

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

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THEOLOGICAL DIRECTIVES

From the White House?

BY BRAD K. GSELL

On Tuesday, June 24, 2014, President Barack Obama hosted the White House Forum on Global LGBT Human Rights. The keynote address was delivered by National Security Advisor Susan Rice, and the text of her speech was made available for immediate release by the Office of the White House Press Secretary.

Rice told the "wonderful collection of faith leaders, human rights activists, private sector representatives and colleagues in government" that promoting the homosexual agenda "is work to which we are all called." Making any opposition to this movement a matter of violating "civil rights" and "human rights," Rice proceeded to strongly condemn those who oppose same-sex marriage, stating: "It offends common humanity ... when individuals anywhere have their rights restricted because of who they are."

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THE LORD'S COVENANTING REMNANT

BY MARK W. EVANS

Jesus Christ said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37,38). Throughout the ages, our sovereign God has raised up servants to declare His Word, proclaim His Gospel, edify His people, and defy His enemies. In 1638, many in Scotland signed a National Covenant, vowing to defend the Scriptural doctrines and practices of the Reformation. Some signed the document with their blood. They knew they faced a fierce battle, but looked to the King of kings to withstand the onslaught of the Evil One. There was a bloodbath in Scotland, but the Lord won the battle.

The final, fierce struggle that ended Scotland's reign of civil and religious tyranny rested upon the shoulders of a separated remnant, resolved to never compromise allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of executions, imprisonments,

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impoverishing fines, banishments, tortures, and desertions, the Covenanters were diminished to a small remnant. Yet, the Lord preserved a clear testimony through a few faithful ministers and a flock that would not hear the voice of “strangers” (John 10:5).

In 1660, King Charles II returned to the throne under the pretense of allegiance to the National Covenant of Scotland and to the Solemn League and Covenant of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Once upon the throne, the king removed his mask and began a bloody persecution to dismantle Protestantism and prepare the land for Romanism.

John Howie, author of *The Scots Worthies*, wrote: “During these twenty-eight years of persecution, it is computed that not less than 18,000 people suffered death or the utmost hardships and extremities”¹ A witness to the sufferings gave a list of King Charles’ atrocities: “His cruelty over the bodies of Christians, in chasing and killing upon the fields, many without sentence, and bloody butchering, hanging, [be]heading, mangling, dismembering alive, quartering upon scaffolds, imprisoning, laying in irons, torturing by boots, thumbkins, fire-matches, cutting pieces out of the ears of others, banishing and selling as slaves old and young men and women in great numbers, oppressing many others in their estates, forfeiting, robbing, spoiling, pillaging their goods, casting them out of their habitations, interdicting any to reset them, under the pain of being treated after the same manner.”²

The king also devised snares to divide the Covenanters, including an “Indulgence” that allowed Scottish ministers to subscribe allegiance to the king in order to have freedom

to preach and protection from persecution. However, such allegiance gave credence to the king’s unlawful claims to civil and religious tyranny. It was a transgression of the Scottish National Covenant.

Those who discerned the danger and refused the Indulgence were bitterly rejected and slandered. Steadfast followers of Christ faced persecution by a government seeking their annihilation and rejection from their Indulged brethren. Although slanders, misrepresentations, and false reports plagued the remnant, they continued to worship God, proclaim the Gospel, and resist the false teachings and tyranny of their oppressors.

“Today, our country faces tyranny that threatens the foundations of civil and religious liberty. Will there be a remnant to stand without compromise and to ‘earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints’?”

The faithful were forced to form small societies in order to provide protection, mutual edification, and a united testimony against compromising and apostate religion. Their members adhered to the National Covenant and defied their persecutors and defended the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ.

A. Sinclair Horne, in his book *Torchbearers of the Truth*, wrote: “Many who have referred to the Society People have branded them as Extremists and censured them for their exclusiveness, but, when one considers the situation, this criticism loses its validity. Those days were marked by spiritual declension. The principles of the Reformation were largely swept aside and abandoned. The tide of unfaithfulness had to be stemmed and it was left to these peo-

ple to do it. Granted, they gave every appearance of being exclusive, but why should they be so severely censured for refusing to associate themselves in worship with those who had accepted the Indulgence or to listen to any other minister but their own? One writer has summed it up in this way, ‘They stood alone because they were left alone.’ The old paths had been forsaken and they believed that God had given them the responsibility of seeing that these paths were kept open for all who wanted to tread them.”³

Donald Cargill, called the “Lone Star of the Covenant,” ministered to this remnant. He resisted the tyrannical, papist king bent upon subjecting Scotland to his false claims of civil and ecclesiastical domination. This stalwart martyr for Christ’s Crown Rights also maintained a testimony against unfaithful brethren who compromised their solemn, covenantal oaths.

Although alone in his ministerial duties, the Lord blessed him with laymen of unbending resolve. John Main is an example of this unconquerable spirit. Just before his execution on March 19, 1684, he wrote a testimony, including these words: “I leave my testimony against the people, their hearing of curates, basely leaving the way of truth, and following a course dishonoring to God, and destructive to themselves. Also against the joining with the indulged and unfaithful ministers, vindicating themselves thus, ‘That it is good to hear the word,’ not considering that these ministers have so far gone out of the way of God, in their accepting of that Indulgence, as that they ought to be testified against, and when they go on obstinately in that crooked way, ought to be withdrawn from.”⁴

Donald Cargill became the object of the king’s wrath and was forced to live in hiding, yet managed to frequently preach and perform ministerial duties among the

Lord's remnant. A. Sinclair Horne wrote: "Cargill now stood alone as the leader of the persecuted people. Every step was watched and he could not move from one place to another without tidings of some new plan of capture coming to him. On more than one occasion he had to disband a meeting when he saw the heavy dust from the horses' hooves on the distant road. He also had to stand bravely and fearlessly against those who would betray him."⁵

His escapes were numerous. Jock Purves, in his book *Fair Sunshine*, wrote of a memorable deliverance: "Familiar with the hills and hollows of his childhood, he had to run very fast up and down them one day, years later, when chased by swift and armed pursuers who came to take him in his preaching. Cargill was always preaching. He ran for a known rocky chasm where the River Keith narrows. Mounting a huge rock he took a flying leap across the river. None of his hunters dared follow. They gave up the chase. It is called 'Cargill's Loup' [Leap] to this day."⁶

Cargill was eventually captured by his enemies and condemned to hang. As he ascended the ladder to the scaffold, he said, "God knows that I mount this ladder with less fear, less perturbation than I ever mounted a pulpit to preach."⁷

Before his death, he said, "Now I am near the getting of the crown of which I shall be sure; for which I bless the Lord and desire all you to bless Him that hath brought me here, and made me triumph over devils and men and sin. They shall wound me no more. I forgive all men the wrongs they have done me and I pray the sufferers may be kept from sin and helped to know their duty."

After silent prayer, he declared with the voice of victory: "Farewell all relations and friends in Christ. Farewell all acquaintances and earthly enjoyments; Farewell reading and

preaching, praying and believing, wanderings and reproaches and sufferings. Welcome Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."⁸

A young man, named James Renwick, witnessed Cargill's execution and could never get out of his mind the martyr's brief sermon. It would appear that Charles II had succeeded in destroying the leadership of the separated Covenanters, but that young man grasped the banner held so high by the "Lone Star of the Covenant." He became the minister of the Society People and was the last to be hung on the scaffold for the Crown Rights of Jesus Christ.

