

REDEEMING THE TIME

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

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The 2016 Election and the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

BY BRAD K. GSELL



The first presidential election I remember was in 1968. Even at a young age, I was impressed with a speech by one of the candidates, the then Governor of California — a man named Ronald Reagan. He of course had to wait another 12 years before being elected President.

In all the many elections since then, I do not ever remember being more disheartened than with our present spectacle. Truth no longer seems to be of any special importance to mil-

lions of voters in our nation. The basic Constitutional principles have not been taught, and thus are not known by millions in the rising generations. America is in trouble. I doubt if very many need convincing of that fact.

We certainly believe it is our duty as Christians to seek to promote righteousness in our land — one way being through the ballot box. However, we must never forget that our great God is sovereign over all things. Daniel 4:35 says: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

David writes: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed ..." (Psalm 2:1-2). The Psalmist then tells us in verses 4 and 5 that such fulminations of the wicked cannot thwart the will of God in the least: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

When I went to camp as a child, we sang a song that included these words: "God is still on the throne, Almighty God is He; And He cares for His own through all eternity. So let come what may, whatever it is, I only say that I have Christ in my heart, I have Christ in my heart!"

COURAGE

BY MARK W. EVANS

William S. Plumer (1802-1880), Southern Presbyterian professor at the Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC, said of courage: "... the Scriptures often speak in tones of high commendation of doing things courageously, and greatly censure such as are not valiant for the truth. Indeed, when sin is impudent and brazen-faced, it is not right that piety should be timid and sneaking. Accordingly the genuine people of God have in all ages manifested more or less intrepidity in the cause of truth." Satan has many devices to attack the professing church. He may use the methods of Balaam to ensnare the Lord's people into sin. He may use the world, with its vain wealth, power and wisdom to corrupt its pure doctrines, commandments and practices. He also uses fear to quench zeal and silence the voice of truth. In Revelation 12:11 we read of God's elect who defeated the old serpent: "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

During the ancient, iron rule of the Roman Empire, ten periods of persecution fell upon Christ's blood-bought flock. They triumphed in each onslaught. Nero, who had the Apostle Paul executed, "wished the ruin of all things before his death." He ordered the burning of the city of Rome. The conflagration was devastating, but the tyrant failed to burn down the city. Shifting the

Continued on page 15

THE DIVISION OF 1937

Between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Bible Presbyterian Church

PART 9

Alcohol and Worldliness

BY BRAD K. GSELL

It is important to have read Parts 1 through 8 of this series, which have been published in successive issues since the winter 2014 issue of Redeeming the Time. They serve as the general background for understanding this segment and those to come. These may be found on our website (www.rttpublications.org), or we would be glad to mail copies to you. Within a few years of its founding, the Presbyterian Church of America changed its name to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Therefore, you will see these names used interchangeably in these articles.

One would think that the matter of separating from worldliness would be an issue upon which all could agree. The Scriptures from beginning to end declare that this is the only practice for the obedient child of God. 1 John 2:15-16 states: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” The Scriptures give many specifics as to what is considered to be worldly. How should those who are “strangers and pilgrims” comport themselves in this wicked world?

Just a short while after the founding meetings of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, specially called conventions in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Utah rati-

“An outcry has been heard, charging the defenders of total abstinence with infringing upon the rights of conscience and the liberty of their fellow citizens. It requires a perspicacity greater than that which falls to the lot of most, to discover the point of this objection; and the difficulty of reply arises not so much from the cogency of the argument as from our inability to discover any argument at all.”

Samuel Miller

*Old School Presbyterian minister and
Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary*

fied the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. These votes, on December 5, 1933, brought the count to 36 states which had done so — exactly the three-quarters minimum required to amend the U.S. Constitu-

tion. This amendment repealed the 18th Amendment, bringing to a close the nearly 14 years of the Prohibition Era. The liquor trade now thrived openly in America once again — leaving death and destruction in its wake.

The 1930s also saw the beginning of the Golden Age of Film. As movie theaters became more commonplace in smaller towns, and as films with sound became the standard, much of America was introduced to the creations of Hollywood. Although tame by today’s standards, many of these films brought portrayals of big city corruptions and various sins into vast areas where strong Christian values continued to mark the beliefs and mores of whole communities.

Presbyterians and the “Monstrous Evil” of Alcohol in Colonial America

These were not new issues. As American Presbyterianism developed throughout the 1700s, the terrible effects of the use of alcohol were felt in nearly every community and congregation. The discovery and improvements of the distillation process over the centuries had allowed people to make or purchase alcoholic beverages many times more powerful than even possible in Bible times. The scourge of alcohol left families facing

starvation, brought on addiction, sickness and early death, led to dangerous quarrels and destruction of property, and so forth. This was widely viewed as perhaps the major enemy to living a godly life under the control of the Spirit of God.

Famous Presbyterian minister Gilbert Tennent, writing in 1735, described the epidemic problem of drunkenness in colonial America as: “a very monstrous evil, that sinks a man beneath his species, by divesting him of, and dethroning his reason and thereby leveling him with the brute creation....” It “breaks the constitution, wastes the estate, wounds the conscience, makes a man an easy prey to his greatest enemies, the devil and his lusts, ... contrary to our temporal as [well as] eternal interest, equally opposite to the law of nature and of God.”¹

In doing some family research, I came across the session minutes of the Middle Spring Presbyterian Church, near Shippensburg, PA, which my ancestors helped found in the 1730s. It was one of the first Presbyterian churches established west of the Susquehanna River. The Rev. John Blair (who later preceded the Rev. John Witherspoon as acting president of what is now Princeton University) served as pastor there in the 1740s, and the session minutes are still extant! Here on the frontier, the biggest matter of business in these meetings was dealing with ungodly behavior by church members due to the use of alcohol.

It appeared that alcohol was not altogether forbidden, but its use sometimes brought rebuke from the session, even when there was no charge of drunkenness. A few excerpts from these minutes will help demonstrate the problem:

May 13, 1743: A man appearing before the session “acknowledg’d ... that he was too merry jocose & loose in his conduct (and) that he had drank more than he shou’d have done. The session agree that he be rebuk’d for

his loose & intemperate conduct & behaviour unbecoming one professing Christianity, to (which) he submitted....”²

May 4, 1747: “... the session judge that tho’ the Evidences do not convict (said) Edmiston of being drunk, yet his conduct that Day was very light & sinful, seems to have been occasion’d partly by drink, & was such as justly deserved Reproof....”³

September 22, 1748: The session removed one man’s suspension after he announced to them that he “had resolv’d thro divine assistance, for the future to refrain from (the) use of liquor abroad in company altogether. — upon which the session concluded to take his publick profession of penitence, & so to restore him.”⁴

The session often had to judge what to believe, having heard conflicting testimony. Did the person on trial just behave strangely due to some sudden illness, or was alcohol the culprit? One witness stated concerning another man, in the meeting of August 18, 1743, that “he tho’t he was disguis’d with liquor ... or that he tho’t (said) Saml sally’d on his horse, faulter’d in his words, & did not speake so solidly as usual, but remembers no other symptoms of it.”⁵

It was quite apparent that the members of the early Presbyterian churches were expected to display the “fruit of the spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23), and obey the many teachings of Scripture as to how a man should live. All were to “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Sobriety was not just from the use of alcohol, but signified that men were in every aspect of life “to govern both the outward and the inward man by the rules of temperance, modesty, and mortification.”⁶ These teachings were not just loose, abstract principles, but were applied with regularity to everyday events and activities of life.

