

The Bible Presbyterian Church will wrap its own 'extreme separation' robes about it and lie down to its internal nightmares. . . .

We must beware of extreme separation. We do not want to dry up like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, or become a little, small group like the Reformed Episcopal Church. The whole field is wide open to a real reformation if we stay in the position where we believe God's Word requires us to stay and do everything in our power to reach in the most attractive, unoffensive, and winning way those who are still in the apostate churches, that they may come out. . . .

May I say . . . , as one who has been in the church from the very first moment and who has given himself without stint to the building of the church and the establishment of churches here and there, that I realize that we are going to have struggles in our church, but they are struggles which none of us must avoid or be ashamed of. We must fight to build the church and we must fight to keep it pure.

*Carl McIntire*  
September 7, 1944

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## The Bible Presbyterian Church

**T**HE origin and development of the Bible Presbyterian Church is deeply rooted in the Presbyterian Separatist Movement, which in 1936 sought, in the language of J. Gresham Machen, ‘the great good of separation of evangelical forces in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. from an apostate ecclesiastical machine.’<sup>1</sup> The aim was to provide a new church organization for the ‘true spiritual succession’ of the Church now lost to modernist control. This movement resulted in the organization of what was originally called the Presbyterian Church of America. Its adherents believed that they were obeying the Scriptural injunction to bear the reproach of their crucified Lord, who suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, by following him without the camp of an apostate ecclesiastical organization (Heb. 13: 12 f.). Having considered and rejected the case for compromise, they followed the call: ‘Let us, therefore, leave the modernist-dominated camp and go without the gate to him, bearing his reproach.’<sup>2</sup>

However, as we have seen, the Presbyterian Separatist Movement in the form of the Presbyterian Church of Ameri-

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1. The language is found in a letter of Machen to C. E. Macartney on May 9, 1936—reprinted in the *Presbyterian Guardian (PG)*, Jan. 1962, 4 f.

2. H. M. Griffiths, *The Case for Compromise*, n.d., 89. Cf. *PG*, June 22, 1936, 113; Aug. 3, 1936, 191. This was a common appeal of all those who withdrew from the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in the 1930’s. Cf. M. T. MacPherson, *The Apostasy and Crisis in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.* (Sermon, May 17, 1936), 19.

ca subsequently divided in 1937—the one party eventually becoming the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; the other, the Bible Presbyterian Synod. It is the purpose of this chapter to trace the history of the Bible Presbyterian Church from its beginnings in 1937 to its tragic division some twenty years later.

### **Bible Presbyterian Synod**

The men who formed the Bible Presbyterian Synod wanted in general what they considered a more forceful testimony to the whole counsel of God, as they understood it, than was possible in what was to become the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They felt that the Presbyterian Church of America had been for them a false start. They found themselves in the wrong church and were glad to have found it out so soon. They wanted a church which, in their view, would not be content merely to expound the truth of the Bible in its historical context, but one which would be willing to take an official stand in the bold application of that truth to every area of life in the modern world. The aim was to build a Presbyterian church which stood upon a Bible whose authority extended, by way of far-reaching and forceful application, to the religious and moral details of modern life.

The founders of the BP Synod were animated with the profound conviction that they could not remain in the fellowship of the Presbyterian Church of America and still expect, in the words of the *Christian Beacon*, ‘the full blessing of God upon their labors.’

Without impugning the sincerity of those who dominated the then Presbyterian Church of America, it was felt by many that, due to a peculiar combination of circumstances, there was no possibility that that body would ever become a widespread or effective witness to the great spiritual succession of American Presbyterianism. It seemed to them that the body was dominated by a small clique who were determined to control it totally. This group represented, doubtless in all sincerity, a point of view concerning the return of our Lord and con-

cerning the use of intoxicating liquors which it was felt by many was both contrary to the Word of God and calculated to prevent that church from ever awakening a wide response in the hearts of American Christians. So, for the sake not only of the principles at stake, but also with a view to the need for the establishment of a great nation-wide witness to the Word of God, there were many who believed that the then 'Presbyterian Church of America' as it had existed up until that time represented a 'false start.'<sup>3</sup>

