of their mission in such circumstances."³³

During the administration of Reverend B. W. McDonnold in 1865-1866 the doors of the institution were opened to women for the first time. Before the Civil War it had been an educational institution for young men only. Bethel College has been a co-educational institution since that time.

Reverend McDonnold served as president for one year, and Reverend J. S. Howard became president of the college in 1866 for a one-year term. His successor was Reverend Michael Liles, who served two years before resuming his work in the ministry. Reverend W. W. Hendrix was then chosen president.³⁴

It was during the administration of Reverend Hendrix that the college was moved to McKenzie, Tennessee, the crossroad of the N. C. & St. L. and the L. & N. Railways. The railroad had missed McLemoresville, and it was thought best to move the college, since the town was moving away from it. During the fall meeting of the West Tennessee Synod a committee of five was appointed to confer with the Board of Trustees about the advisability of moving the college. The committee, in joint session with the Board of Trustees of the college, resolved on December 30, 1871, to move the school to McKenzie, its present location. Preparations were made so that the school could start operations in McKenzie at once.³⁵ The charter changes regarding the location were not made until 1891, when the school was put under the consolidated Synod of Tennessee.³⁶

The plot of ground on which the college is located was deeded to the Board of Trustees of Bethel College by J. M. McKenzie on February 2, 1872.³⁷ A large brick building with a capacity of 300 students was erected on the campus. The Bethel College catalogue of 1875-1876 declared that the school was under the management of the Board of Trustees and listed five teachers and 122 students.

There were struggling days ahead for the school because it was short of money and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church wanted to send all educational funds to Cumberland University at Lebanon, Tennessee. The Cumberland Presbyterians and other friends in West Tennessee contributed to the finances of the school, however, and it weathered the

storm. The catalogues of the last years of the nineteenth century and those of the early years of the twentieth century were optimistic in their tone, and those connected with the college seemed to be sure of the future of the institution.

Improvements have been made in the school's facilities. Courses in various other departments have been added to the curriculum, and Bethel College now ranks among the best of the denominational schools.

The greeting of president Reed in the catalogue of 1904-1905 reflects the optimistic spirit of the leaders of the college.³⁸

Greetings:

We rejoice to announce to our friends and patrons that the closing year has been most pleasant and prosperous, and we have accomplished more than we had anticipated. We have made improvements, and have added much to the convenience of our buildings. Judging from the present, we expect to accomplish great things next term. We have had unity in the faculty, loyalty in the student body, and a larger enrollment than for many years.

Bethel College now merits first rank among the denominational schools. Nor is this statement presumptuous; for more than a half a century Bethel College has sent from its doors men and women who today are standing in the front rank of eminent service. They are found in most prominent pulpits, in the halls of state, in the forums of Justice, on marts of trade, and upon the farm. Their influence has gone out through the press, from the teacher's rostrum and Christian Motherhood. In short Bethel College is woven into the warp and woof of Cumberland Presbyterianism. This college can safely stand upon fifty years of work, and few there are to surpass it. With this glorious past I stand at the helm, with a crew of faithful and tried teachers beside me, looking out upon the sea before us. The current is deep, the breezes are fair, the skies are clear, all favorable for a propitious voyage; yet I realize there are breakers to be watched and storms to be faced. Our campus is a beauty, our buildings are commodious, and with open hearts and ready hands we welcome the ambitious youth of our country. Now praise and speech are not sufficient to raise the college and sustain it; nothing short of solid, earnest work in each presbytery and our new West Tennessee Synod will give us the school we desire and need.

This annual announcement is sent forth on a mission to herald to every Cumberland Presbyterian Home the good news that Bethel College is worth your confidential patronage.

Signed,

J. B. Reed, President

There were dark days ahead. But they were caused by disunity in

the Church. The catalogue of 1953-1954 gives a summary of these trying times.⁸⁹

In 1908, the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church recommended that a teacher be secured to give instruction in a theological school to be operated in connection with Bethel College. In 1913, as the result of a compromise, the Board of Trustees of the Theological Seminary came into possession of \$33,750 of endowment funds of the theological school formerly operated in connection with Cumberland University of Lebanon, and with this endowment it was possible to secure an additional teacher for the theological school. This school, which bears the name "The Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary," has continued in operation in conjunction with Bethel College since 1908.

In 1918, a conference of ministers and laymen of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was held at Memphis, Tennessee, in which a plan was outlined and recommendations submitted to the General Assembly for a campaign to raise \$500,000 to endow a literary and theological school to serve the entire church.

