AN OBSERVER trying to describe his first visit to a youth assembly, with its classes, morning watch, campfire service, stunt night, and treasure hunt, said, "It's a combination of college, circus and camp meeting."

Today's summer assembly demands a different figure of speech. The assembly owes much to two factors in history—the camp meeting and the chautauqua. Some of the best characteristics of both have survived in the assembly, even though more than 100 camp meetings are still drawing crowds and the year's program at Lake Chautauqua, New York is as well filled as ever.

The camp meeting movement that flourished in frontier days has been misunderstood. In the early stages, these meetings were boisterous; they were often accompanied by disorderliness, irregularities, and hysteria. But within a few years camp meetings became well planned and orderly institutions. Charles A. Johnson, writing on "The Frontier Camp Meeting" in The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, says:

"On successive frontiers it passed through a boisterous youth, characterized by a lack of planning, extreme disorder, high-tension emotionalism, bodily excitement, and some immorality; it then moved to a more formalized stage distinguished by its planning, more effective audience management, and notable decline in excessive emotionalism. In this institutional phase the meetings were smaller in size, and highly systematized as to frequency, length, procedure of service, and location."

Some of the emotionalism was no doubt due to the conditions of frontier living—the caprices of the weather, the danger of attacks by unfriendly Indians, the scourge of starvation, the threat of illness without benefit of medical aid, and sheer loneliness. In any event there is little basis for the claim that the emotional excitement, accompanied by bodily agitations (sometimes called "the jerks"), was evidence of primitive habits occurring only among the ignorant and untutored. Even in cultured New England, under the

* Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Historical Society, Lake Junaluska, N. C., July 5, 1963. Bishop Nall is the presiding bishop of the Minnesota Area of The Methodist Church and President of the Association of Methodist Historical Societies. The Lake Junaluska Methodist Assembly is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year.
preaching of Jonathan Edwards, people "wept; they turned pale; they cried aloud; some fainted, some fell into convulsions, some suffered thereafter from impaired health, and some lost their reason,\" to quote Frederick Davenport in *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*.

Wade Crawford Barclay, *The History of Methodist Missions*, offers this explanation of the emotional phenomena of revival meetings, "Since the itinerants emphasized the experimental nature of the Christian faith, it was inevitable that the emotional element should be prominent in Methodist revivals. Their primary purpose was not to inculcate doctrine but to awaken the conscience and move the will to action. Sin to them was intensely real, and its punishment certain. By some, hell was vividly portrayed and its torments described in lurid terms. Did not the apostle say, 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men'?\"

The preachers sometimes did their persuading with remarkable eloquence. Though without much academic training, some of the pioneer preachers became gifted orators whose eloquence stirred the people. W. W. Sweet in *Circuit Riding Days in Indiana* quotes the Rev. John Strange on his schooling, or lack of schooling, at "Brush College": "Here I graduated and I love her memory still. Her academic groves are the boundless forests and prairies of the western wilds; her Pierian springs are the gushing fountains from rocks and mountain fastnesses; her Arcadian groves and Orphic songs are the wild woods, and the birds of every color and every song, relieved now and then with the bass hootings of the night owl and the weird treble of the whippoorwill; her curriculum is the philosophy of nature and the mysteries of redemption; her library is the word of God, the *Discipline* and the hymnbook, supplemented with trees and brooks, and stones, all of which are full of wisdom and sermons and speeches; and her parchments of literary honors are the horse and saddlebags."

A preacher with such a flair for oratory could no doubt stir his hearers' hearts to the depths. The preachers won most of their converts in camp meetings and revival or "protracted" meetings. Since Methodism was essentially a revival movement, in the early days revivals were a large part of the church's work, and they brought many souls into the church.

But times changed and the old methods became less effective in winning converts. Besides, a new kind of evangelism was emerging. Horace Bushnell, liberal Congregational leader, wrote of the revival era in *Christian Nurture*: "The merit is that it displaced an era of great formality, and brought in the demand of a truly supernatural experience. The defect is that it has cast a type of religious individualism, intense beyond any former example. It makes nothing
of the family, and the church, and the organic powers God has constituted as vehicles of grace. It takes every man as if he had existed alone."