Presbyterian Teaching on Holiness Following the American Revolution

New Side and Old Side Presbyterians reunited in 1758, in the midst of the French and Indian War. As that war came to a close, the disharmony between the colonists and Great Britain began quickly to escalate, leading to the start of the War for Independence in 1775. These wars were extremely hard on the churches of America, as many of their men were killed or maimed. Vices became more prevalent as soldiers were away from their families and communities, and church attendance and daily spiritual exercises were often neglected in the struggle for safety and survival. Many church buildings had been destroyed or had fallen into disrepair, and finances were very tight. But, with God’s help, His work came back stronger than ever.

In 1789, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America held its first General Assembly in Philadelphia. The Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon, who had signed the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation, was the convening Moderator of this historic event. He was the President of what is now Princeton University, and had previously served as a delegate from New Jersey to the Second Continental Congress.

The meeting took place in the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, just a few steps down Arch Street from the home of a seamstress named Betsy Ross.⁷ The Church had been started by the Rev. Gilbert Tennent in the aftermath of the Great Awakening, and he labored there as pastor for over 20 years. This was the church attended by the Hugh Hodge family, which welcomed a new son, Charles, into the world in 1797. The Hodges had suffered great trials. Their daughter Elizabeth had been the first person to die in the

Continued on page 4

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 3

deadly Yellow Fever outbreak of 1793. Two more children died of the measles. Sadly, Hugh Hodge died shortly thereafter. But Mary Hodge made sure her two surviving sons, Hugh and Charles, were in faithful attendance under the ministry of Dr. Ashbel Green.

After a long pastorate at Second Presbyterian, Dr. Green went on to become the president of what is now Princeton University, served on the board of Princeton Seminary, and was one of the great 19th century leaders of the denomination and various of its agencies. Young Charles grew up to be one of the foremost theologians in church history.

Dr. Green was bold in his public denunciations of what he considered to be “worldly.” The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had a law forbidding the theater. A group arose trying to have this law repealed. Green tells us that this group “was vigorously opposed, chiefly by the Friends, or Quakers, and the Presbyterians.” Green was quite active in supporting this law, so much so that he was attacked in the public newspapers. He even appeared before the State legislature to oppose repeal.⁸ The law was repealed, but the churches tried again to have it reinstated following the Yellow Fever outbreak of 1793. Dr. Green wrote a pamphlet on the subject. But, he concludes: “... it was all in vain. The theatre is fastened on the city; and unless some great and general revival of religion shall destroy it, it will probably prove a nursery of vice till the millennial age.”⁹

Even before the American Revolution, Dr. Witherspoon was active in denouncing the theater. In a lengthy treatise entitled *A Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage*, Dr. Witherspoon declares his purpose:

“I will endeavor to show, that PUBLIC THEATRICAL REPRESENTATIONS, either tragedy or comedy, are, in their general nature or in their best possible state, unlawful, contrary to the purity of our religion.”¹⁰

PCUSA Letter to Its Members Warning Them of Worldly Practices

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly also was not slow to take a stand against what they considered to be worldly practices. This can be seen in the minutes of the General Assembly over many years. The General Assembly of 1812 went on record calling for “addresses, sermons, tracts, or other printed compositions on this subject as may have a tendency to produce a suitable impression against the use of ardent spirits, and to recommend sobriety and temperance.”

The General Assembly of 1818 voted to pay for the publication of a letter to all the leaders and members of the churches in the denomination on this subject. The Moderator was Dr. Jacob Janeway, who was Dr. Green’s assistant, and then successor, at Philadelphia’s Second Presbyterian Church.

Concerning drunkenness, he wrote: “We are convinced that it may be opposed more successfully by prevention than in any other way.... For this purpose we earnestly recommend to the officers and members of our Church to abstain even from the common use of ardent spirits....”

His next comments dealt with gambling: “But it is further our duty to testify, that all encouragement of lotteries, and purchasing of lottery tickets; all attendance on horse-racing, and betting on such, or on any other occasions; and all attempts of whatever kind to acquire gain without giving an equivalent, involve the Gambling principle, and participate in the guilt which attaches to that vice.”

Concerning the theater, Janeway writes that if one does not receive “painful and embarrassing sensations” upon attendance at the theater, “it only proves that the person in question, has lost some of the best sensibilities of our nature; that the strongest safeguard of virtue has been taken down, and that the moral character has undergone a serious depreciation.”

Moving on to the subject of dancing, Janeway wrote that it: “steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions, and hardens the heart.”

He concluded this letter with the following words: “To guard you, beloved brethren, against its wiles and its fascinations, we earnestly recommend that you will consult that sobriety which the sacred pages require. We also trust, that you will attend with the meekness and docility becoming the Christian character, to the admonitions on this subject of those whom you have chosen to watch for your souls. And now, beloved brethren, that you may be guarded from the dangers we have pointed out, and from all other dangers, which beset the path of life and obstruct our common salvation, and that the great head of the church may have you in his holy keeping is our sincere and affectionate prayer. Amen.”¹¹

Both before, during and after the New School / Old School Division of 1837, the various General Assemblies repeatedly issued statements urging total abstinence from the use of alcohol (a few of which include the years 1812, 1818, 1829, 1830, 1865, 1869, 1877, 1934 and 1936). This continued right up to the year the Presbyterian Church of America (OPC) was formed.

The Presbyterian Response to the Great Richmond Fire of 1811

An event occurred on the day after Christmas in 1811, which has



been called the worst urban tragedy in the United States up to that time. The theater in Richmond, Virginia, burned to the ground while a play was being performed. Seventy-two people, including the Governor of Virginia and a number of other dignitaries, perished in the flames. The biographer of the Rev. Jacob Janeway describes the aftermath: "... Gloom hung over the nation. The Presbyterian clergy of Philadelphia resolved to improve the event, and preach against the lawfulness of theatrical exhibitions. Dr. Janeway records that, in the preparation of his sermon, he looked to God for direction, counsel, prudence, wisdom, and faithfulness. Janeway stated, 'I prayed, too, that I might feel for my people, and even weep over them. God, I think has heard my prayers.' The session of the church ordered a pertinent address to be read from the pulpit, in which notice was given that attendance at the theatre would subject church members to the discipline of the church."¹²

Just a few blocks away, the Rev. Archibald Alexander preached a sermon on the subject in the historic Pine Street Presbyterian Church. The next year, Alexander went on to become the first professor at the newly

formed Princeton Theological Seminary. Alexander's son writes concerning that sermon: "It is worthy of note, as belonging to a parallel between two long and blended lives, that the Reverend Dr. [Samuel] Miller, in New York, preached and published a discourse, commemorative of the same afflictive event. It ... contains an able and elaborate argument against theatrical amusements."¹³ Miller joined Alexander in 1813 as the second professor at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Miller had been asked to preach to a number of young men in New York City to offer "sympathy to the afflicted." Miller wrote to these young men: "... when, after being apprized, that if anything was said by me in relation to the awful Calamity in question, it must include a solemn protest against Theatrical entertainments ... my duty to comply with it appeared no longer doubtful. It gives me pleasure to find that you so far approve of what I thought myself bound to say on that subject...."¹⁴