Thus, on the evening of June 4, 1937, during the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America, a small group of fourteen ministers and three ruling elders gathered in the St. James Hotel in Philadelphia to determine what would be done should they for the sake of conscience feel compelled to leave the Church. They decided that in that event they would probably form a synod which would be a 'Presbyterian Church in every sense of the word.' Carl McIntire spoke out for a strong Presbyterian Church. Milo Jamison wanted a 'Bible Church.' Thus the moderator of the meeting, J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., suggested the name 'Bible Presbyterian.'<sup>4</sup>

At this meeting certain 'Articles of Association' were drawn up. The first paragraph reads:

For the sake of fellowship in the principles for which we stand, and as a testimony to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and because of the official apostasy of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and because of the departure of the Presbyterian Church of America from the historic position of American Presbyterianism, we, a group of ministers and ruling elders, do associate ourselves together in the Bible Presbyterian Synod.<sup>5</sup>

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3. *Christian Beacon (CB)*, Aug. 31, 1939. Cf. M. G. Harden (ed.), *A Brief History of the Bible Presbyterian Church and Its Agencies*, 1967, 62. This work is valuable, not only because it is the only published history of the Church but because it contains lengthy excerpts from old issues of the *Christian Beacon* and *Synod Minutes* which are very scarce. It goes without saying that this history embodies the viewpoint of Carl McIntire, editor of the *Beacon*.

4. As recalled by Buswell, *Bible Press*, July 22, 1955, 8. Cf. *CB*, Aug. 31, 1939. Apparently the word *synod* was used purposely because there was still some doubt as to whether a new *church* would be necessary. Cf. R. L. Harris, *Evangelical Presbyterian Reporter (EPR)*, 8:1 (Jan., 1962), 4.

5. Harden, 61. Cf. *CB*, June 10, 1937.

The aim was ‘to form a testimony which they felt would be more in line with the historic attitudes of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. which they had so recently left.’<sup>6</sup>

The group reaffirmed their belief in the infallible authority of the Bible, the Westminster Standards—in the form in which they stood in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in May, 1936—and in the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church polity. They proposed to amend the Westminster Standards ‘in any particular in which the premillennial teaching of the Scriptures may be held to be obscured.’ They also reaffirmed their faith in, and support of the Independent Board. The final paragraph reads: ‘We are persuaded that the great battle in the world today is the faith of our fathers versus modernism, compromise, indifferentism, and worldliness. With all our hearts we throw our strength into the great task of winning lost souls to Jesus Christ by the Gospel of the grace of God.’<sup>7</sup> Thus it was their intention, as ‘stalwart fundamental Christians’ having withdrawn from the old Church, to form ‘a new testimony—Calvinistic, fundamental, premillennial, and evangelistic.’<sup>8</sup>

Faith Theological Seminary was opened in the fall of 1937, under an independent board of trustees, to represent the distinctive views of the Synod.<sup>9</sup> However, in that there was apparently some doubt as to whether a new Church would be formed, the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church did not meet until September, 1938.<sup>10</sup> The Synod approved the Bible Presbyterian Articles of Associa-

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6. Harris, *op. cit.*

7. Harden, *ibid.*; *CB*, June 10, 1937.

8. Harden, 73.

9. *Ibid.*, 133 f. The seminary charter reads: ‘The teaching is to be true to the great Christian fundamentals, including the premillennial return of Christ. The system of doctrine contained in the Scriptures and expounded in the historic Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms shall form the basis of the instruction. True piety is to be nurtured, and an attitude of devotion and constant prayerfulness inculcated.’

10. *Cf.* Harris, *op. cit.*, 4 f: ‘It was not at first certain that a new church would be constituted, but in September of 1938, thirty-eight ministers and eleven elders gathered in the first synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church.’

tion.<sup>11</sup> It adopted the Westminster Standards, with a few alterations in which the premillennial view is explicitly taught.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, despite these changes, the Synod adopted a resolution allowing Church officers to be free to hold any eschatological view which includes the visible and personal return of the Lord, and which is not otherwise inconsistent with the Scriptural and Confessional system of doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Synod of 1938, despite the Articles of Association of 1937, rejected the 1903 revisions of the Confession of Faith.<sup>14</sup> It did, however, append a Declaratory Statement similar to that of 1903.