His martyrdom led to The Glorious Revolution of 1688 that forced King Charles' successor, James II, into exile, and freed Scotland from oppression. Today, our country faces tyranny that threatens the foundations of civil and religious liberty. Will there be a remnant to stand without compromise and to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"? •

¹John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (Glasgow: W.R. M'Phun, 1858), p. 556.

²Johannes G. Vos, *The Scottish Covenanters* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Blue Banner Publications, 1998), pp. 134,135.

³A. Sinclair Horne, *Torchbearers of the Truth* (Edinburgh: Featherhall Press Ltd., 1981), pp. 72,73.

⁴John H. Thomson, *A Cloud of Witnesses* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1989), p. 333.

⁵Horne, p. 67.

⁶Jock Purves, *Fair Sunshine* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), p. 156.

⁷Horne, pp. 79,80.

⁸Horne, p. 71.



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Behaviors Declared to Be a Right

Rice declares that so-called homosexual rights are on exactly the same plane as race or gender rights: "Because if you care about equal rights for women or ethnic or religious minorities, you should care about LGBT human rights too. It's all the same."

"We need everyone's shoulder at the wheel" to promote "the message that gay rights are straight-up human rights." She makes no distinction between inherent traits such as race or gender and sinful *behaviors*.

Rice spoke of "the inexhaustible pursuit of equality," and said this matter was a "personal passion" of hers. She continued that this "is among the most challenging human rights issues we face," and that "custom" and "popular support" for traditional marriage "are no excuse for human rights violations. They do not justify criminal behavior."

To further emphasize the power of the government, she stated: "Law

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REDEEMING THE TIME

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enforcement officials now have the tools to prosecute violent acts motivated by someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, and to prosecute them as the hate crimes they are."

The born again Christian most certainly expects the full force of the law to be used in punishing offenders and protecting any citizen who has had a crime committed against him. Yet, Mrs. Rice wants "hate crimes" laws to be used to greatly stiffen the penalties if it is determined that a crime was caused by bias against homosexuals. We have no sympathy for any criminal who has committed a crime, but to have different sentencing standards — based on who the victim is and whether the offender committed his crime because he supposedly didn't like something about the person or just wanted to rob him — is dangerous. It opens up the possibility of judges (and juries) meting out "justice" based on their personal political leanings and agendas.

Tolerance for Whom?

Mrs. Rice tells us: "It is incumbent upon the state, and upon each of us, to foster tolerance and reverse the tide of discrimination." At another time, she stated: "It's what drives me as a public servant and as a mother, because I do not want my children, or anyone else's, to have their life choices limited by how they look, who they worship, or whom they love."

Yet it quickly becomes clear that tolerance is only for those who promote HER agenda and worship a god of HER making. To her, the God of the Bible is a human rights violator.

Those who worship this God are guilty of inhumanity if they promote His teaching in the Bible that marriage is only to be between one man and one woman.

White House Theology at Taxpayer Expense

Then, she announces that the government is now in the business of promoting her theology. She clearly is unhappy with the theology of a number of religious groups. Biblical Christianity is most assuredly on her black list. She asked the attendees: "For the faith community, how can we reinforce to religious groups that God loves all the children of his creation equally?"

She gives her audience hope for the future against these stubborn religious holdouts: "We're also seeing public attitudes evolve with breathtaking speed.... [L]ast week, the Presbyterian Church overwhelmingly voted to allow their ministers to officiate these ceremonies."

"The convicting work of God's Spirit can bring the 'vilest offender' to repentance and saving faith in Christ."

To push things along, she announced that the government is "launching new efforts to help civil society build partnerships with local faith communities, business leaders, and health care providers to enhance protections for LGBT rights."

Near the end of her speech, she stated: "And I have no doubt that future generations will wonder why anyone ever sought to criminalize love or condemn another human for being true to him or herself." The child of God is thankful that he is NOT "true to himself." We read in Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Our concentration needs to be on being "true" to God and His Word.

She concluded the speech by saying: "So let's recommit to doing everything we can to reach the day when love — all love — is met only with celebration, when all of our brothers

and sisters encounter only equal opportunity and acceptance, and when all rights are just simply human rights—sacred and inviolable." With such statements, one can only wonder what other Biblical commands will be declared to be "human rights violations" in years to come.

"Tolerance" Sounds Nice, But Is Clearly Not the Desired Goal

"Tolerance" is a nice sounding word, but is here used deceptively. It is clear that tolerance of the homosexual lifestyle is NOT what Mrs. Rice has in mind. She declares in her speech that "acceptance" and "celebration" of it are the government's goal and requirement!

How Should Christians Respond?

Most of the mainline denominations have capitulated to this new agenda. Sadly, a number of evangelicals have likewise done so. The philosophy of the New Evangelicals of the twentieth century has now shown forth in ever higher relief its tragic consequences, as some evangelicals today are willing to compromise on things which would have been unthinkable a generation ago.

The Bible-believing Christian is not free to mold and bend his beliefs to the secular dogma of the day. God has given clear instructions as to marriage being the union of one man and one woman.

The man of God must show forth the love of Christ before a watching world, but he can never compromise in holding that homosexuality, fornication, adultery or any other perversions are condemned by God. Those involved in these sinful behaviors need Christ as their Saviour. The Christian must with kindness and compassion present the saving grace of God to ALL who are in sin. The convicting work of God's Spirit can bring the "vilest offender" to repentance and saving faith in Christ. •

THE DIVISION OF 1937

Between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church

PART 3

The INDEPENDENT Board for PRESBYTERIAN Foreign Missions: A Contradiction in Terms?

BY BRAD K. GSELL

It is important to have read Parts 1 and 2 of this series, which were published in the Winter and Spring 2014 issues of Redeeming the Time. They serve as the general background for understanding this segment and those to come. Parts 1 and 2 may be found on our website (www.rttpublications.org), or we would be glad to mail copies to you.

When Dr. J. Gresham Machen and other Presbyterian leaders founded Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929, they incorporated it as an independent institution. It was dedicated to teaching seminary students the Word of God as historically understood by Presbyterians faithful to the Protestant Reformation — particularly as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The institution was to be operated under the control of a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees, not by the courts of any Presbyterian body. Four years later, The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions was established along similar lines.

Although some in the denomination worked to keep Westminster

Seminary graduates from being received into presbyteries, the denomination did not formally take any direct action against it. This was not the case with The Independent Board. The very next General As-

"We believe that independent mission agencies are perfectly in accord with the truths of God's Word, and in no way violate the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government."

sembly after the Board's formation issued a Mandate ordering the members to resign from The Independent Board, or face ecclesiastical discipline.

The *Presbyterian Digest*, published by the Office of the General Assembly, declared: "The very existence of such a[n] [independent] Board or agency is illegal and subversive of the authority and Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America [PCUSA] (1934, pp. 82-98)."¹ Was the PCUSA's assessment correct? Was the very idea

of an independent Presbyterian mission board a contradiction in terms and a violation of the fundamental tenets of Presbyterian polity (form of government)?

The Gradual Assumption of Power and Authority by the General Assembly

As the PCUSA became larger and more prosperous throughout the nineteenth century, more and more good and necessary works had been assumed by the General Assembly, with boards, committees and commissions being established. What had been a simple system of church government and discipline at the formation of the first presbytery in 1706, had by the dawn of the 20th century become a complex bureaucratic machine, with many full-time paid employees, and millions of dollars in real property. Rather than the General Assembly being a meeting lasting several days once a year, and then adjourned, the entrance of multiple church boards in effect turned the General Assembly into a year-round organization with

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more power than was ever intended for it to have. Many, who had never known anything else and were unfamiliar with American Presbyterian history, assumed that this control by the General Assembly was inherent to Presbyterianism.