In 1919, the Synod of West Tennessee tendered Bethel College as a gift to the General Assembly. The offer was accepted, and Bethel College became the property of the whole Church. Subsequently, at the General Assembly at Greenville, Tennessee, in 1922, McKenzie was chosen as the permanent location of the school, namely, the General Assembly's Board of Education, the Board of Trustees of Bethel College, and the Board of Trustees of the Theological Seminary, were merged into one board to be known as the Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Education.

In 1923, the college was reorganized on a thoroughly standardized basis and has since continued to render a creditable service in the field of education.

Throughout its career Bethel has emphasized the cultivation of the moral and spiritual as well as the mental and physical welfare of its students, and to this end particular attention has been given to choosing as teachers men and women of high Christian character.

Today Bethel College is the Cumberland Presbyterian Church's only institution of higher learning, and it is offering young people the best instruction in the development of character and Christian living. There are approximately four hundred sixty students enrolled in the college. We feel sure that some of these young people will be men and women of distinction as a result of their training and guidance while attending Bethel College.

1. Evans, H. B., *History of Education in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, (unpublished thesis on file in the vault at Bethel College), pp. 215-216.
2. Smartt, C. H., and A. D. Smith, *The First One Hundred Years of the History of Bethel College* (A thesis presented to the faculty of the Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1944), p. 262.
3. McDonnold, B. W., *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1869, pp. 193-194.
4. Mr. A. K. Burrow, grandson of Reverend Reuben Burrow, who has been a resident of Memphis since young manhood, says that his grandfather came from Guilford County, North Carolina, was one of those who actually started the school, and was one of its early Presidents.
5. *Act of Incorporation*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1847; Chapter LXXI, pp. 110-112.
6. *Act to Amend*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1850; Chapter CXXVII, p. 322.
7. Personal letter from J. C. Denton, Superintendent of Schools, Carroll County, Tennessee, July 7, 1954.
8. Smartt, C. H., and A. D. Smith, *The First One Hundred Years of the History of Bethel College* (A thesis presented to the faculty of the Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1944), p. 5.
9. *Bethel College Catalogues* (Alumni List), in vault at Bethel College.
10. *Bethel College Catalogue*, 1924, p. 13.
11. Stephens, John V., *The Story of the Founding of the Theological School in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1934, p. 20.
12. McDonnold, B. W., *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1869; pp. 363-365.
13. *Act to Amend*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1858; Chapter XCII, p. 209.
14. *Act to Amend*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1860; Chapter XXXV, p. 197.
15. *Act to Amend*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1891; Chapter LXXI, p. 294.
16. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1851, p. 38.
17. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1852, p. 52.
18. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, (For dates, see table above). In the *Minutes of 1859*, p. 120, and the *Minutes of 1860*, p. 15, Bethel College is listed as not reporting.
19. There were only 152 students listed in the *Bethel College Catalogue of 1850-1851*; while the *Minutes of the General Assembly* reports that the college had on roll 172 students.
20. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1887, p. 134.
21. McDonnold, B. W., *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1869; p. 576.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. McDonnold, B. W., "The Importance of our Colleges to the Church," *The Theological Medium*, January, 1873; pp. 18-19.
26. McDonnold, B. W., *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1869, p. 567.
27. Smartt, C. H., and A. D. Smith, *The First One Hundred Years of the History of Bethel College*, p. 33.
28. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1855, p. 55. Bethel College was reported to have \$6,000 worth of buildings, and an endowment of \$16,000. The monetary value of the school was not mentioned any more in the *Minutes* until 1887, when it had buildings worth \$16,000; p. 134.

29. Smartt, C. H., and A. D. Smith, *The First One Hundred Years of the History of Bethel College*, p. 37.
30. Notes from private conversation with President Baker. August 10, 1954.
31. Plate on the telescope now in the vault at Bethel College.
32. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1869, p. 24.
33. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*, 1871, p. 18.
34. *Bethel College Catalogue*, 1911-1912, p. 5.
35. *Bethel College Catalogue*, 1875-1876, p. 16.
36. *Act to Amend*, Public Acts of the Legislature, State of Tennessee, 1891; Chapter LXXI, p. 187.
37. *Minute Book L*, Carroll County Chancery Court, Huntingdon, Tennessee, p. 94.
38. *Bethel College Catalogue*, 1904-1905, p. 9.
39. *Bethel College Catalogue*, 1953-1954, pp. 13-14.