In adopting the Confession of Faith this General Synod declares: *First*: its firm and glad belief in the reality and universality of the offer of the Gospel to mankind. We believe that Christ's atonement is sufficient for the sins of all, adapted to all, and is freely offered to all

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11. *Minutes of the First General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church*, 1938, 1.

12. These changes occur in the WCF (XXXII, ii, iii; XXXIII, i), and in the WLC QQ. 84-90. See *The Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church*, 1946, 40 f., 65-68. See also *Minutes*, 1938, and the pamphlet published at the time: *Form of Government of the Bible Presbyterian Church—Changes in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms—Declaratory Statement*, Adopted at the First General Synod, Collingswood, 1938, 21-23.

13. Harden, 64. For discussion, see C. McIntire (ed.), *Free Press*, April 12, 1957, 4. See also H. D. Morton, *Origins of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement* (Unpublished Thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary), 1967, 112. This work is very helpful to the understanding of the Presbyterian Separatist Movement and the Bible Presbyterian Church, especially McIntire's Twentieth Century Reformation Movement. Its thesis will be referred to at the end of this chapter. Cf. J. W. Sanderson, Jr., *EPK*, 7:1 (Jan., 1962), 8: 'We may wonder why, since they made the changes, they passed the resolution; or we may wonder why, since they passed this resolution, they still could make the changes. We may try to read their minds and evaluate their motives. But it is best to stay with the facts. What is clear from the facts is that the premillennialism thus introduced was not out of harmony with the covenant theology of the rest of the Confession, nor were details of chronology introduced into the Confession; such discussions were not to be divisive in the Church if it took its Confession seriously.' Cf. *Minutes of the Bible Presbyterian Synod* [Columbus Synod], 1958, 19 (cf. 3); *EPR*, 9:6, 13 f.

14. Cf. Sanderson, *op. cit.* 6: 'Whatever one might think of the amendments and their effect on the U.S.A. Church, those amendments are not to be found in our Constitution, and we interpret their absence as evidence that our Church wants no part of Arminianism.'

men in the Gospel. We believe that no man will be condemned except upon the ground of his sin.

*Second:* With regard to the salvation of those dying in infancy we do not regard our Confession as teaching or implying that any who die in infancy are lost.<sup>15</sup>

The first General Synod also adopted a Form of Government. The first chapter contains verbatim the Preliminary Principles of church government adopted by the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., in 1788. However in addition a final principle reads as follows: ‘All powers not in this Constitution specifically granted to the courts of the Church are reserved to the congregations respectively, or to the people.’ This principle is reminiscent of the similar one found in the U.S. Constitution (Amendment X) with respect to the relationship between the federal government and the several states. No such statement had ever before appeared in the constitution of a Presbyterian Church.<sup>16</sup>

The Form of Government states that the catholic visible Church has, in the providence of God, become divided into various denominations, or churches. Such bodies which hold fast to the historic Christian faith, subordinating their authority to that of the Word of God, are, despite differences in government or matters not essential to the faith, true Churches of Christ. ‘The Bible Presbyterian Church declares itself to be a branch of the catholic visible Churches of Christ and further declares its willingness to hold Christian fellowship with all other such branches of the Church.’<sup>17</sup>

The Form of Government also states that particular local churches need remain in association with the Bible Presby-

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15. *Constitution*, 45. *Form of Government, etc.*, 23. Cf. *CB*, Mar. 10, 1955, 2.

16. *Ibid.*, 129 (FG, 1:9). Cf. J. O. Buswell, Jr., *Bible Press*, July 22, 1955, 4 f: ‘This statement had never occurred in the constitution of any Presbyterian body prior to the organization of the Bible Presbyterian Church. It should be regarded as a new step forward in the clarification of Presbyterian doctrine. Most emphatically this statement does not tell us that “the power in the church belongs to the people.”’ This statement is uttered in the context of the controversy of 1955 in opposition to the interpretation of the McIntire party.