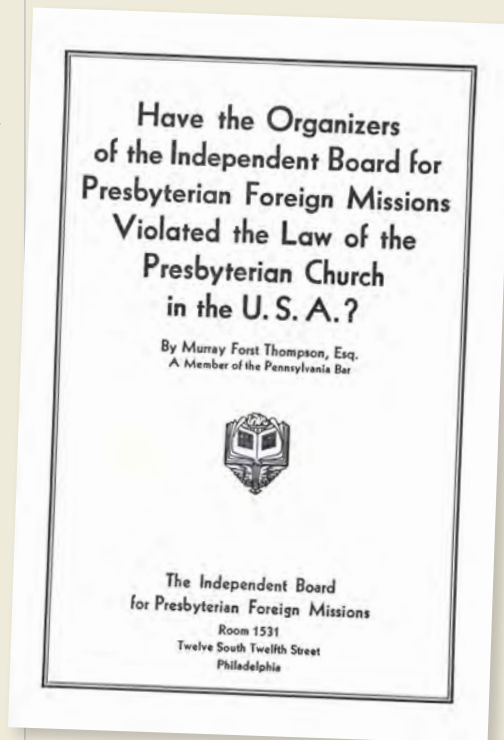
Many ancillary books and statements had been published by the General Assembly which sought to clarify and give specific detail as to how the general provisions of the *Form of Government* and *Book of Discipline* should be understood. *The Presbyterian Digest: A Compend of the Acts, and Deliverances of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, was often referred to and was mistakenly viewed, and used, by many in the church as the final word in any controversy. As the years passed, these works began to emphasize more and more the power and authority of the General Assembly.

Attorney Murray Forst Thompson, an elder in the Holland Memorial Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and a member of The Independent Board, wisely pointed out: "It is important ... to note where the law of the Church is not found. It is not found in the 'Manual of Presbyterian Law for Church Officers and Members,' nor in 'The Presbyterian Digest.' Both publications, of course, are most helpful in studying the law which is found in the subordinate Standards; but it is necessary to remember that no legal standing can be accorded the statements of the editors of those works. A further caution is required. The law is not to be found in resolutions or declarations of General Assembly. The Form of Government (Chapter XXIV, Sections I and II) provides for the method of amending the Constitution through formal action by General

Assembly and the presbyteries. That Constitution could not be altered one whit by all the resolutions successive Assemblies might pass...."²

Deceitful Conclusion Based on a Deliberately False Premise

Although there is not one word to be found in the Presbyterian Form of Government forbidding independent agencies, by the 1930s, the Gen-



eral Assembly, using very strained reasoning, based on a faulty premise, declared: "The organization of any Independent Board or Agency for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, which does not receive the sanction of the General Assembly, and which attempts to carry on any administrative functions involving the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, constitutes a rebellious defiance of lawful authority."³

It is quite obvious that the authors of the report printed in the *Presbyterian Digest*, having no Constitutional ground to stand upon, resorted to intentionally declaring a falsehood as their premise, and then

using that as the basis for their arguments. Indeed, it was fully known that The Independent Board was not seeking in any way to "carry on any administrative functions involving the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." The word "Independent" was in its name, and its official charter declared it to be so.

In fact, at the June 15, 1934, meeting of The Independent Board, Dr. Machen presented a resolution, which was adopted, to counter such falsehoods. It stated: "In view of current misunderstandings of its position, The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions desires to reemphasize the fact that it is not connected, and does not seek to be connected, either with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. or with any other of the numerous Presbyterian churches. Its charter does not require any particular ecclesiastical connections on the part of its members or on the part of the missionaries whom it will send out; but what it does require of them is that whatever be their ecclesiastical connections they shall be wholeheartedly devoted to Presbyterian doctrine and to the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government, in order that they may be instruments to lead men and women in mission lands to embrace not some partial or inconsistent doctrine but the great system of revealed truth which is contained in the Word of God.

"We deny any expressed or implied claim of any particular ecclesiastical organization, or of any group of ecclesiastical organizations, to have an exclusive right to the name 'Presbyterian' and thus an exclusive right to profess in clear and generally understood language adherence to that system of revealed truth which, to distinguish it from inconsistent and incorrect views of what the Bible teaches, is commonly called 'Presbyterian.'"⁴

The View of Independent Agencies in 1937

Dr. Machen and the other members of Westminster Seminary and The Independent Board obviously believed their actions were perfectly compatible with Presbyterianism. However, by 1937, some within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church viewed The Independent Board as having been merely an expedient measure in the midst of crisis — designed only for temporary existence until such time as a new faithful church body could be established and a denominational board erected. They felt that the missions work should be conducted directly by the General Assembly of the new denomination.

Others, however, felt that the tremendous power gained incrementally by the General Assembly-controlled boards of the PCUSA was a result of, and had contributed to, the advance of apostasy within that denomination. They believed that such centralization was a flaw which would lend itself toward the development of an ecclesiastical “machine” within any denomination.

The Function of Church Courts: Judicial — Not Legislative or Administrative

Dr. Allan A. MacRae, writing years later, expressed this position well. He stated: “Presbyteries and synods have uniformly been designated as ‘courts’ or ‘judicatories,’ never as legislative assemblies or administrative bodies. Such legislative or administrative powers as they have assumed have historically been restricted to matters dealing with the safeguarding of the ministry from the entrance or continuance of unworthy or unbelieving members.”⁵ MacRae continued by showing that the time-honored *Form of Government* of the PCUSA stated that the power of Presbyterian assemblies is

DEFINITION:

What Is True Presbyterianism?: “The word literally means ‘rule by elders.’... [Of the three main forms of church government] true Presbyterianism stands midway between the [other] two. To strict **independency** [such as is practiced in many Baptist and Congregational churches] it answers that no man lives to himself alone, that God has established His church as an organism in which the unity of the Spirit should be observed, and that each should profit by the greater spiritual insight of others. To **prelacy** [such as in Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism] it answers by laying emphasis upon the fundamental Protestant doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, and insisting that each Christian is directly responsible to God for the way in which he serves his Lord.... It establishes presbyteries and synods [and, in some cases, general assemblies] as parts of a system of graded courts [also referred to as “judicatories”], set up in order to safeguard the ministry from the entrance of unbelieving or unworthy candidates, to protect the pulpits from false doctrine, and to give the ministers and elders an opportunity for mutual fellowship and discussion of spiritual matters. Its local churches are ruled by elders in order to guard against the two extremes. Power is in the hands of the group of elders, not simply of the minister, in order to guard against the rise of prelacy, and to keep the power in the hands of the people.” —Allan A. MacRae, *The Free Press*, June 30, 1955.

“only ministerial and declarative.”⁶ It continues: “... no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority” (PCUSA Form of Government I:VII).

MacRae continued: “True Presbyterianism involves the principle that individual members or ministers of the church may associate themselves together for the carrying on of a particular type of Christian activity, and that the only surveillance which Presbyterian bodies shall give to these associations is to determine whether they are tainted with modernism or unbelief, or whether the doctrine which they are advancing is in line with the standards of the church.”⁷

There certainly was precedence in Presbyterian history, particularly in America, for both kinds of agencies being used of God, and receiving the blessing of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. However, many men felt that the way the General Assembly boards had developed actually was more closely in line with an episcopal or prelatical form of church government (like Catholicism and Anglicanism), and was not at all what the founders of Presbyterianism had ever envisioned.