Out of such changes evolved the chautauqua, the second movement that has contributed to the summer assembly as we know it today. A few leaders of the chautauqua movement have been reticent about owning any kinship with the camp meeting, preferring to play up the new educational and cultural features. In an historical sketch published in 1934, Arthur Eugene Bestor, Jr., professor at Yale and former editor-in-chief of the Chautauquan Daily, said:

"Chautauqua has sometimes been regarded as an outgrowth of the camp meeting movement, but this is a misconception of history. An educational purpose was uppermost in the minds of both founders, and rigid control was exercised over public meetings in order to eliminate revivalistic tendencies."

It is true that Dr. John H. Vincent (later Bishop), one of the two chautauqua founders, did assert that "the assembly was totally unlike the camp meeting," adding, "We did our best to make it so." But Lewis Miller, the other founder, an Ohio manufacturer and Sunday school worker, wrote in the introduction to Vincent's book, The Chautauqua Movement:

"Chautauqua was founded for an enlarged recognition of the Word. What more appropriate than to find some beautiful plateau of nature's own building for its rostrum, with the sky for its frescoed ceiling, the continents for its floor, the camp meeting spirit of prayer and praise for its rostrum exercises, the church school for thought and development."

Vincent was an educator who did not hesitate to apply to Sunday schools the advanced organization of the rapidly growing public schools. He adopted many of Horace Bushnell's ideas concerning religious education, as well as some of the views of Robertson of Brighton. Barclay says of Vincent, "Within Methodism he became the leading advocate of infusing religion with intellectual and spiritual culture; of educational evangelism; and of bringing the whole life under the domination of Christian ideals."

Concerning the first assembly at Chautauqua, Vincent wrote: "The lecturers and teachers were widely known as men and women of superior ability and large experience. Everything centered in the Sunday school. Never were so many representative Sunday school people so long together. . . . Never had Sunday school work been more carefully canvassed, or its methods more fully or admirably illustrated."

Chautauqua developed and rapidly expanded. Within a dozen years there were 21 distinct Chautauqua organizations, reaching
thousands of people. There were the Chautauqua Teachers' Reading Union, the Chautauqua Book-a-Month Reading Circle, the Chautauqua Society of Fine Arts, and the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle.

Some 39 summer assemblies were soon under way, a number of them on grounds where camp meetings had met in former years. They could be found from Maine to California. At Siloam Springs, Arkansas, an amphitheater 100 by 125 feet was built in 1885. At Bay View, near Petoskey, Michigan, a large hotel, auditorium, chapel, restaurant and docks were built on a 650-acre tract overlooking Lake Michigan. Soon there were also 150 cottages on the grounds.

At Canby, Oregon, a campground on the Molalla River, midway between Portland and Salem, became the site of a thriving assembly. Near Tallahassee, Florida, an assembly was established on a ridge of 208 acres near a beautiful lake. There were soon buildings for a cooking school, kindergarten and young people's headquarters, and a large two-story building with assembly room and classrooms.

The Interstate Sunday school Assembly turned to Forest Park, adjoining the city of Ottawa, Kansas, and in that location served both Kansas and Missouri. Through the liberality of the city, the park was provided with a large and convenient tabernacle, a normal class building and an assembly hall. Lakeside-on-Lake-Erie, within sight of Put-In Bay Island, immortalized by the victory of Commodore Perry, soon had a hotel, boardinghouses, restaurants, stores, cottages, a chapel, and a large auditorium. The present auditorium at Lakeside seats 6,000 people and is the regular meeting place for the Northeast Ohio Annual Conference.