17. *Ibid.*, 130 (FG, 2:4).

terian Synod only as long as each congregation desires. The denominational relationship is voluntary, based only upon mutual love and confidence, and is in no sense to be maintained by the exercise of any kind of force or coercion whatever. A given church may at any time withdraw for reasons which it deems sufficient.<sup>18</sup> In this connection, provision was made so that each local church own its 'own property without any right of reversion whatsoever to the Bible Presbyterian Synod or any of its presbyteries. This provision of the Constitution is to be 'unamendable and irrevocable.'<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the issue of independent or church-directed agencies, it is noteworthy that the Form of Government allows for both kinds. 'The General Synod may at its own discretion, set up committees to act as its agents in conducting benevolent, missionary and educational enterprises, or it may commend to the churches, for their support, other such Christian enterprises' (10:6). Consistent with this position, the Synod both approved independent agencies, such as the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and established agencies of its own such as the Committee on National Missions, empowered temporarily to 'act as the agent of the Synod in receiving ministers and presbyteries.'<sup>20</sup>

The Synod of 1938 was concerned to pass a resolution calling upon all of its members to live a holy life separated from worldly practices with a view to giving an effective testimony against sin. With respect to the Christian's use of intoxicating beverages, the Synod adopted the same resolution which had been voted down in the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America. Its core reads: 'We deem it wise to pursue the course of total abstinence.' The resolution also severely condemns the modern saloon and liquor traffic.<sup>21</sup>

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18. *Ibid.*, 131 (FG, 3:2; cf. 2:4; 4:1).

19. *Ibid.*, 158 f. (FG, 20:4, 5). This guarantee, apart from the irrevocable character of it, was a carry-over from the Presbyterian Church of America. See *Minutes of the First General Assembly*, 19 f.

20. Harris, *op. cit.*, 5.

21. Harden, 63 f.



By 1939 the General Synod had grown to a total of nine presbyteries and 72 ministers. The Synods of 1939 and 1940 passed resolutions commending the Independent Board, Faith Seminary, the *Christian Beacon*, and the separated life. The Synod also appointed a committee to negotiate with other evangelical bodies not connected with the Federal Council of Churches 'toward the establishment of a truly Christian Council to represent them publicly in matters of common interest and concern.' This resolution was an important step in the establishment of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) in 1941.<sup>22</sup>

The Synod of 1941 adopted a Book of Discipline. As usual it also reaffirmed its condemnation of various independent agencies. It also commended to Bible Presbyterians the newly-formed American Council, Harvey Cedars Bible Presbyterian Conference, and the National Bible Institute under the presidency of Dr. Buswell, later to become Shelton College. The 1942 Synod reaffirmed these resolutions as well as passing a strong resolution urging the vigorous prosecution of World War II as a just war.<sup>23</sup>

By 1945 the General Synod reported a total of 133 ministers and 56 churches (with 40 more unaffiliated, but closely related through their ministers). By 1946 the number of communicants had grown from 2,168 in 1940 to 6,834. The General Synod of 1947 passed a Tenth Anniversary Resolution which thanked God for His blessing. It thanked God for the courage to proclaim the gospel of salvation and to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints against apostasy, radicalism, and pacifism, as represented by the Federal Council. The resolution ended with a call to God's people everywhere to cease from the fear of men and compromise with unbelief, and to join with churches that maintain Scriptural principles of separation.<sup>24</sup>

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22. *Ibid.*, 64 f.

23. *Ibid.*, 67 f.

24. *Ibid.*, 73, 77 f.