Miller's sermon was quite strong. He stated: "I am constrained, then,

A
SERIOUS INQUIRY
 INTO THE
 NATURE AND EFFECTS
 OF THE
STAGE:
 AND A LETTER RESPECTING PLAY ACTORS.
 BY THE
 Rev. JOHN WITHERSPOON, DD. L. L. D.
Late President of the College at Princeton, New-Jersey.
 ALSO
A SERMON,
 ON THE
 BURNING OF THE THEATRE AT RICHMOND, &c.
 BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.
Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New-York.
 TOGETHER WITH
AN INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS,
 BY SEVERAL MINISTERS IN NEW-YORK, &c.
 NEW-YORK:
 PUBLISHED BY WHITING & WATSON,
 96 BROADWAY.
 1812.

to my deliberate conviction, that theatrical entertainments are criminal in their nature, and mischievous in their effects; that they are directly hostile to the precepts, and to the whole spirit of the Religion of Jesus Christ; that they are deeply baneful in their influence on society, and utterly improper to be attended or countenanced, by those who profess to be the disciples of Christ, or even the friends of morality."¹⁵

This sermon was printed in a booklet with Dr. Witherspoon's writings, mentioned above. It included an opening address by 11 ministers of the Presbyterian U.S.A., Dutch Reformed and Reformed Presbyterian churches commending the work and warning against theatrical productions.

Continued on page 6



Nathaniel Currier, of Currier and Ives fame, used his talents on behalf of the Temperance Movement. His portrayal demonstrated the real life experience of thousands of families across America.

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 5

The Writings of Dr. Samuel Miller

We could include much material by other Presbyterian stalwarts in this article, but the writings of Dr. Miller are reflective of the common thinking in the Presbyterian Church at that time. Concerning dancing, he wrote: “Let it not be said, that I am arguing only against the *abuse* of dancing; and that the best things may be abused. I contend that the unhallowed influence of which I have spoken, is its *native tendency*.”¹⁶

Although Dr. Miller did drink sparingly in his younger years, partially on doctor’s orders for “medicinal” reasons, he stopped abruptly and permanently (near the time he began teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary).¹⁷ He became a strong supporter of the temperance movement.

Miller wrote that “Total abstinence from spirituous liquors, except for medicinal purposes, is to be vindicated upon the ground of moral obligation, as well as of expediency....”¹⁸

*“That in the present state of society, it is the duty of every prudent and benevolent man, to abstain from any use of alcoholic liquors, except as a medicine. We say the duty, because that which is so far expedient, that, if neglected, it leads our brother into sin, is our duty....”*¹⁹

“No human eye can mark the point where temperance ends and intemperance begins; and wherever that imperceptible boundary may fall, the victim is always secure in his own apprehensions....”²⁰

“An outcry has been heard, charging the defenders of total abstinence with infringing upon the rights of conscience and the liberty of their fellow citizens. It requires a perspicacity greater than that which falls to the lot of most, to discover the point of this objection; and the diffi-

culty of reply arises not so much from the cogency of the argument as from our inability to discover any argument at all.”²¹

It is of note that these comments were published in the official Princeton Theological Seminary journal, *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review*. Miller comments about that publication: “In the course pursued by the *Biblical Repertory*, all the Professors of the Seminary seem to have been substantially agreed. No article of importance was inserted without their general concurrence.”²²

In a letter to the Rev. Justin Edwards, Corresponding Secretary of the American Temperance Society, dated January 1, 1836, Dr. Miller wrote: “It would be well for the church and the world, if our present race of young men, especially those in our seminaries and colleges, could be prevailed upon to enter into the spirit and practice of this doctrine [total abstinence].” In an attached note, Dr. Miller wrote from Prince-

ton on April 2, 1849: “I wish it to stand as a testimonial of my early and zealous adhesion to the cause of pledged abstinence from all that can intoxicate. That cause I love, and hope I shall have the privilege of promoting as long as I live.”²³

The Conflict Over Alcohol and Worldliness in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, in his last letter to Dr. J. Gresham Machen, December 4, 1936, wrote: “There is among your most faithful friends and followers a deep feeling that any theology which does not result in ‘a separated life’ cannot be truly Biblical.... Such things as introducing the use of fermented wine of which converted alcoholics are expected to partake at the communion table, are far more likely to cause an explosion in our ranks than any question of eschatology. The report that some Westminster students use liquor and keep it in their rooms with the approval of some members of the faculty is also likely to produce a serious explosion. I feel also (as an individual) that the commercial stage can never be defended as though it existed merely for drama as a fine art. Not all of your friends and mine agree with the position of Wheaton College in completely boycotting the commercial theatre. We maintain our position without desiring to force it upon our Christian friends who cannot see exactly with us. Nevertheless it seems so useless, such a waste of energy, that a considerable number of our mutual friends, a considerable portion of the Presbyterian Church of America [OPC], have to be shocked by the spectacle of some of their leaders in the defense of the faith also defending the products of Hollywood.”²⁴ Unfortunately, Machen and Buswell never had time to sit down and discuss these things further. Machen was with his Lord in less than one month.

Shortly after Machen’s death, Buswell wrote to his friend Dr. Harold Laird, Secretary of the Westminster Seminary Board: “I do not believe God will bless a drinking, worldly ministry.”²⁵

In the same issue of the *Presbyterian Guardian* in which Professor John Murray had so needlessly assaulted Dr. Buswell concerning his Premillennialism (see *Redeeming the Time*, Spring 2016, pp. 8-9), a front page article appeared attacking those who were to become Bible Presbyterians on a different front. Again, these Westminster men appeared to view themselves alone as the custodians of “truly Reformed” doctrine and practice, with any who differed — even on minor points — being accused of not being “truly Reformed.” This article, presumably by the editor, Professor Ned B. Stonehouse, was entitled “Godliness and Christian Liberty.” Although certainly admonishing all to live a godly life, he wrote that those who promoted “‘the separated life’ seem to advocate the historic position of Methodism rather than that of Presbyterianism.” He further stated that: “it is our conviction that in some very important particulars the plea for a ‘separated life’ errs seriously in its understanding and application of the Word of God.”²⁶

Professor Stonehouse was certainly a man of great Christian scholarship, but his reasoning was flawed in at least two respects. “The separated life,” “godly Christian living,” or whatever one may wish to call it, had been taught by all of the historic Protestant denominations to one degree or other. The examples are so ubiquitous, that it is not necessary to seek to prove this. (see the spring 2010 issue of *Redeeming the Time* for documentation on this point). There are indeed examples of this teaching in Methodism, but Stonehouse is incorrect in implying that this identical teaching was not prominently taught within historic Pres-

byterianism — particularly in America. Further, it was taught widely within “Old School” Presbyterianism. ALL of the examples we have just given earlier in this article have been from some of the leading lights of the OLD SCHOOL theology!