Monteagle Assembly in the Cumberland Mountains, undenominational and unsectional, dates from 1882. It began with a board of trustees elected annually by the members, with an equal number from each denomination listed in the membership. In the first three years of the assembly's existence some 20 states were represented each season, and through the years it has continued to draw people from all sections of the country. In the early days distant cities in the South sent their public school teachers for refresher courses, special dormitories being erected for them. The Assembly built a Hall of Philosophy, like the one at Chautauqua.

Monterey, California, welcomed Pacific Grove, and soon a number of notable scholars, scientists and literary figures were attending, along with many average people of limited means. This assembly soon became a city of summer homes with graded streets. The secretary, Mrs. Mary H. Field, wrote Dr. Vincent:

"Nature and art have rivalled each other. We challenge the world to show such another campground. Each assembly of two weeks'
duration has had fresh attractions. Music, art, literature, science
and religion are all represented."

The Southern California Assembly, sometimes called “the Chau-
tauqua of Southern California,” was established at Long Beach. Pro-
fessor G. R. Crow, its first president, said of it:
“The Acropolis, crowning that famous height of ancient Athens,
overlooking the waters of the Aegean Sea, was not regarded with
greater pride by the native Athenian than is our pavilion or amphi-
theater by our native Chautauquans, crowning, as it does, the bluffs
of the mighty Pacific, and overlooking the ruins and the dreamland
of the Montezumas. Here, as nowhere else in the United States, do
January and July continually smile on each other. Here, at even-
tide, the devout Chautauquan chants the hymn of his Alma Mater:

               God bless the hearts that beat as one
               Though continents apart;
               We greet you, brothers, face to face,
               We meet you heart to heart.”

In The Story of Chautauqua, Jesse L. Hurlburt writes of “Chau-
tauqua’s Elder Daughters.” The three oldest began in 1876, two years
after the founding of Chautauqua. They were: the Sunday School
Parliament on Wellesley Island, among the romantic Thousand Is-
lands in the St. Lawrence River; Bay View Assembly, in Michigan;
and Clear Lake Assembly, on a beautiful sheet of water in northern
Iowa, midway between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

The chautauquas developed circuits and lyceum bureaus that
supplied speakers, singers, magicians and other performers for the
growing number of centers. Political figures were in demand, and
many a public issue was debated on the platforms under the tents.
The lecturers at the muddy crossroads of Mid-America first intro-
duced the pros and cons of high and low tariff, prohibition, juvenile
courts, votes for women. Parents heard talk of supervised play-
grounds, school lunches, free milk for babies, and the new doctrine
that the little red schoolhouse was hardly good enough.

When the Chautauqua movement was at its peak, Professor Irving
Fisher of Yale wrote:
“The success or failure of democracy depends on public opinion.
The chautauqua movement has probably done more toward keeping
American public opinion informed, alert and unbiased than any
other movement. The press has come to be regarded, like adver-
tising, as warped by special interests. The pulpit is restricted as to
subject matter and manner of treatment. The moving picture screen
offers possibilities as yet unknown for good or ill. But the chau-
tauqua platform has kept above suspicion as the greatest agency
of popular education.”
It may be that the chautauqua movement became secularized as the great circuits developed, but it really languished because the character and the interests of the people changed. The radio and talking pictures, the automobile and airplane came in to alter public interest. The chautauqua had done as much as any other influence to develop community; now a shrunken world called for worldwide community. The Depression beginning in 1929 played its part, too.

Harry P. Harrison's *Culture Under Canvas* closes with these wistful words: "The circuit program disappeared like the circuit rider. Its last oratorical echo died, the last quartet sang its last sweet note, the tents molded. But something has endured."

Not only the reading books and study courses, but also the physical features of Chautauqua were copied by the summer assemblies that sprang up. Many of them had a Hall of Philosophy; and the Park of Palestine, with its representation, in miniature, of the mountains and lakes, fields and rivers, was standard equipment.

Hurlbut tells of a Methodist bishop, of generous proportions, arriving late one night at Round Lake, New York, and inquiring the way to the hotel. He happened to ask directions of a small boy.

"The gates are shut, and you'll have to climb the fence yonder," the boy advised.