The 1948 Synod commended the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) soon to be formed after the pattern of the American Council. In 1950 a strong resolution was adopted warning the American Government and people of the menace of world Communism. In 1952 the Church, recognizing a 'national emergency,' heartily recommended the 'militant stand' of the American and International Councils in their exposure of the errors of modernism and socialism—namely, the humanistic concept that the state is responsible for the economic and physical care of the individual, rather than the agent of the people for general safety and freedom. The Church also called upon Christian parents to withdraw their children from public schools in which so-called 'progressive education' is the basis of instruction, in order to send them to Christian schools where God is recognized and His Word taught. Moreover, it recommended that all Sunday school teachers be required to subscribe to the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Standards.<sup>25</sup>

In the years following 1952 the dark cloud of controversy was to hover over the Bible Presbyterian Synod. However, this controversy did not develop overnight. Indeed, the Synod had always had its problems. As Robert H. Cox remarked in 1950: 'The fact that there are problems is proof that we are trying to do something. Dead movements have no problems.'<sup>26</sup> Given the Synod's preoccupation with its distinctive testimony, these problems, as might be expected, revolved around the testimony of the Bible Presbyterian Church.

#### **Testimony of Separation**

As already noted, the Bible Presbyterian Church was acutely conscious of its distinctive testimony from the very beginning. For instance, a promotional pamphlet put out in 1941 by the Synod's Committee on Publications maintains

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25. *Ibid.*, 79-86.

26. *National Missions Reporter (NMR)*, 3:4 (Aug., 1950), 15.

that the Bible Presbyterian Church is not only a fellowship of believers and churches but a testimony raised against all forms of modernism and compromise with unbelief ‘for the establishment and extension of a stable evangelistic church organization through the propagation of *the Bible message by a Bible method.*’ This message and mission is summarized in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.<sup>27</sup> Thus the Biblical witness of the Church is to be a separatist, Reformed, and evangelistic testimony. These three aspects of the Church’s testimony, and the issue of the relationship between them, provided a problem which vexed the Church throughout its history.

From the nature of the case—that is, the historical situation in which the Church found itself—the separatist aspect of the testimony drew the most attention. This fact is illustrated from a remark of Francis A. Schaeffer in a paper presented to the Synod of 1942: ‘Let no one of us forget that our Separatist position is not an arbitrary thing; it is doctrinal. If one should ask for a single word that would show our stand against the evils of this day, the word would be Separatist; and it should be for we are Separatists. On the basis of our System of Doctrine we militantly state that this is a day when the issues must not be confused.’

Schaeffer goes on to stress the doctrinal basis for the testimony of separation. It is embodied in the Church’s confessional position—protestant, supernaturalist, evangelical, particularist, and premillennialist. With regard to the last point, ‘We can say with pride that we are the first Reformed group to say formally by our creed that we believe in the premillennial Second Coming of our Lord.’ This point is not, however, formally a part of the Church’s system of doctrine, for the Synod has guaranteed eschatological liberty. ‘Let no one think, however, if I understand rightly the feeling of our Church, that this means that we minimize the fact that we

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27. *What God Hath Wrought or What Is the Bible Presbyterian Church?*, 1941. Cf. *Why a Bible Presbyterian Church?*, 1946.

are Premillennialists. We believe this doctrine with all of our heart.' Finally, Schaeffer stresses the importance of 'doctrine in action' in the life and testimony of the Church.<sup>28</sup>

The principle of ecclesiastical separation, and the problem of how to testify to it in practice, was a major concern of the Bible Presbyterian Church in the early 1940's. The problem was especially acute in the South where the question of cooperation with those believers, who, like Dr. Robert C. McQuilkin of Columbia Bible College, still associated with ecclesiastical organizations tolerant of modernism, was a perennial and burning issue. This issue is illustrated in the case of the refusal of the Carolina Presbytery to ordain Thomas McMahan, Jr., who insisted that the presbytery should give latitude in the matter of cooperation with those who have not yet come to appreciate, or disagree with, the separatist convictions of the Church. 'We are to separate from sin and unbelief—but not from any members of the body of Christ.' McMahan contends that if he is excluded from the ministry for his conviction in this matter, the Bible Presbyterian Church will have gone 'one long step farther toward getting into a little side eddy, far from the mainstream of the Church of Christ.'