Stonehouse argued further that admonishing men to abstain from the use of alcoholic beverages amounted to binding men’s consciences above what the Word of God teaches. He singled out Dr. Buswell by name, and further gave a defense of “moderate” drinking.²⁷ Dr. Buswell’s response should have brought an amiable end to the matter, but the attacks kept coming. Buswell wrote that his stand against alcohol “is based squarely upon the scriptural doctrine of expediency. ‘All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any’ (I Cor. 6: 12). ‘All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify’ (I Cor. 10:23).”²⁸

The truth of the matter is that the men in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who opposed warning against alcohol and worldly practices were in clear departure from the consistent stand of American Presbyterianism on these matters, as proved by the quotations we have just provided, and many others. Stonehouse and his sympathizers in the OPC are to be commended for upholding the crucial belief that we must never bind the conscience of a man over and above anything which the Scriptures teach. The Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church had long included the time-honored words that “God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith and worship.”²⁹ Despite Professor Stonehouse’s accusations, this prin-

Continued on page 8

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 7

ciple was fully championed by those on BOTH sides of this controversy. Stonehouse and his sympathizers held no higher ground on this issue than those who were to become Bible Presbyterians!

Was This Just Another Accretion of Manmade Rules to the Law of God?

Men on both sides recognized that Christ had some of His harshest words for the Pharisees, who held all kinds of specific rules as to what could and could not be lawfully done. According to the Jewish Talmud, their Torah (the five books of Moses, with additional rabbinical writings), had 613 commandments. There was an accretion of additional written and oral rules, over many centuries, which sought to spell out in great detail what was involved in perfectly obeying each Biblical commandment.

By the time of Christ, the number of rules was staggering. For instance, the distance one might travel on the sabbath changed several times over the centuries, by new and clever — but many times arbitrary — interpretations by Jewish rabbis of Old Testament laws.

The Pharisees were quite proud of the meticulousness with which they observed the Law and all the accumulated rules. But, Christ responded to them: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

The Prophet Isaiah hundreds of years earlier had proclaimed: “Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this

people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men” (Isaiah 29:13).

Following the advent of Christ, this exact thing took place as the Roman Catholic Church developed over the centuries. The commandments and traditions of men grew to a place where the church held them to be equal to or greater than the Word of God! The Protestant Reformation provided a resounding condemnation of this very thing!

In contrast, the issue of advising total abstinence was not a matter of anyone seeking to add to the Word of God or proudly thinking they were observing God’s Law better than another. It was quite clear that with the effects of alcohol being one of the worst scourges upon the United States since before its founding, total abstinence was advocated on the grounds of Biblical expedience. In addition, the Westminster Larger Catechism 99:6 states that not only are the sins listed in Scripture forbidden, but also “all the causes, means, occasions, and appearances thereof, and provocations thereunto.”

May General Scriptural Principles Be Applied to Specific Practices?

Many of those who were to become Bible Presbyterians were pastors of large, thriving churches. They believed it was their duty to exhort their congregations — with particular emphasis on the youth — to live godly lives of obedience and sacrifice to Christ and His Word. Such Scriptures as Romans 12:1-2 were often set forth as a challenge: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your

mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” This general principle was likewise agreed to by those on BOTH sides.

The point of departure was in the future Bible Presbyterians’ insistence, in keeping with the clear examples here presented from American Presbyterian history, that the mere teaching of abstract principles, divorced from any application to our daily lives, would produce a weak and ineffectual ministry, and would compromise their oversight of the flocks God had committed to them. They certainly believed strongly that manmade rules could never be added to Scripture, but insisted that the mere teaching of abstract principles, without application, would be of little value.

They took a balanced Biblical approach expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith I:6: “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, *or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture*: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men”³⁰ (emphasis ours).

Concerning these words, Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield commented: “This is the strenuous and universal contention of the Reformed theology against the Socinians and Arminians, who desired to confine the authority of Scripture to its literal assertions; and it involves a characteristic honoring of reason as the instrument for the ascertainment of truth. We must depend upon our human faculties to ascertain what Scripture says; we cannot suddenly abnegate them and refuse their guidance in determining what Scripture means. This is not, of course, to make reason the ground of the authority of inferred doctrines and duties.... Warfield continues that we must apply what the Scriptures

teach “either by literal assertion or by necessary implication.”³¹

It is clear that the Westminster Divines were not hesitant to apply the Scriptures. Question 139 of the Larger Catechism states that the Seventh Commandment forbids such things as “impudent or light behaviour, immodest apparel ...” and “lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancing, stage plays.” All of these things involve a great deal of subjectivity in application, and godly men over the millennia have not ceased to apply these principles to specific things being faced by their particular generation.

The Issue Comes to a Head at the OPC’s Third General Assembly

As tensions increased within the OPC over this matter, the Westminster men seemed to dig in their heels, spending more time defending supposed “Christian liberty” than in encouraging men to “use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13). Upon his resignation as a professor at Westminster in April 1937, Dr. Allen A. MacRae wrote: “In recent months practically every member of the faculty has entered upon a vigorous defense of an asserted right to use intoxicating liquors — a defense occasioned by the fact that certain faculty members themselves use intoxicants. Whatever the abstract right that may be involved, the whole burden of their emphasis has been against abstinence in this regard. This is no true representation of the Biblical emphasis, which constantly speaks of strong drink as something to be shunned. Here again a straw man has been erected.”³²

Many men were distressed because some within and without were calling the denomination a “wet church.” They saw this as a detriment to their personal and ministerial testimony. The Presbytery of Chicago overtook the Third Gener-

“When a church refuses to adopt even the mildest imaginable statement recommending its young men to avoid the use of intoxicants, it certainly cannot be called a ‘dry’ church. Surely it has forgotten the historic witness of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which for more than a century has stood squarely for total abstinence from alcoholic liquors.”

Allan A. MacRae

al Assembly of the OPC to “reaffirm” the stand for total abstinence from the use of alcohol taken by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America for well over 125 years. The overture was well documented with quotations from a number of statements passed by various general assemblies over many decades. A special point was made to state that they were not standing in criticism of other church bodies with differing “traditions.” It was clear that this was being put forth on the grounds of expediency.³³ In more recent times, OPC minister Peter J. Wallace, after reviewing some of the same documentation contained in the Chicago overture, concludes: “... This brief overview suggests that the Bible Presbyterian stance, requiring total abstinence of all officers of the church, was very common among Old School Presbyterians....”³⁴

When the Third General Assembly met, the opponents of the Chicago Overture vigorously attacked an error that did not exist in what the proponents were requesting. Among other things, the Westminster men accused those who were to become Bible Presbyterians of charging Christ with sin in turning the wa-

ter into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.³⁵ H. McAllister Griffiths writes: “I could not help thinking what a waste of energy it was. One would suppose that before they set about attacking a view, men would find out for themselves exactly what it is. As it was, the arguments eloquently made by these brethren had no possible pertinency to the matter under discussion, simply sailing by like a train on another track.”³⁶

An Unlikely Appeal to Charles Hodge in the Discussion

One of the delegates quoted Charles Hodge, who condemned the stance of some Temperance Societies that any use of fermented beverages was *in itself* a sin. Some ministers, while total abstainers themselves, and strong advocates of the practice, were criticized as “friends of drunkards” because they would not go as far as many in the temperance societies. Hodge discusses this in a number of his writings and his comments have been used many times in the succeeding years. Hodge indeed was quite clear and direct that no human laws could be added to what the Scriptures teach. He also warned that if one were to take a position based on “expediency,” it must be for the reason proscribed in the Scriptures of not being a stumbling block to oneself or his neighbor.³⁷ This part of Dr. Hodge’s writings was in line with what Dr. Stonehouse had written in the *Presbyterian Guardian*, but was not the whole story.