Dr. MacRae points out, quite convincingly, that the Jerusalem Council,

in Acts 15, met to handle a doctrinal dispute, which is a prime Biblical warrant for present-day sessions, presbyteries, synods and general assemblies. However, the expansion of the gospel in new areas was handled by brethren working together in agreement, and sometimes through local churches. Right after the Jerusalem Council met, we read that Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement over Barnabas’ desire to take John Mark with them on their missionary journey. There is no record of them taking the matter to a higher church body. It was not a doctrinal matter, but rather had to do with personality and administration. Thus, Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took John Mark, and they departed in different directions to preach the same glorious gospel. MacRae comments: “It is evident that we have here the beginning of two independent missionary agencies....”⁸ He also points out other examples in Acts 8 and 11 where missionary work was initiated by individuals, not by courts of the church.⁹

“True Presbyterianism,” said MacRae, “never means that a group of ministers and elders takes the place of a king or of an archbishop, and lays down directives for the entire church.”¹⁰

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Early American Presbyterian Missionary Work

The planting of Presbyterian churches in America began as a missionary work, and the Presbyterian Church was always one of the most evangelical of all denominations. The Rev. Francis Makemie was ordained in 1682 by the Presbytery of Laggan, in Northern Ireland, and the following year was sent as a missionary to America — beginning his work in Snow Hill, Maryland. Twenty-four years later, the first American presbytery was formed in Philadelphia (1706). Throughout the eighteenth century, Presbyterian church government was small. The missionaries who were sent to other areas of what was to become the United States were often sent by the presbyteries, but with minimal support or structure.

At the dawn of the 19th century, a plethora of “missionary societies” began to spring up to undertake the support and preparations necessary to send godly men and women into the more remote areas of the country — particularly to work with various tribes of the American Indians.

The Presbyterian Church was neither strong nor prosperous in those days, and many works were promoted which were not directly under General Assembly control, including a number of independent missionary societies. One such example is the Western Missionary Society of New Jersey. The Rev. Ashbel Green (who served as president of Princeton College [now Princeton University]), in recounting the history of American Presbyterian missions, wrote that it “was formed about the year 1800. Its organization indeed, *was entirely independent of the General Assembly*”¹¹

(emphasis ours). Green further stated: “Institutions established or conducted mainly by associations or individuals ... [have been] carried on in concert with members of the Presbyterian denomination.”¹²

In 1810, The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was founded by New England Congregationalists. By 1812, it had become an independent, self-perpetuating board. The minutes of the 1812 General Assembly of the PCUSA record that the ABCFM sent an official communication inviting the Presbyterian Church to form “an institution similar to theirs, between which and them [*sic*] may be such a co-operation as shall promote the great object of missions amongst unevangelized nations.”¹³

Instead of agreeing to start a General Assembly-controlled foreign missions board at that time, as the letter urged, the Clerk was instructed to send a reply. It stated in part: “That as the churches under the care of the Assembly rejoice in the Foreign Missions, organized and about to be organized by the American Board of Commissioners [ABCFM], so, as opportunity favours, they ought to aid them, as they have in a measure already aided them by contributions to their funds, and by every other facility which they could offer to so commendable an undertaking.”¹⁴

The letter further stated that “the business of foreign missions may probably be best managed under the direction of a single Board,” and that the General Assembly planned presently to decline operating such missions due to its limited resources and “inasmuch as the [General Assembly] committee are informed that [independent] missionary societies have lately been instituted in several places within the bounds of the Presbyterian church, which make foreign missions a particular object of their attention.”¹⁵

A few years later, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church

did officially work in cooperation with other Reformed churches in forming a foreign missions agency. Ashbel Green writes: “In 1818, the General Assembly adopted measures which resulted in the establishment of the United Foreign Missionary Society [UFMS].”¹⁶ The 1819 General Assembly stated: “The Society shall be composed of the Presbyterian, Reformed Dutch, and Associate Reformed Churches, and *all others who may choose to join them*” (emphasis ours). “The business of the Society shall be conducted by a Board ... to be annually chosen by the Society. They have power to enact their own bylaws.”¹⁷

It appears that few restrictions were placed on the Board of the UFMS. It was to “present their annual report to the highest judicatory of the three denominations, *for their information*” (emphasis ours). Also, any individual who donated “not less than one hundred dollars, shall be a director for life, and entitled to a seat and vote in the Board of Managers.”¹⁸

Control and influence was not confined just to the judicatories of these three church denominations. The main restriction was that the Society was free to change its Constitution by a two-thirds vote, but any changes required the approval of the highest bodies of the three denominations.¹⁹ Missionaries also were received from other groups. Annual reports of the UFMS state that a number of the missionaries were New England Congregationalists.²⁰

Even while the UFMS was in existence, a number of notable Presbyterians were on the Board of the ABCFM. A few of these included Ashbel Green and Samuel Miller (the second professor at Princeton Seminary).²¹

But, the UFMS was short-lived. In just a few years, its work was turned over to the ABCFM, the independent group first commended by the Presbyterian Church in 1812.

The minutes of the General Assembly of 1826 recorded: “Resolved, That the General Assembly do consent to the amalgamation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the United Foreign Missionary Society.” The Assembly then commended the ABCFM to its members for their support.²²

Home Missions

The line between foreign and home missions was often blurred in those days. This is easy to understand, since so much missionary work was being done in unsettled areas of the North American continent as Americans began to push westward. Also, many Indian tribes resided within the official borders of the States, yet their tribal governance, culture, religion and so forth, were quite “foreign” to the experience and faith of the missionaries coming from settled areas.

However, the need for a distinct effort for home missions soon emerged. Charles Hodge’s nephew, the Rev. J. Aspinwall Hodge, writes: “In May of that year [1822] delegates of ten of these local societies in New York State, belonging to the Presbyterian and the Dutch Reformed churches, were consolidated, forming the ‘United Domestic Missionary Society of New York’ [UDMS]. *It was not a denominational institution...*”²³ (emphasis ours).

There was wide support for this independent agency in various forms. In 1825, the Presbytery of Cayuga (New York), instructed its secretary, William M. Adams, to communicate with the UDMS that the Presbytery had officially “Resolved, That this Presbytery form themselves, and they do hereby form themselves into a Missionary Society, *auxiliary* to the United Domestic Missionary Society” (emphasis ours). The resolution continued with details of plans to raise money in the Presbyterian churches, and

GLOSSARY OF ORGANIZATIONS:

This glossary is being provided as a handy reference as the names of these organizations appear throughout the article. Some organizations which are mentioned briefly are not included here.