The bishop did so, and according to the story, fell from the top of the fence into the Dead Sea, producing such a tidal wave that the waters washed away the city of Jericho. The ecclesiastical leader, spattered with mud, walked up the Jordan Valley and over the mountains of Ephraim, destroying the cities and laying waste several holy places. He caught his foot in Jacob's Well, and bumped his head on Mount Gerizim. He reached his hotel at last. The next day he was shown the land of Palestine in worse ruin than the time when it was laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar's army.

At Ocean Grove in 1881, Hurlbut had a children's class. He asked the boys and girls to meet him at the beach when the tide was scheduled to be at its lowest. They were to bring pails and shovels, or shingles, if pails had been lost.

The procession marched down the avenue to a place where Hurlbut proposed to build a damp-sand model of Palestine, 200 feet long. The children fell to, eagerly constructing the coastline, piling up the mountains, digging out the Jordan Valley, with its lakes. A thousand people were looking on.

"When it was finished," says Hurlbut, "I walked up and down the model, asking the children questions upon it, and was somewhat surprised to find how much they knew. Some whose conduct in the class gave little promise were among the promptest to exploit their knowledge. It was my purpose to leave the map that it might be seen by the multitude until the tide should wash it away. But the boys..."
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shouted, 'Can't we stamp it down now?' and I rather reluctantly consented.

"Palestine has been overrun, and trodden down, and destroyed by armies of Assyrians, Babylonians, Turks, Crusaders, and many other warriors, but the land never suffered such a treading down by the Gentiles as on that morning at Ocean Grove."

Assembly programs have changed with the passing years. Consider now one on the Atlantic Seaboard, one in the Middle West, and Lake Junaluska in the Southeast.

Ocean Grove, which fully endorsed the Chautauqua idea, ante-dated the parent New York assembly by five years. It grew out of the holiness camp meeting movement, and specifically a national camp meeting for the promotion of holiness, held at Philadelphia, in 1867. After the decision was made to locate on the seashore, the New Jersey coast from Cape May to Sandy Hook was carefully explored for a likely location. The Rev. W. B. Osborn and his group were seeking three things: the best beach, the best grove, and the place freest from mosquitoes. They chose a site, high and dry, surrounded on three sides by water—two lakes and the sea. Mrs. Osborn in her book, entitled In the Beginning God, says:

"It was wilderness, desert and desolation. Silence reigned. A serpentine and heavy sand road, wide enough only for a single wagon track, was all that penetrated the forest. When we first entered, where now our gates are, the driver stood in front of his carriage and lifted the limbs, so as to crowd our conveyance through the brush and drooping branches of the trees. The heavens were black, the grass wet, and the sands half-knee-deep. We alighted from our carriage near a cedar tree where the model of Jerusalem now stands."

But, the founders saw the possibilities. Later, at a prayer meeting held in a tent, the presiding elder of the New Brunswick District said that the venture reminded him of the first words of the Bible, "In the beginning God." That became a slogan as the people worked to build a place where all who wished might find "the desired rest and the great salvation."

During almost a century the ministries of Ocean Grove have been threefold: spiritual, cultural and recreational. Annually, religious services have been held, first in tents, then in an open-air auditorium, and finally in a building that seats 10,000 people and houses one of the best pipe organs in the world. It has an electric four-manual console, echo organ in the ceiling, chimes in the organ chamber, ceiling bells, gongs, harmonic sounds, castanets, tambourines, and surf, thunder and rain effects. The altar rail in the auditorium is 114 feet long.

Walter Damrosch brought the New York Symphony Orchestra to
Ocean Grove. Among those who have sung there are John McCormack, Galli-Curci, Madam Schumann-Heink, and Lawrence Tibbetts. Jascha Heifetz and Conrad Thibault have performed there. Billy Sunday, Gypsy Smith, and Billy Graham are among the famed preachers who have appeared at Ocean Grove, along with Stanley Jones and Bishop Arthur J. Moore.