On the other hand, the presbytery, as represented by R. H. Cox, maintained that 'such latitude would vitiate the entire testimony of the Bible Presbyterian Church.' For the Church believes not only in separation from infidels, but also in separation from disorderly brethren who, while personally sound in their views, insist on remaining in organizational fellowship with modernists. If this were not the case, there would be no reasonable or Scriptural ground for the existence of the Bible Presbyterian Church.<sup>29</sup>

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28. F. A. Schaeffer, *Our System of Doctrine* (Adapted from a paper read to the General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, Mo., 1942), 1942?

29. R. H. Cox, *A Communication to the Presbytery of the Philadelphia Area From the Commission of the Carolina Presbytery to Receive and Ordain Mr. Thomas McMahan, Jr., and Archie Shelor* (Mimeographed), May 25, 1944.

In August of 1944 the first issue of the *Clarion*, sponsored by E. A. Dillard and edited by R. H. Cox of the Carolina Presbytery, appeared as ‘a monthly devoted to the interests of the Bible Presbyterian testimony.’ Though a private publication, the purpose of the *Clarion* is to minister to those deeply concerned about the witness and future of the Church; it is to embody ‘a practical presentation of the problems which face the Bible Presbyterian Church.’ As such the *Clarion* does not intend to compete with the *Christian Beacon*. The *Beacon* is doing a fine job and is to be highly recommended. However: ‘The ministries of these two periodicals is totally different. The CLARION seeks to meet a need which THE BEACON has not had time or space to meet. . . . THE CHRISTIAN BEACON has proved itself a very effective spearhead of the total Twentieth Century Reformation movement. However, we are facing problems as a church family and to their solution THE CLARION is devoting its ministry solely.’<sup>30</sup>

Carl McIntire was quick to respond to what he considered a dangerous challenge. In an open letter to the presbyters of the Church he makes clear that, while the *Clarion* purports to approve of the *Beacon*, the *Beacon* does not approve of the *Clarion*.

We are separated from unbelievers. We will not cooperate organizationally with those who work with unbelievers. There are many godly people still in the apostate denominations, ignorant, leaderless, confused, heartbroken, whom we must reach. We must not separate ourselves further from them than God’s Word requires, or place unnecessary barriers between them and us. . . . We have set modernism and unbelief on the left and preached separation from it. Now on the extreme right we must beware of these influences which may arise in our midst which would pull us to an extreme position and hinder our testimony and our march in the van of this Twentieth Century Reformation for our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Dr. Dillard, together with Mr. Cox, by their paper have set out thus to change the Bible Presbyterian Church and also to change the American Council in regard to this position on separation which they maintain. I am convinced that if the

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30. *Clarion*. 1:1 (Aug., 1944), 1, ‘[A Clarion Call](#)’ by R. H. Cox.

view held by Dr. Dillard shall prevail . . . the Bible Presbyterian Church will wrap its own 'extreme separation' robes about it and lie down to its internal nightmares.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless Dillard and Cox still continued to publish the *Clarion*. For instance, the September issue carries an article by LaVerne Donaldson on the importance of a balanced outlook in the Church. 'What is needed is a happy combination of the positive and negative aspects of the gospel.'<sup>32</sup> There is also an article by Cox on the principle and practice of separation. He laments the fact that many fundamentalists, for whom separation is of a very limited nature, violently oppose any thorough application of the principle. Indeed, according to the Scriptures (II Thess. 3:6-15) separation from such brethren is necessary when they walk disorderly. 'We cannot cooperate with denominational leaders or movements when modernism and indifference to truth are tolerated or encouraged for the sake of our testimony and those who look to us for spiritual guidance. We cannot encourage fundamental leaders or movements which are unfaithful in repudiating unbelief in their own circles. Such men are disorderly and it is our duty to let others know it.' The application of this principle, however, is not always simple or easy.<sup>33</sup>

In future issues Cox continued to express his views as to the needs of the Bible Presbyterian Church. For example, in an article entitled 'How Distinctive Is Our Witness?' he maintains, first, that the Church must maintain a strong testimony against apostasy, as opposed to the sentiment that no more need be said about it. Second, there must be a vigorous program of indoctrination in the Word of God. Bible Presbyterians are not just another fundamentalist sect raised up to contest the attack of modernism on a few 'essential' doc-

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31. C. McIntire, To the Ministers and Elders of the Bible Presbyterian Church—Important (Mimeographed), Sept. 7, 1944, 4 f.