A discussion of Hodge may seem better placed when earlier we were providing documentation from the writings of several of his Old School brethren. However, since Hodge’s writings on this subject played no small part in the discussion at this Third General Assembly, it seems advantageous to consider them in this context.

Continued on page 10

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 9

In truth, Charles Hodge was NOT in disagreement with the historic stand of the Presbyterian Church on temperance, and those who were to become Bible Presbyterians were not opposed to the stand of Hodge. Hodge's whole emphasis was that we cannot add human rules to limit communion in the church. However, he did believe there were circumstances where "total abstinence" was indeed required.

The Old School General Assembly of 1865 had declared: "... This

It is of great significance that Charles Hodge's practice was the same as that of the Bible Presbyterians. Hodge warned the young against various vices. In a note to his grandson, Hugh Lennox Scott, upon his graduation from West Point, Hodge wrote: "Dear Lennie ... Never drink intoxicating liquor...."

Assembly enjoins upon all their ministers, ruling elders and church members to use their influence upon those around them, particularly on our young men now returning from the army, and on our youth in academies and colleges, to practice entire abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage, which it is believed is the only sure protection against drunkenness."³⁸

This was reiterated in 1869, when the General Assembly passed a resolution stating:

"Resolved, 1. That this Assembly reiterates its former deliverances in

favour of total abstinence, especially that passed at Pittsburgh in 1865.

"Resolved, 2: That our ministers be enjoined to preach on the duty of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks as a beverage, on the third Sabbath of December next, or at the earliest practicable time previous."³⁹

With Charles Hodge as editor,⁴⁰ *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* carried an article which commented on this resolution. The writer stated that he "concurred with the resolution as long as it wasn't saying that the use of alcohol 'is a sin *per se*.'" It further stated that as long as that concern was satisfied, 'We will heartily join in efforts to promote abstinence on this ground, even to the extent of supporting prohibitory legislation so far as the public will sustain it."⁴¹

H. McAllister Griffiths, writing on the front page of the *Christian Beacon*, states: "The Church has never declared that the use of alcohol is sin *per se*. That is, it has never held that the act is sinful in itself, quite without regard to any attending circumstances."⁴² It is interesting that Griffiths uses virtually the same words as were used in this article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, as well as a statement from a Committee of the Old School General Assembly of 1843, which states concerning alcohol that the "use and sale are generally to be decidedly disapproved; but each case must be decided in view of all the attendant circumstances that go to modify and give character to the same."⁴³

It is of great significance that Charles Hodge's *practice* was the same as that of the Bible Presbyterians. Hodge warned the young against various vices. In a note to his grandson, Hugh Lennox Scott, upon his graduation from West Point, Hodge wrote:

"Dear Lennie,

"Never pass a day without reading the Bible and calling upon God in prayer.

"Learn to pray always. The Lord Jesus is ever near you. It does not take long to say: 'Lord preserve me; Lord help me. Lord keep me from sin.' We need to say this a hundred times a day.

"Never gamble.

"Never drink intoxicating liquor" (emphasis ours).

"Never use profane language.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.

"Never incur debt.

"Live peaceable with all men.

"Never be afraid to confess Christ.

"Let your last words every night be: 'I take Jesus Christ to be my God and Saviour.'

"May the blessing of God be upon you always and everywhere.

"Your Loving Grandfather, Charles Hodge, Princeton, Sept. 15, 1876."⁴⁴

It is of note that he did not say "Never get drunk" or "Never drink to excess." No, he urged him to "Never drink intoxicating liquor"! In that same spirit, the Bible Presbyterian men were warning the young people in their churches.

The Formation of the Bible Presbyterian Fellowship

With the rejection by the General Assembly of the overture from the Presbytery of Chicago (by a vote of 65 to 24),⁴⁵ Dr. MacRae wrote: "When a church refuses to adopt even the mildest imaginable statement recommending its young men to avoid the use of intoxicants, it certainly cannot be called a 'dry' church. Surely it has forgotten the historic witness of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which for more than a century has stood squarely for total abstinence from alcoholic liquors."⁴⁶

The Bible Presbyterian Fellowship was formed on Friday, June 4, 1937, partially due to this issue of the use of alcohol. It was bound to create no small controversy among the laymen in the pews and among Westminster Seminary's many supporters.

The
Orthodox Presbyterian Church
MINUTES OF THE
THIRTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MEETING AT
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

MAY 24 - MAY 29, 1971

Published by
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7401 Old York Road
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19126

REPORT OF THE MINORITY OF THE COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE MATTER OF ABORTION

However, the author finds himself compelled to differ with the proposition that a fertilized egg is, from the moment of fertilization, a human person. It may possess the potentiality of becoming a person. But to affirm that it is a person seems a piece of rationalistic folly. It is to be noted that the majority report is too wise to do this.

It, therefore, appears to the author of this minority report that the Church is on the verge of doing what it refused to do in 1937, on the verge of adding additional sins to the scriptural catalogue. That some instances of abortion are sinful is obvious. That they all are is not. Yet, with one minor possible exception, the report of the committee concludes that they are. This is quite illicit.

Paul Woolley

The same reasoning used against the Bible Presbyterians in 1937 for admonishing Christians to totally abstain from the use of alcohol was used once again in 1971. Professor Paul Woolley issued a minority report to protest a call for the condemnation of abortion in the OPC General Assembly. The overwhelming majority were not persuaded and passed a resolution against abortion in 1972, but not without 14 delegates requesting that their negative votes be recorded in the minutes. The excerpts above are photographically reproduced.