Ocean Grove has retained much of its original character, including the prohibition of “ardent spirits.” On Sundays automobiles, except emergency vehicles, are not allowed in the 4,000 population city. Forty years ago the association decided to abolish the showing of motion pictures in the auditorium. In 1958 the association voted to allow bicycle riding on the boardwalk mornings only from 7 to 8 o’clock. The association governing the city consists of 13 ministers and 13 laymen, all members of The Methodist Church. Each year at least 50,000 people participate in the activities of this community “dedicated to Christ.”

In 1923, the association went on record as unanimously opposed to the construction of an ocean-front boulevard through the grove. However, the boardwalk, dating back to 1880, was restored and improved after the destructive hurricane of 1944. Following the storm of 1953 the association spent $325,000 for rock bulkheading, a new stone jetty, repairs on the boardwalk, and a new aluminum roof on the auditorium. The new Methodist Home in Ocean Grove cost $1,200,000, and the new school building $225,000.

Epworth Heights, located on a mile of beautiful lakeshore just north of Ludington, Michigan, arose out of three dissimilar circumstances.

In 1893, the year of the Great Depression, the lumber boom that made Michigan pine famous had begun to wane. Ludington was still getting along, but Lincoln, on the other side of the river, was already a ghost town. Sawmills were closing. The mercantile business in the stores was slow. The railroad had few passengers.

Between Lincoln and Ludington there was a good fishing and hunting area well known to campers and sportsmen. A group of Epworth Leaguers considered locating an institute there. A citizens’ committee, prompted by the manager of the railroad, offered to drill a well if the institute would locate there. Also, the railroad promised excursion fares and special advertising.

During the summer of 1893 the first camp assembly met. Some 1,200 to 1,500 people came, overcrowding the tent city and compelling many to seek shelter in Ludington, two miles away. Pleased with the success of the project, the railroad offered a gift of $10,000, and the citizens’ committee contributed a deed to 300 acres of land along with some cash. Electric lines were strung and water mains were laid.
On their side, the Methodist young people agreed to construct suitable facilities for scientific, intellectual and religious studies. They promised to build a hotel and summer cottages. The next spring snow had scarcely melted in the piney glen near the center of the resort when work was started on an auditorium to seat 1,200 persons. The first preaching service was held in July, 1894. The first unit of the hotel was ready in June. A building boom followed and by the summer of 1900 there were 100 permanent homes on the grounds and the tent city had all but disappeared. Administration and classroom buildings were added. During the 1920s many more cottages were built, along with community garages. Broad cement walks replaced the narrow wooden walks.

Many distinguished persons appeared at Epworth Heights: Ben Greet, renowned Shakespearean actor with his English troupe (he thought the outdoor amphitheater one of the best in America); Bishop William A. Quayle, whose Sunday morning services are still well remembered; Bishop Wilbur P. Thirkield, of missionary fame; and many others. Regularly outstanding ministers came to preach. Wooden bleachers were built along the shore down to the water's edge. The vespers services were timed so that the benediction was pronounced shortly before the sun sank into the big lake.

The times changed and the Chautauqua movement waned; the programs at Epworth Heights were suspended in 1919. Then the families of the cottagers developed their own musical and dramatic features. Specialists in golf, tennis, swimming and baseball came to offer help in sports. The water front was always filled with children. A marina and launching ramp were built on Lincoln River, with access to Lake Michigan.

"The original policies of the founding fathers are still the fundamentals of management," writes Pierce Lewis, whose memories of Epworth Heights go back 65 years. Good moral character is the chief requisite for membership in this summer colony of Christian people.

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina is in the Great Smoky Mountains, 25 miles west of Asheville and 60 miles east of Gatlinburg. This assembly came into being in 1913.