- **American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM):** Formed in 1810 by New England Congregationalists. It was an independent agency and received the commendation of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1812. The Presbyterian Church gave various levels of support to it throughout much of the nineteenth century.
- **American Home Missionary Society (AHMS):** Founded in 1826, it involved the merger of the United Domestic Missionary Society (UDMS) and other societies, including quite a few Congregationalists. It had “no responsibility to any judicatory of the Presbyterian Church.” It was strongly supported for a time by the Presbyterian Church, as it helped in the supply and support of pastors and aid to struggling churches.
- **The Board of Foreign Missions (BFM) of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA):** The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (Old School) established this Board in 1838. It was an official agency of the General Assembly.
- **The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM):** Founded in 1933 by those who opposed Modernism in the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.
- **United Domestic Missionary Society (UDMS):** An independent agency, founded in 1822, which was the result of a merger of several smaller Reformed missionary societies.
- **United Foreign Missionary Society (UFMS):** Formed in 1818 by the PCUSA, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, “and all others who may choose to join them.” Its structure included a limited control by the General Assembly of the PCUSA and the other two denominations, but operated independently in many regards.

work to appoint missionaries to needy areas. The resolution concluded: “Resolved, That the Secretary [of the Presbytery] be, and he hereby is directed to transmit to the Parent Society [UDMS] a copy of our proceedings hitherto.”²⁴

N. Coe, Stated Clerk of the Oneida, NY, Presbytery, was directed to communicate to the UDMS “That the Presbytery cordially approve of the plan of the United Domestic Missionary Society ... and that the stated clerk be directed to write to the Corresponding Secretary of that Society, and to request that ... an agent, or agents, may be sent as soon as convenient.”²⁵

The Presbytery of New-York, communicated through M. Bruen (Moderator) and John Goldsmith (Clerk): “Resolved, that the Presbytery of New-York do hereby express their approbation of the proceedings of the United Domestic Missionary Society, in the aid they have granted to infant Churches, and their efforts to send the Gospel to the destitute within our bounds; and that hav-

ing dissolved their [the Presbytery’s] Missionary Society, they do recommend the United Domestic Missionary Society to the general patronage of the Church under their [the Presbytery’s] care.”²⁶

A large number of similar communications are available in the archives of the Presbyterian Church and these missionary societies.

J. Aspinwall Hodge, in his historical account mentioned above, continues: “In 1825 a circular was published by its [the UDMS’s] Executive Committee, at the request of a meeting of Ministers held in Boston, calling a meeting of Congregational, Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches, to be held in the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York, to form a National Domestic Missionary Society. Drs. Alexander and Miller of the Princeton Seminary endorsed the plan.”²⁷

In 1826, the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) was founded, involving the merging of

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THE INDEPENDENT BOARD ...

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several smaller societies. Ashbel Green writes that three-quarters of the members were not Presbyterian and it bore “no responsibility to any judicatory of the Presbyterian Church.” However, he continues that it “had in its connexion [sic] many estimable members of the Presbyterian Church, was instrumental in building up and supplying with pastors, no inconsiderable number of feeble congregations in this church, and that, on this account, it for a time received the countenance of the General Assembly.”²⁸

George P. Hays, Moderator of the 96th General Assembly in 1884, relates that the AHMS had been formed to represent Congregationalists and Presbyterians. “Large numbers of its directors were leading Presbyterian ministers and laymen. They believed in the sincerity of the zeal of that society, and the possibility of a joint work being carried on through it by the two denominations.”²⁹

The support and countenance of independent agencies was very common in the Presbyterian Church. An example is contained in the Minutes of the 1812 General Assembly: “The continuance of Missionary Societies formerly established, with the formation of others embracing in their plans missions both foreign and domestic, the increased number of societies for distributing Bibles and Religious Tracts, and for the education of poor children, manifest an active and growing zeal for extending the boundaries of the Mediator’s kingdom, and diffusing the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”³⁰ These “societies” mentioned were virtually all independent agencies, and included many Presbyterian ministers and elders on their boards.

GLOSSARY OF INDIVIDUALS:

This glossary is being provided as a handy reference as the names of these individuals appear throughout the article. Some individuals mentioned briefly, or who have been identified in previous installments, are not included here.

- **Archibald Alexander:** Old School Presbyterian minister and President of Hampden-Sydney College. When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church established Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812, Alexander was unanimously called to be its first professor. He taught there until his death in 1851, and was considered a pillar of Biblical orthodoxy. He was a member of the independent American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) until near the time of his death.
- **Ashbel Green:** Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, he went on to become the President of Princeton College (now Princeton University). He was a founding member and second president of the Pennsylvania Bible Society, an independent agency. He served as a member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and later as a member of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. He wrote a history of the missions outreach of the Presbyterian Church, commissioned by the Old School General Assembly of 1838.
- **Charles Hodge:** Old School Princeton Seminary theologian and professor, known for his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, which is still widely used in seminaries today. He also wrote an oft-used volume on Presbyterian polity (government), and a number of essays on various points of doctrine and application of Biblical principles to current issues. Several of his family went on to become Presbyterian theologians in their own right.
- **J. Aspinwall Hodge:** Nephew of Charles Hodge, who wrote *What Is Presbyterian Law as Defined by the Church Courts?*
- **Jacob J. Janeway:** Succeeded Ashbel Green as pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Janeway held membership on the boards of several independent agencies. At the end of his life he was President of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Old School)
- **Samuel Miller:** An Old School minister and the second professor of Princeton Theological Seminary, arriving a year after it was established. A pillar in the Presbyterian Church of the 19th century, he defended, and was a member of, independent agencies.
- **James Henley Thornwell:** Theologian and professor at Columbia Seminary in South Carolina, Thornwell was an Old School Presbyterian. When the Presbyterian Church split at the beginning of the Civil War, he helped in the founding of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. Shortly before this division, he and Charles Hodge had a debate on the floor of the General Assembly over whether it was Biblical for the General Assembly to establish its own mission board. Thornwell was against such agencies.

The Move to General Assembly-Controlled Boards and Agencies

All were not happy with the various methods by which Presbyterians had been conducting their missions, education and benevolent works. Some works were carried on by presbyteries or synods, some by the General Assembly, and others through independent agencies.

George Hays writes: “Year after year this question of denominational missionary societies was carefully debated in the General Assembly, with the predominance of view sometimes on the one side and

sometimes on the other. Committees of conference were appointed from the General Assembly to meet with committees from undenominational mission societies; but no plan could be finally agreed upon which was acceptable to all parties.”³¹

In 1831, an overture was presented suggesting that the General Assembly organize its own foreign missions agency, and a committee was formed to investigate the feasibility of doing this. The report of this committee was adopted by the Assembly. It stated: “That while the Assembly would express no opinion in relation to the principles contained

in the Report, they cordially recommended the [independent] American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to the affection and patronage of their Churches.”³²

The Presbyterian Church divided into Old School and New School General Assemblies in 1837 — a division which lasted just over three decades. This major disruption brought immediate changes relating to these questions. The New School General Assembly continued its support of the ABCFM. But, the Old School Assembly immediately “reorganized” a Board of Foreign Missions under the control of its General Assembly. We do not have space within the scope of this discussion to examine all of the points which led to this division, but it is enough to say that the Old School adhered more consistently to the system of doctrine and polity taught in the Westminster Standards.

Some have sought to show that those who carried on the work of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions through the decades must have been more in sympathy with New School Presbyterianism, because that group maintained much of its work through independent agencies. However, such assessments draw an inaccurate correlation between what took place in the 1830s and the developments of the 1930s.

Old School Presbyterianism and General Assembly Boards

Also less than accurate is the popular assumption that the majority of Old School Presbyterians believed that General Assembly-operated boards were the only means sanctioned by the Scriptures and that “control” of the church’s ministries must be in the hands of the General Assembly, as the highest judicatory of the Church.