Westminster Seminary Yields to Pressure From Its Supporters and Bans Alcohol on Campus

Amazingly, the faculty of Westminster Seminary, with just the weekend in between, gathered on Monday, June 8, 1937, and took action for the Seminary that they had fought so strenuously against the week before. They passed a statement “strongly urg[ing]” their students to “walk circumspectly” when considering the use of alcohol, and even quoted several verses dealing with the matter of expediency!⁴⁷

The statement concluded with the real reason for this sudden action: “That, though we believe the making of a rule to be unnecessary, yet, to avoid any misconceptions by the public, we establish a rule forbidding all beverage use of alcoholic liquors upon the grounds and in the buildings of the Seminary.”⁴⁸

Carl McIntire, in an editorial entitled “Abstinence,” wrote: “We respect men with convictions. Therefore, if, after they have taken this stand [against urging abstinence] and the pressure from the Christian public increases, if they were to yield and lift up prohibitions and regulations in regard to themselves simply to save their faces our respect for them would, of course, diminish. We wish that they might change their principles.”⁴⁹

Westminster Professors Murray and Woolley and the Application of the Scriptures

Professor John Murray was particularly sensitive to this matter of applying the Scriptures, and often would go no further than expressing general Scriptural principles. He had been involved in a controversy when the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland condemned the use of public transportation on the Sabbath. As it became widely available, many people became lax in attending church services, since they could now easily travel to distant places. This was viewed as a tool of Satan to facilitate the breaking of the Sabbath. It was also believed to be neither a work of “necessity” nor “mercy” (as Westminster Shorter Catechism Question 60 proscribes) and thus was seen as a violation of the Fourth Commandment.

Murray opposed the conclusion the Synod “deduced” from the Scriptures, and spoke strongly against this — saying in affect that the church was “adding to the Scriptures.” He soon was dropped as a ministerial candidate by the Free Church for his outspokenness. Although some may agree with Murray that the Synod went too far in barring members from the communion of the church for this “offense,” he became a cham-

pion of so-called “Christian liberty.” At least in this writer’s opinion, he became excessive in his unwillingness to apply Scriptural principles to the specifics of everyday life.

Professor Paul Woolley likewise seemed to take an extreme position in refusing to apply Scriptural teaching to real-life situations, even to the point of defending abortion! Dr. John Frame, presently a professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL, writes concerning his time as a professor at Westminster: “My senior colleague at Westminster in Philadelphia, Dr. Paul Woolley, maintained to his last day that abortion is legitimate in some cases.”⁵⁰

In 1971, the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church heard a rather lengthy report from a committee it had erected to study the matter of abortion. The Committee examined various portions of Scripture and concluded that abortion was the taking of innocent human life and should be rejected. That there would be a minority report is indeed shocking. Professor Woolley signed the report and stated: “... to affirm that it [an unborn child] is a person seems a piece of rationalistic folly.”⁵¹ Woolley tied his position directly back to the opposition to the Bible Presbyterians in

Continued on page 12

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 11

the 1930s, stating: “It would appear that there is no scriptural passage dealing directly with induced abortion.... It, therefore, appears to the author of this minority report that the Church is on the verge of doing what it refused to do in 1937, on the verge of adding additional sins to the scriptural catalogue.... If God has not prohibited an action, the church may not do so.”⁵² Fortunately, the majority in the OPC did not buy into Professor Woolley’s reasoning. In 1972, they passed a short resolution declaring abortion to be a violation of the Sixth Commandment — “thou shalt not kill.”⁵³ Unfortunately, the vote was far from unanimous. Of those delegates voting against the resolution, 14 took the extra step of requesting that their No vote be recorded in the Minutes.⁵⁴

Even some in the OPC at that time expressed their frustration with the extreme extent to which Woolley and some others in the OPC had refused to apply general Scriptural principles to specific things. John Frame wrote: “Our opponents said that we must not require believers to obey principles not stated in Scripture; and since Scripture doesn’t speak about killing the unborn, we must leave that question open. However, we noted, Scripture doesn’t mention the killing of plumbers, either, or the killing of Scottish Presbyterian men over 43 years of age. What it says is, ‘thou shalt not kill.’ Typically, Scriptural commands are to some extent general, and it is our responsibility to make the specific applications. Unless we are allowed, even required, to make those specific applications, the Bible becomes a dead letter. So the argument must be made: Killing people is wrong; killing unborn babies is killing people;

therefore killing unborn babies is wrong.”⁵⁵

Woolley was not dissuaded. Several years later he wrote: “The common Protestant view has been that an induced abortion was sinful except when it was the only possible means of saving the life of the prospective mother. That was satisfactory for a time. But again the Bible was consulted with care. There seemed to be no specific prohibition for abortion.... One danger to be avoided is the addition, on human authority, of a new sin to the moral law in supplement to the moral law of God.”⁵⁶

It is little wonder that Woolley had a special dislike for Carl McIntire. McIntire and most Bible Presbyterians stood publicly for conservative Biblical values like their Presbyterian forebears. In contrast, OPC Historian John Muether writes concerning Woolley that he “was known as something of a political renegade. He held membership in organizations such as the ACLU and Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. (To be sure, this was before either of these organizations became stridently antireligious.) ... In Moisés Silva’s words, Woolley [took a] rather ‘liberal’ position on a wide variety of social and political issues.”⁵⁷

Alcohol, Worldliness and the Bible Presbyterian Church

Most Bible Presbyterians were perhaps somewhat more expansive in their application than was Charles Hodge. However, there was little difference as to the underlying principle. Hodge thought it was the “duty” to totally abstain from alcohol in some areas of the country, but not necessarily in others, depending on how the local culture, understanding and usage applied to the Biblical principle of “expediency.”⁵⁸

However, by the 1930s, transportation and communication had made the nation much more homogeneous than

in Hodge’s day. Events in Los Angeles or Chicago were quickly known in Marysville, Kansas, and Laramie, Wyoming. The whole nation was fully aware of the crime and debauchery still deeply embedded in and associated with the liquor trade, even after Prohibition.

R. Laird Harris, a founder of the Bible Presbyterian Church and a professor at Faith Theological Seminary for many years, did a study of the various Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible for “wine,” detailing how each was actually used. He also put this in context, documenting usage throughout historical accounts of the ancient world. He made a compelling argument that in many places, the use of the word “wine” did not necessarily mean that fermentation was involved.

Harris pointed out that the liquor of 20th century America had little resemblance to the wines of Bible times. He writes: “People in Bible times had nothing to correspond to our strong drinks today. Natural fermentation only gives a product with about 14% of alcohol...”⁵⁹ Only the discovery and perfection of distillation and fortification has allowed for the much stronger alcoholic content available in modern times.

He continues: “... wine and beer in ancient Palestine were not over 5% or 8% because of the limited sugar content in the natural grape juice and malt used for the fermentation. There is obviously a great difference between a society where only 5% liquor is obtainable and one where 100 proof whiskey is a common thing.”⁶⁰

When the Bible Presbyterians met in their First General Synod on September 1938, they passed two resolutions, one concerning alcohol and one concerning worldliness. They could easily have been written by any number of Old School Presbyterians and could have been gladly received in the general assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in the USA over the past 125 years. They satisfied completely the concerns Charles Hodge had expressed in the last century — even more so than the state-

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIRST GENERAL SYNOD OF THE BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Photographically reproduced from the Minutes — Wednesday, September 7, 1938

The Use of Intoxicating Beverages

On motion, the following resolution was adopted:

"We, the members of this Synod, in the interest of making clear our position on this particular matter, namely the question of a Christian's relation to the use of intoxicating beverages, and with no slightest intention of setting ourselves up in judgment on the conscience of any man where the Word of God has not bound him, do desire to declare that we deem it wise to pursue the course of total abstinence; and furthermore, we lament the widespread tendency of the American people toward intemperance, and we are unalterably opposed to the modern saloon and the liquor traffic in general, which, as now carried on, is associated with and leads to sinful abuses, and is subversive of the general welfare of society."