In a 1913 copy of The Christian Advocate (Nashville), Dr. James Cannon described the glories of the Southern Assembly Grounds, as the place was originally called. "Waynesville [the county seat town three miles from Lake Junaluska] is one of the most healthful and beautiful resorts in the entire range of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Nature is at her best in these glorious wooded mountains and fertile valleys. To those who would like to combine, in a sojourn of two or three weeks in the mountains, recreation for the body, entertainment and instruction for the mind, and edification for the spir-
ritual man, no better choice can be made for the summer of 1913 than the Bible and Evangelistic Conference."

That first year a missionary conference preceded the Bible-centered conference on the shores of Lake Junaluska. The twofold emphasis on the Bible and evangelism meant that the Bible was the center of attention the first week and evangelism the second.

Bishop James Atkins, who lived in Waynesville, was influential in launching this Southern Chautauqua for the Methodists. Bishop Walter R. Lambuth, of missionary fame, was on the program for the opening day, June 13. His theme was, “Lest We Forget: the White Man’s Burden” and “Africa.” He had recently visited Africa accompanied by John Wesley Gilbert, of Paine College. Dr. Gilbert was present and spoke on, “The Black Man’s Problem.”

Dr. Charles L. Goodell, of New York, gave a four-day series of lectures of special interest to preachers. An expert on archeology, Dr. Camden M. Cobern told of explorations in Egypt and Palestine and also gave a series of talks on the work of Paul.

Dr. Lincoln Hutley, scheduled as “one of the most fluent, entertaining and popular platform speakers on biblical and literary themes in the entire South,” spoke on the place of sacred poetry in the literature of the world. Professor George M. Sleeth showed how Scriptures and hymns and sacred poems can be read effectively. During the vespers he offered recitations of great literary pieces.

From Fort Worth came Dr. John A. Rice to preach four times on Old Testament prophets. Dean Wilbur F. Tillett, of Vanderbilt, gave early morning lectures on the literature of the New Testament, with “special reference to the revelation and exaltation of Christ as the crowning purpose and inspiration of this literature.” Dr. George R. Stuart, well-known evangelist for whom the Lake Junaluska auditorium was later named, was the Sunday preacher.

Laymen were given a prominent part in the assembly program; John R. Pepper, of Memphis, spoke on “The Sunday School and the Saving of the Young.”

There were singers on the program. Cannon wrote of them, “They are preachers as well as singers. They have the spirit and passion of evangelists.”

The spirit of dedication mentioned by Cannon has been evident through the years in life-saving guards and life-saving preachers at Lake Junaluska, and it accounts for the fact that this assembly flourishes, even though many older assemblies are gone. Adapting its program to the spirit of the times, making religion relevant to present-day moods, and yet refusing to compromise principles and purposes, has paid off. This writer is not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but he is willing to predict that this assembly in this su-
premely beautiful place, will survive to celebrate its centennial 50 years hence.

What of that future? If I may be allowed the undeserved luxury of a prediction, it seems to me that the summer assembly, drawing on the traditions of the camp meeting and chautauqua of other days, must also make use of the best experiences of the ashram or retreat, the study institutes (specifically, the evangelical academies of Europe), and the centers like Church and World in Holland.

The Church is, after all, both the gathered and the scattered community. Church people come together for refreshment and renewal, for worship and fellowship, and then they go out to preach and teach and heal, to witness and to win.

The Church dare not become a roof-garden to which we retreat for prayer, lifting our eyes to heaven and forgetting the unpleasant facts of earth, the prides and prejudices of sinful men, the hungers, the pains, the needs of people everywhere. The Church dare not become a fall-out shelter to which we run when our fears and frustrations beat us down, and we feel unequal to the task of living. The Church dare not become a spiritual discount house to which we go when we want a cheap and easy way of being saved from our sinful selves. There is no easy way, only the steep, rocky way of discipline that Jesus Christ walked to Calvary.

The Church is eternally in the world, which God sent his only begotten Son to save, and yet the Church is never of the world. As Karl Barth has well put it, the Church is called together, called out, and called up by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And it is the blessed privilege of the summer assembly in these years and the years ahead to renew and restore the sense of mission in the Church, our church, every church which is the body of our Lord.