The church throughout its history had many men who did indeed prefer the General Assembly orga-

nizing its own works of missions, education and benevolence. In fact, the General Assembly’s establishment of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812 as an official church agency proved to be a great blessing to the Christian church for well over 100 years. However, it was an action taken by the General Assembly in 1929 that destroyed Princeton as a faithful institution.

The Old School men were greatly influenced by their experiences with societies and agencies which were comprised of members of various denominations. The most significant concern which developed was that the cooperative missionary efforts sometimes left compromising situations as churches were established on the frontier. Sometimes new congregations, which had been nurtured by Presbyterian missionaries, became Congregational churches due to the influence of other missionaries under the same missionary society.

Charles Hodge commented: “Is it wonderful that Presbyterians and Episcopalians should decline committing their candidates to the care of Congregationalists or Baptists? Or that they should be uneasy at seeing their churches supplied with ministers by a society in which some other denomination than their own, has an equal or controlling influence?”³³

Another practice which many found objectionable was that some of the independent societies gave voting membership privileges to those who merely gave a certain amount of money. Even the General Assembly had approved such a procedure when the UFMS was founded in 1818.

The dangers of this should be evident to all. Hodge commented concerning this: “What security is there that they shall be even professors of religion, much less that they approve of the doctrine and discipline of the Presbyterian Church?”³⁴ James Henley Thornwell, the eminent Southern theologian, compared this prac-

tice to “the sin of Simon Magus, for which he met the rebuke of the Apostle” (see Acts 8:9-24).³⁵ It is of interest that this Biblical account is responsible for the introduction of the word “simony” into the English language, which means “the buying or selling of a church office or ecclesiastical preferment”³⁶

To show that his objections did not apply equally to all independent agencies, Hodge wrote: “It will be seen that few of our arguments have any bearing on the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. We cheerfully admit that our objections to this institution are far less strong, and that they do not interfere with our entertaining for it the highest respect and confidence.” Hodge continues that as long as this independent board did not seek to usurp power belonging to the General Assembly, “we are sure it will have the prayers, the confidence, and support of the churches.”³⁷

It is interesting that the very objections the founders of The Independent Board had concerning the Board of Foreign Missions of the PCUSA, were the same ones that Hodge found to some of the independent works. In both cases, it was felt that a political “machine,” with undue influence on the Church, had come into being.

Hodge wrote: “We are aware that many who some years ago cheerfully voted to recommend the [independent] Home Missionary Society would not do so now, simply because they believe that that society has, under the management of its present secretary, become a great party engine, and is operating in a manner most unfriendly to the best interests of the Church. This, again, is a very different thing from opposition to that institution founded on the assumption that a voluntary society has no right to engage in the work of missions.”³⁸ J. Aspinwall

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Hodge concurred, stating that “the Home Missionary Society, under the management of its secretary, has become a great party engine, operating most unfavorably for the peace, union, and purity of the Church.”³⁹

The Hodges’ concern here was that independent agencies not usurp the church’s God-given oversight of its ministers and churches. They and others believed that if God had given the church a work to do, the administration of those works, in the most efficient manner, should be understood to be included.

Not all Old School ministers were of the same mind. Thornwell opposed all mission boards — PARTICULARLY General Assembly-controlled boards. He stated: “We are fully satisfied that the system of Boards and permanent Agencies falls very far short of the spirit of our Constitution, and, so far from being a blessing, will in the end prove a deplorable calamity unless speedily abandoned.”⁴⁰ He continued: “We believe that the system in its essential principles is directly subversive of the Constitution of our Church, unknown to the Word of God, and unsupported by any arguments of expediency or necessity which can commend it to the understanding of a Christian man.”⁴¹ Thornwell believed the establishment of permanent boards by the General Assembly was “subversive of the Form of Government embodied in the Constitution of our own Church. They involve a practical renunciation of Presbyterianism.”⁴² He further held that these boards constituted a new class of church courts and usurped the authority of sessions, presbyteries and synods.⁴³

The deacons of the various churches, he declared, should handle all of the many things involved with

sending a missionary to a distant location. If it should become more than the deacons could handle, he believed secular businesses should be paid to handle these temporal affairs.⁴⁴

Hodge and Thornwell had a debate concerning this on the floor of the Old School General Assembly in 1860. Hodge believed Thornwell to be more restrictive in his views than were the Scriptures. He stated his belief that “... all the attributes and prerogatives of power in the Church arise from the indwelling of the Spirit, and where He dwells there is the Church, with authority to do its own work in the best way; and as He does not dwell in the clergy exclusively, therefore the power is not confined to the clergy; but the Church may in her discretion adopt such modes or agencies to carry out the commands of Christ as she deems best. She must be free. She must breathe. The power of the Church is where the Holy Ghost is; but in externals He has given her *discretion*....”⁴⁵

Both of these men had a considerable portion of delegates who espoused their respective views. In fact a protest was issued by a number of delegates to the form in which the Old School General Assembly Boards were operated.

Charles Hodge and Mission Agencies

Charles Hodge is often regarded as the preeminent authority on anything dealing with Presbyterianism. Many have stated without further elaboration, that Hodge supported boards established under the control of the General Assembly. However, presented with this statement alone, many have made the incorrect assumption that he believed this to be the ONLY way Presbyterians could conduct their mission works and that other structures were inherently wrong.

Hodge himself did not hesitate to make sure that none would make



Charles Hodge

for ecclesiastical organizations, we have felt perfectly willing that those who differed from us should take their own course in doing the work of the Lord. Believing that there was a large part of the Church who would not co-operate with the Boards of the General Assembly, we have rejoiced that they had institutions through which their energies might be exerted in doing good.”⁴⁶

He further set forth his conviction that there should be liberty in the matter. He wrote: “We concede that either plan [independent or General Assembly-controlled agencies] is allowable, the question is, which, all things considered, ought to be preferred?”⁴⁷

He continued: “That Churches and Individuals are at liberty to decide this question for themselves is almost universally admitted. This is the ground which we have always taken (See *Biblical Repertory* for July 1835, p. 480, also for July 1836). Dr. [Samuel] Miller [of Princeton Seminary] in his Letters to Presbyterians takes the same ground. And it is known to our readers that the Board of Missions officially and by its leading friends and officers on the floor of the Assembly have assumed the same position. In an address to the churches signed by Dr. Green as president of the Board, and by its two secretaries, it is said, ‘We are not only willing but anxious that the churches should be left to their own unbiased and deliberate choice of the particular channel through which their charities should flow forth to bless the perishing; nay more, that the God of all grace may give to the poor a heart to pray, and to the rich a disposition to contribute liberally

this mistake. He stated: “We have never been opposed to the existence of voluntary societies. While we have had our decided preference

to either of these missionary Boards according to the decided preference of every donor (See *Christian Advocate*, vol. 7, p. 138).⁴⁸

Indeed, a number of Old School congregations did support missionaries serving under independent agencies. One such example is John Leighton Wilson, of South Carolina, who served under the ABCFM. He received most of his support from Old School churches.⁴⁹

Although Hodge believed that missions work and education were preferably to be conducted by General Assembly boards, he taught that some areas of ministry were BEST handled by independent agencies. He writes: “There are then some of the most important of all the means for evangelizing, which can be employed by the Church in her organized capacity only. There are others as to which the people of God are at liberty to act either as an organized ecclesiastical society, or in voluntary combinations for some specific object. There can be no doubt that for some purposes, such as the distribution of the Scriptures for example, the latter is the preferable method. With regard to other there can, we think, be as little doubt that the ecclesiastical method is to be preferred.”⁵⁰