A Holy Life Separated From Worldly Sin

On motion, the following resolution was adopted:

"In conformity to the Word of God and without adding thereto any rules binding the conscience we do hereby urge our membership to lead a holy life separated from worldly sin. We hold that the participation in games commonly used for gambling sets a snare for our young people, introducing them to gambling associates and leading themselves into this evil practice. We hold that the patronage of the commercial theatre is not conducive to the development of the spiritual life. We hold that the promiscuous familiarity between the sexes in modern society in the modern dance and in other modern social customs sets dangerous temptations before the young. We urge all ministers and Christian leaders among us to discourage these and other worldly practices among the Lord's people, and to give their Christian testimony uncompromisingly against all forms of sin."

ments of some of the Old School Presbyterian general assemblies!

The resolution urging total abstinence from alcoholic beverages included the phrase: "with no slightest intention of setting ourselves up in judgment on the conscience of any man where the Word of God has not bound him...."⁶¹ The other, dealing with worldliness, carried this qualifier: "... without adding thereto any rules binding the conscience...."⁶² (Please see the full text of these resolutions at the top of this page.)

The Bible Presbyterian Church has continued to uphold the principle of total abstinence, as have other Reformed groups, such as the American

Presbyterian Church and the Free Presbyterian Church of North America. It does not shrink from its admonition to refrain from worldly practices which hinder and prevent true Biblical holiness. Far from being a sign of following Methodism or the dangerous latitude allowed by the "New School" Presbyterians of the 1800s, the stand of the Bible Presbyterian Church is quite Biblical and stands in the grand heritage of Reformed doctrine, practice and history. •

¹Gilbert Tennent, *A Solemn Warning to the Secure World From the God of Terrible Majesty or The Presumptuous Sinner Detected*

ed, His Pleas Considered, and His Doom Displayed (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1735), pp. 70-71.

²*Minutes of the Session of the Middle Spring Presbyterian Church*, near Shippensburg, PA, 1742-1748 (copy in the author's files), p. 5.

³*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VI (I Peter 5:8) (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd), p. 1035.

⁷Some believe that she lived in a house which is no longer standing, beside the present structure known as the Betsy Ross House.

Continued on page 14

ALCOHOL AND WORLDLINESS

Continued from page 13

⁸Ashbel Green, *The Life of Ashbel Green* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1849), pp. 194-195.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁰John Witherspoon, *A Serious Inquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Stage: And a Letter Respecting Play Actors* (New York: Whiting and Waton, 1812), p. 33.

¹¹*Extracts from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, A.D. 1818* (Philadelphia: Thomas & William Bradford, 1818), pp. 54-55.

¹²Thomas L. Janeway, D.D., *Memoir of the Rev. Jacob J. Janeway, D.D.* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1861), pp. 179-180.

¹³James W. Alexander, D.D., *The Life of Archibald Alexander, D.D., LL.D.* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1856), p. 295. This is also mentioned in the autobiography of Dr. Samuel Miller: Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D., LL.D.*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfiner, 1869), p. 322.

¹⁴Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D., LL.D.*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfiner, 1869), p. 322.

¹⁵Samuel Miller, "A Sermon delivered January 19, 1812, at the Request of a Number of Young Gentlemen of the City of New-York, Who had Assembled to Express Their Condolences With the Inhabitants of Richmond, on the Late Mournful Dispensation of

Providence in That City" (New York: Whiting and Watson, 1812), p. 168.

¹⁶Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D. LL.D.*, Vol. 1, p. 188.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹⁸Samuel Miller, "Suggestions in Vindication of the Temperance Society," *The Biblical Repertory and Theological Review* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1831), p. 45

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 58.

²²Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D. LL.D.*, Vol. 1, p. 271.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 303.

²⁴Personal letter from Dr. J. Oliver Buswell to Dr. J. Gresham Machen, December 4, 1936 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁵Personal letter from Dr. J. Oliver Buswell to Dr. Harold S. Laird, January 31, 1937 (Archives of the PCA Historical Center).

²⁶Ned B. Stonehouse, "Godliness and Christian Liberty," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, February 27, 1937, pp. 201-204.

²⁷Stonehouse, p. 201.

²⁸J. Oliver Buswell, "Two Communications From Dr. Buswell: The Brief Communication," *Presbyterian Guardian*, April 10, 1937, p. 12.

²⁹*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, 1917), p. 352.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 13.

³¹Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Westminster Doctrine of Holy Scripture," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Vol. IV (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Review Association, 1893), p. 634.

³²"Professor MacRae Leaves Westminster Seminary," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, May 15, 1937, p. 50.

³³*Minutes of the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Church of America), pp. 5-7.

³⁴Dr. Peter J. Wallace, "The Myth of Old School Presbyterianism," *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, Vol. 18, 2007, p. 195. Nowhere in the Bible Presbyterian Form of Government or Book of Discipline is anything stated specifically about the use of alcohol. However, it has been so universally viewed as a major compromise of one's Christian testimony, in our American society, that this writer has never known of a Bible Presbyterian minister who has not been a total abstainer.

³⁵Much has been written concerning the precise meaning of the Greek words used in the New Testament for "wine." Fermentation is not always implied. Whether it was or not in this situation it was considered irrelevant by the Bible Presbyterians, for they certainly were not implying in any way that this miracle of Christ was improper or sinful.

³⁶H. McAllister Griffiths, "'Since the Syracuse General Assembly': Machine Politics in the Presbyterian Church of America," *Christian Beacon*, September 16, 1937, p. 2.

³⁷Charles Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1879), pp. 224-231. First appeared in *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, July 1843), pp. 461-469.

³⁸*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Old School)* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1865), p. 570.

³⁹*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Old School)* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869), p. 896.

⁴⁰The article does not carry the name of its author, but states that it is presented under the responsibility of "the junior editor." Charles Hodge and Lyman H. Atwater are listed as co-editors.

⁴¹*The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, Vol. XLI, 1869. New York: Charles Scribner and Company, p. 412.

⁴²H. McAllister Griffiths, "'Since the Syracuse General Assembly': Machine Politics in the Presbyterian Church of America," *Christian Beacon*, September 16, 1937, p. 1.

⁴³*The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, July 1843), pp. 461-469.

⁴⁴Paul Gutjahr, *Charles Hodge: Guardian of American Orthodoxy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 320.

⁴⁵*Minutes of the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Church of America), p. 23.

⁴⁶"Bible Presbyterian Fellowship Formed," *Christian Beacon*, June 10, 1937, p. 8.

⁴⁷"Westminster Faculty Adopts Statement on Liquor Question," *Presbyterian Guardian*, June 26, 1937, p.100.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Carl McIntire, "Abstinence," *Christian Beacon*, June 17, 1937, p. 4.

⁵⁰John M. Frame, "Ministries of Mercy to the Unborn," May 21, 2012 (<http://www.>

REDEEMING THE TIME

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frame-poythress.org/ministries-of-mercy-to-the-unborn).

⁵¹Paul Woolley, "Report of the Minority of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion," *Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, May 24-29, 1971 (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church), pp. 156-157.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, May 15-20, 1972 (Philadelphia: Orthodox Presbyterian Church), pp. 17-18, 149.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵⁵Frame.

⁵⁶Paul Woolley, *The Significance of J. Gresham Machen Today* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1977), p. 71

⁵⁷John Muether, "The Significance of Paul Woolley Today," *Confident of Better Things*, ed. John Muether and Danny Olinger (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2011), p. 13.

⁵⁸Hodge, *The Church and Its Polity*, pp. 228-229.

⁵⁹R. Laird Harris, "Wine and Strong Drink," *The Bible Today* (New York: National Bible Institute, March 1944), p. 1.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Minutes of the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church*, Collingswood, NJ, September 1938, pp. 9-10.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 10.



Mr. Brad Gsell is an elder and minister of music of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, and President of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions.

COURAGE

Continued from page 1

blame from himself, he pointed to the Christians. He devised horrendous tortures and executions to punish the innocent followers of Christ. For example, John Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs* stated: "[H]e had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts

made stiff with wax, fixed to axle-trees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them." Yet, the ruler failed in his object to destroy Christianity. Foxe said: "This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity."²

As dreadful as the first nine periods of persecution were, the tenth was the worst. Foxe said, "Racks, scourges, swords, daggers, crosses, poison, and famine, were made use of in various parts to dispatch the Christians; and invention was exhausted to devise tortures against such as had no crime, but thinking differently from the votaries of superstition."³ Still, Christ's church grew. One historian said, "By the end of the first century, the gospel had been carried far from its starting-point in Jerusalem. No amount of persecution could stop it."⁴

By the fourth century, apostasy had taken root in the professing church and began a corruption of doctrine, worship, government and discipline that produced the Dark Ages. The apostate ecclesiastical establishment became an enemy of the Lord's people, torturing and executing those who resisted their heresies. Loraine Boettner, in his book *Roman Catholicism*, listed 44 heresies and unscriptural inventions adopted into the papacy over a period of 1,650 years, beginning in the year A.D. 300 and ending in the year 1950. They included such practices and dogmas as the following (in chronological order): "Prayers for the dead (300); veneration of angels and dead saints, and use of images (375); the doctrine of purgatory, established by Gregory I (593); prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels (about 600); the title of pope, or universal bishop, given to Boniface II by emperor Phocas (610); The Mass, developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance made obligatory in the 11th century; celibacy of the priesthood (1079); the

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Joshua 1:9

Inquisition (1184); auricular confession of sins to a priest instead of to God, instituted by pope Innocent III, in Lateran Council (1215); Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Council of Valencia (1229); Immaculate conception of Mary, proclaimed by pope Pius IX (1854); infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by the Vatican Council (1870); Assumption of Mary (bodily ascension into heaven shortly after her death), proclaimed by pope Pius XII (1950)."⁵

Jesus Christ kept his flock throughout the Dark Ages, even in remote areas, such as the Alps. There were continuing testimonies against Rome's degeneration, but the corruption increased from century to century. When the darkness seemed to prevail over the known world, the Lord raised up a man named John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384) — known as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." This Roman Catholic priest and scholar studied the Scriptures and learned divine truth. Protestant historian J.A. Wylie said: "From questioning the mere abuse of the papal prerogative, he began to question its legitimacy. At every step a new doubt presented itself; this sent him back again to the Scriptures. Every page he read shed new light into his mind, and discovered some new invention or error of man, till at last he saw that the system of the Gospel and the system of the papacy were utterly and irreconcilably at variance, and

Continued on page 16

COURAGE

Continued from page 15

that if he would follow the one he must finally renounce the other.”⁶ Wycliffe translated the Bible into English, trained his followers in the truth, and sent them forth to distribute handwritten copies of God’s Word. Many of his students were burned at the stake, with a hand-copied Bible chained around their necks. Wycliffe was spared but, 44 years after his death, Rome had his remains burned and his ashes cast into the River Swift. The preacher and scholar, who knew the Scriptures and possessed the courage to stand for the truth, sowed spiritual seeds that would end the Dark Ages.

A Bohemian priest, John Huss (c. 1372-1415), influenced by Wycliffe’s writings, read the Word of God, received its truth and courageously proclaimed its teachings. He was given a private chapel in the city of Prague to preach the Scriptures. The city, known for its wickedness, was transformed into a city of morality and decency. Pope Alexander V “fulminated a bull, in which he commanded the Archbishop of Prague, Sbinko, with the help of the secular authorities, to proceed against all who preached in private chapels, and who read the writings or taught the opinions of Wicliffe.”⁷ The Reformer was forced into exile, but traveled throughout the land teaching God’s Word. In time, the Council of Constance called the courageous

servant of the Lord before its court. He was promised a safe conduct, but received Rome’s anathema and death by the fiery stake. J.A. Wylie explained the consequences of the martyr’s faithfulness: “What a surprise to his and the Gospel’s enemies! ‘Huss is dead,’ say they, as they retire from the meadow where they have just seen him expire. Huss is dead. The Rhine has received his ashes, and is bearing them on its rushing floods to the ocean, there to bury them for ever. No: Huss is alive. It is not death, but life, that he has found in the fire; his stake has given him not an entombment, but a resurrection. The winds as they blow over Constance are wafting the spirit of the confessor and martyr to all the countries of Christendom. The nations are being stirred; Bohemia is awakening; a hundred years, and Germany and all Christendom will shake off their slumber; and then will come the great reckoning which the martyr’s prophetic spirit foretold: ‘In the course of a hundred years you will answer to God and to me.’”⁸

Some one hundred years later, a German monk, Martin Luther, defied Rome’s unbiblical teachings, refused to recant the truth before potentates, kings, and princes, translated the Scriptures into the German language and lived to see the soul-saving Gospel proclaimed and received in many nations. It seemed impossible, when Luther was born, that the ancient errors and false practices of Rome would be defeated and the

true Gospel would spread throughout the earth. It was not Luther that brought the change — it was the King of kings. “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15:25).

In our wicked day, we must not lower the blood-stained banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has never lost a battle. Our spiritual forefathers refused to compromise and determined to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). It is our privilege to stay on the old paths until we see our Redeemer face to face. •

¹William S. Plumer, (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1993), p. 433.

²William Byron Gorbush, ed., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1926), pp. 7,8.

³*Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴A.M. Renwick, *The Story of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 23.

⁵Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 7-9.

⁶J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, vol. I (New York: Cassell and Company, n.d.), p. 75.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 165.



The Rev. Mark Evans is pastor of Hope Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC, and currently serves as the Moderator of Faith Presbyterian Church.

“... the Scriptures often speak in tones of high commendation of doing things courageously, and greatly censure such as are not valiant for the truth. Indeed, when sin is impudent and brazen-faced, it is not right that piety should be timid and sneaking. Accordingly the genuine people of God have in all ages manifested more or less intrepidity in the cause of truth.”

William S. Plumer

Southern Presbyterian professor at the Theological Seminary in Columbia, SC,