He continues: “Wherever the field of operation is common to different denominations, and the proper means for its cultivation are also the same for all, there is an obvious reason why all should unite. These conditions meet with regard to the Bible and Tract Societies, and in many important respects in regard to Sunday-school Unions. There are other cases in which voluntary societies of a denominational character may be either indispensable or highly desirable.”⁵¹ Hodge continues that it is his “opinion” that General Assembly-controlled agencies are the “decided preference” in educating ministers and in missions.⁵² He concluded his discussion by stating that

his writing was only done to defend General Assembly-controlled agencies against those who were totally against them. He concluded: “We are, therefore, not to be considered as aggressors in this business.”⁵³

Shortly before the Old School/New School Division, Old School ministers such as Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller (Princeton Seminary’s first and second professors, respectively), were “Corporate Members” of the ABCFM. Archibald Alexander remained a member of the Board till near the time of his death in 1851 — long after the establishment of the Board of Foreign Missions by the General Assembly. Charles Hodge was an honorary member, as was Old School leader Jacob J. Janeway.⁵⁴ A minister had to contribute at least \$50.00 to become an Honorary member. Hodge and Janeway, likewise, appeared in this list a number of years after the Board of Foreign Missions was established in the Presbyterian Church. It should be noted that Janeway, at the time of his death was both an honorary member of the ABCFM and the President of the official Board of Foreign Missions.⁵⁵ Those who try to make General Assembly-controlled agencies a Scriptural principle, or at least an *invio-*lable plank of Old School Presbyterianism and the Princeton Seminary tradition, are faced with the insurmountable problem that the evidence does not support their claim.

The Work of Missions Following the Reunification of the Old School and New School General Assemblies

In 1869, the Old School and New School General Assemblies reunited on the basis of the Westminster Standards. Much has been written as to how this reunion actually caused a general decline in adherence to the Standards and helped to usher in the rise of apostasy in the following decades.

However, even in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the combined Church did not hold to the exclusivity of General Assembly-controlled agencies. Attorney Murray Forst Thompson, mentioned earlier, wrote a most informative pamphlet, shortly after the formation of The Independent Board, entitled: “Have the Organizers of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions Violated the Law of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.?”

Among other things, his research showed that “in 1869, at the time of the reunion of the New School and Old School branches of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the Old School possessed a Board of Foreign Missions. The New School had been using as its agency the [independent] American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [the PCUSA had sent missionaries out under this independent board for decades before the division between the Old School and the New School in 1837. The Dutch Reformed Church sent missionaries under the ABCFM until it withdrew in 1857]. Before merging, the Old School and New School assemblies adopted concurrent resolutions. These were not adopted as covenants since the basis of the reunion was simply the *Standards*. Nevertheless the resolutions possess a tremendous moral force and indicate the view taken regarding freedom in Christian service. Resolution 6 reads as follows: ‘There should be one set of committees or Boards for Home and Foreign Missions, and the other religious enterprises of the Church; which the Churches should be encouraged to sustain, *though free to cast their contributions into other channels if they desire to do so.*’ ([*Presbyterian*] *Digest*, 1930, Vol. II, p. 38.) (Italics are ours [Thompson’s].)”⁵⁶

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Thompson continues: “A significant passage also occurs in the report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Missions, appointed by the Assemblies of 1869, reporting to the United Assembly of 1870, which report was adopted by the Assembly and is found on pages 44-46 of the Minutes of 1870. After expressing the hope that missionaries of the American Board would serve under the Presbyterian Board, the Report continued, ‘Especially is it to be kept in mind, that these brethren and sisters are, first of all, missionaries of Christ; that their relations to Him are personal and direct; and that, unquestionably, the liberty and responsibility are their own, of deciding in what relations to Boards and Churches they will spend their consecrated lives. Equally free and responsible directly to Christ are all Christian people, in deciding through what agencies they will do their share of His work of Missions.’”⁵⁷

So, Who Is Right?

This brief look at the historical record shows that the discussion of the best way to organize and carry out the work of missions, education and benevolence was a matter of very serious consideration and deliberation for much of the history of the church. Highly venerated fathers of the church did not always agree on these matters.

Charles Hodge sought to answer those who opposed ALL General Assembly-controlled boards as a matter of principle or even conscience. He specifically stated that he was answering the following actual criticisms which had been publicly stated in opposition to the concept of General Assembly boards: “By conducting all

her concerns ecclesiastically, the judicatories of the church would be loaded with an amount of property and of secular business, which would endanger her spiritually.” “The concentration, therefore, in these courts, of so much ecclesiastical and pecuniary power, is both inexpedient and perilous.” “Suppose that in addition to this (its ecclesiastical authority) the Assembly possesses the property and pecuniary patronage of the whole Church, and how tremendous must be the power of this judicatory.” “Who would not fear before this Assembly?”⁵⁸

Many of these concerns, which Charles Hodge and some of his Old School contemporaries in the mid-1800s did not see as valid, had in fact come to be realized in the Presbyterian Church in the 1920s and 1930s. By 1934, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had become so powerful, and so arrogant, that it stated that an independent board that had Presbyterian ministers and elders as board members and missionaries “subverts the whole system of Presbyterian Church Government, and subjects its officers and members to the discipline of the church.... The very existence of such a Board or agency is illegal and subversive of the authority of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America — 1934 (pp. 82-98).”⁵⁹ A very telling observation appeared in the midst of this statement, which reveals what perhaps should be seen as the main reason for the quick and decisive attack on The Independent Board. The men of the General Assembly stated: “[An independent board] will thereby divert the missionary offerings of our churches from the channels which the Presbyterian Church has made for them.”

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REV. JAMES RICHARDS.

IN PENNSYLVANIA,
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The next annual meeting of the Board is to be held in New-Haven, at the Philosophical Chamber in Yale College, on Thursday, the 15th day of September, 1814. The Rev. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D. is appointed to preach the annual sermon, and the Rev. JAMES RICHARDS is appointed his substitute.

The 1813 Annual Report of the independent American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) lists such Presbyterian notables as the Revs. Ashbel Green and Samuel Miller as members of the Board. Note that Princeton Seminary professor Miller was chosen to preach at the next annual meeting of the Board. Note also that the Hon. John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, an Episcopalian, was also a board member from New York.

The 1934 General Assembly also adopted a statement called “Studies in the Constitution.” It stated that: “A church member or an individual church that will not give to promote the officially authorized missionary program of the Presbyterian Church is in exactly the same position with reference to the Constitution of the Church as a church member that would refuse to take part in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper...”⁶⁰

An all-powerful General Assembly had developed. The men of The Independent Board and the Bible Presbyterian Church rightly saw, as Dr. MacRae stated, that the courts of the church have no authority to legislate and hold sway of power by the hand of powerful administrators (board officials) and those unduly influenced by them, due to their control of the missionary’s livelihood. The very criticisms which James Henley Thornwell had of official Church boards, nearly a century before, had come to pass.

He stated: "...these institutions become so intolerably arrogant in the exercise of their unlawful dominion, that they speak of the true judicatories of the Church as their auxiliaries."⁶¹

The one fact that rises above all of the points of discussion held over many years concerning this subject is that all of these godly men desired to have Christian work conducted for the glory of God, in the most Scriptural and efficient way possible. A man of God, who knows the Scriptures, will undoubtedly see good points from those who held varying views on how these ministries should best be conducted. It is also to be noted that many of these views were adopted not so much because it was felt the Bible directly *required* them, but because they were considered the best safeguards against the abuses of Biblical principles witnessed at these particular times in church history.

Comparisons made between most of the missionary societies of the nineteenth century and The Independent Board are not valid on several fronts. Whereas many of these societies were interdenominational (including members who were Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed, and even Episcopal), The Independent Board, in its Charter, declared that it was exclusively Presbyterian.

Whereas many of these nineteenth century societies added voting members merely by the amount of money donated, The Independent Board was from its inception operated under the guidance of a self-perpetuating board. Members have always been elected by the body based on spiritual qualifications. Very seldom do the Board members have any idea what a particular individual donates when he is nominated and elected to the Board.

Although Charles Hodge and other great Presbyterian leaders preferred General Assembly-controlled boards, in no small part because of the abuses they saw in the AHMS of

New Jersey.

1812. SAMUEL MILLER, D. D. Prof. in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.
 1823. EDWARD D GRIFFIN, D. D. Newark.
 1824. PHILIP MILLEDOLER, D. D. Professor in the Theological Seminary at New Brunswick.
 1826. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D. Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.
 1826. THEODORE FRELINGHUYSEN, LL. D. Newark.
 1826. JAMES CARNAHAN, D. D. President of Nassau Hall.
 1832. Hon. PETER D. VROOM, Somerville.

Pennsylvania.

1812. ASHBEL GREEN, D. D. Philadelphia.

The 1837 Annual Report of the ABCFM shows that the Revs. Ashbel Green and Samuel Miller are still listed as members of the Board. The first professor at Princeton Seminary, Archibald Alexander, is also listed. Alexander remained on the Board of this independent mission agency until near the time of his death in 1851 — long after the General Assembly had established its own Board of Foreign Missions. Note also that the Rev. James Carnahan (President of Princeton College) and Attorney Theodore Frelinghuysen (later President of Rutgers College) are listed as members.

the 1830s, none should be misled to believe that this was a push for centralized power. Hodge was a great champion of the fact that Presbyterianism has a church government of ordained leaders, but at the same time places great power in the hands of the laymen of the church.

It is a sad truth that even the best methods, based most solidly on Biblical principles, can be perverted by the inherent sinfulness of man. John Witherspoon, the convener of the first General Assembly of the PCUSA in 1789, was also a signer of the United States Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon delivered a sermon in Princeton, NJ, on May 17, 1776, in which he wisely warned his fellow countrymen: "Nothing is more certain than that a general profligacy and corruption of manners make a people ripe for destruction. A good form of government may hold the rotten materials together for some time, but beyond a certain pitch, even the best constitution will be ineffectual, and slavery must ensue." Witherspoon's warning can easily be applied to the conducting of church government and missionary enterprises.

Charles Hodge also stood against those who tried to make every detail of church government a matter of right or wrong. He wrote: "Deprive the Church of discretionary freedom to *adapt* her principles to

the exigency of cases as they arise, and you tie her, hand and foot. The Church cannot submit to it; it will not submit to it."⁶² In other words, tradition and historical precedence may be given great weight, but it is just as wrong to make discretionary details into matters on the level with Biblical truth, as it is to violate clear Biblical teaching. Many organizations have lost sight of this, to their great detriment.

Although both the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church have used both independent agencies and ones emanating from the church courts, the Bible Presbyterian Church has overwhelmingly conducted its ministries through the method of annually approving independent works which are faithful to the Word of God.

This has allowed the Church to do its real work of overseeing the churches and ministers within its jurisdiction as to their spiritual health and adherence to the Word of God. By merely approving — or disapproving — independent agencies, the spiritual courts of the church are saved from handling the logistical matters and from enacting various forms of unauthorized "legislation." This also allows the liberty inherent to Presbyterianism for men

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of like mind to conduct ministries in which the Lord has led them. The independent agencies of course must maintain and defend their own testimonies, but their operation in no way interferes with the Biblical duty of the presbyteries to ordain and oversee its ministers. We believe that independent agencies are perfectly in accord with the truths of God's Word, and in no way violate the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government. •

To be continued in the fall 2014 issue of *Redeeming the Time*.

¹*Presbyterian Digest: Supplement to Volumes I and II, 1930 Edition ... and Acts and Deliverances of the General Assembly 1931-1934 Inclusive* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly of the PCUSA, 1934), pp. 258-271.

²Murray Forst Thompson, "Have the Organizers of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions Violated the Law of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.?" (Philadelphia: The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, 1934), p. 3.

³*Presbyterian Digest*, p. 270.

⁴Minutes of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, June 15, 1934.

⁵Allan A. MacRae, *The Free Press* (Vol. 1, No. 1) (Baltimore, 6/30/1955), p. 1.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹Ashbel Green, *Historical Sketch or Compendious View of Domestic and Foreign Missions in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (prepared at the request of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church [Old School]) (Philadelphia: William S. Martien, 1838), p. 22.

¹²Green, p. v.

¹³*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* [1812]: 1789-1820 (Philadelphia:

Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), p. 515.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Green, p. 55.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁰*Annual Report of the United Foreign Missionary Society* (1820, pp. 19-20; 1821, p. 20).

²¹*Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting* [1925] (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1825), pp. 5-6.

²²Green, p. 85.

²³J. Aspinwall Hodge, *What Is Presbyterian Law as Defined by the Church Courts?* (Fourth Edition) (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1884), p. 421.

²⁴*Second Report of the United Domestic Missionary Society* (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1824), pp. 50-51.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁷J. Aspinwall Hodge, p. 421.

²⁸Green, p. 28.

²⁹George P. Hays, *Presbyterians* (New York: J.A. Hill and Company, 1892), pp. 174-175.

³⁰*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* [1812]: 1789-1820, p. 498.

³¹Hays, p. 175.

³²*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: 1832*, p. 331.

³³Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1878), p. 428

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 433.

³⁵James Henley Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, Vol. IV (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 1986), p. 148.

³⁶Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

³⁷Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, p. 434.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 421.

³⁹J. Aspinwall Hodge, p. 421.

⁴⁰Thornwell, p. 147. The quotations in footnotes 40-44 were first published in the *Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine* in 1841.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 154.

"It is a sad truth that even the best methods, based most solidly on Biblical principles, can be perverted by the inherent sinfulness of man."

⁴⁵Charles Hodge, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, Vol. IV, p. 229.

⁴⁶Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, p. 434.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 420-421.

⁴⁹Peter J. Wallace, "The Myth of Old School Presbyterianism," *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Vol 18, 2007, p. 196. [Note: Peter J. Wallace is a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and a graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary. His Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Notre Dame was entitled, "The Bond of Union: The Old School Presbyterian Church and the American Nation, 1837-1861."]

⁵⁰Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, p. 419.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 434.

⁵⁴*Forty-Ninth Report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston: T.R. Marvin & Son, 1858), p. 179.

⁵⁵Charles Hodge, "Funeral Sermon," *Memorial of the Rev. Jacob J. Janeway, D.D.* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1861), p. 278.

⁵⁶Thompson, p. 10.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Charles Hodge, *Discussions in Church Polity*, p. 426.

⁵⁹*Presbyterian Digest*, p. 271.

⁶⁰*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.: 1934*, pp. 70-71, 110-111.

⁶¹Thornwell, p. 151-152.

⁶²Charles Hodge, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, Vol. IV, p. 230.



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