32. *Clarion*, 1:2 (Sept., 1944), 1.

33. *Ibid.*, 2 f.

trines. They are dedicated not only to the defense of the Word but also to its propagation to all men in all of its fulness. Thus, third, there must be an increasing effort to reach the lost for Christ.<sup>34</sup>

As anticipated, the issue of separation was much discussed during the Synod of 1944. For instance, retiring moderator Roland Armes addressed the brethren in the following spirit.

There would be no Bible Presbyterian Church apart from the call to separation. . . . I am convinced that God is calling us to go on with Him in this walk of separation. Every act of separation, in time, necessitates another act of separation, as God permits new circumstances to arise and then through these circumstances calls us with a still, small voice to a closer walk with Him and a clearer, sharper testimony to the heedless, truth-denying, Bible-doubting world about us.<sup>35</sup>

As a result of debate, the Synod called for ‘a prayerful study of the Word of God to ascertain the Biblical basis and meaning of Christian separation.’ The supervision of this task was entrusted to Faith Seminary President Dr. Allan A. MacRae, whose labors culminated in the carefully articulated Harvey Cedars Resolutions approved by the Synod of 1945.<sup>36</sup>

The first resolution deals with *moral separation* from worldly sin. In conformity with the Word of God, and without binding the conscience by adding rules thereto, the resolution calls for a holy life separated from such worldly practices as games commonly used for gambling, the commercial theatre, the modern dance, and the use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco. It should be pointed out that this resolution on the separated life arose out of discussions within the Bible Presbyterian Church itself (for instance, there was an overture before Synod on the tobacco issue), not out of controversy with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—although the

34. [Clarion, 1:5 \(Dec, 1944\), 2.](#)

35. [Clarion, 1:3 \(Oct., 1944\), ‘The Moderator’s Message.’](#)

36. *Minutes*, 1944; MacRae’s mimeographed letter to presbyters seeking advice.

resolution obviously reflects the positions taken in the division of 1937.<sup>37</sup>

The second resolution deals with *ecclesiastical separation* from apostate religious activities:

1. We hold that it is a Christian's duty to separate himself from all cooperation in religious activities with those who deny the full authority and dependability of the Word of God, and that no consideration of expediency could ever warrant such cooperation.

2. As concerns cooperation with those who, while themselves believing in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, continue in membership in denominations which include known unbelievers, and fail to see clearly and to observe fully the scriptural injunction to separate themselves from such organizations, we hold that this is a sphere of expediency, that is, one in which no man's conscience may be bound by other men; however, we as a Synod feel that great harm is done in many cases by such cooperation, and hence that it is unwise to enter upon or continue in them without careful consideration.

3. Regarding such individuals as are described in paragraph one, we should seek by every possible means to win them to Christ; regarding such individuals as are described in paragraph two we urge that they be dealt with in a spirit of brotherly love, seeking by every proper means to win them to the scriptural position of separation rather than to drive them from us, and yet not violating our conscience.<sup>38</sup>

The Harvey Cedars Resolutions were in some ways a unifying influence among Bible Presbyterians of the late 1940's. As Cox remarked regarding the resolution on ecclesi-

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37. The complete text of the resolution reads as follows: '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 them in 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 also desire to declare that we deem it wise to pursue the course of total abstinence with regard to alcoholic beverages, and also tobacco; and furthermore we are unalterably opposed to the modern saloon and the liquor traffic in general. 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 testimony uncompromisingly against all forms of sin.' For an analysis of the background of the resolution, see an article by P. Stam in the *Bible Presbyterian Reporter*, May, 1960.

38. *Minutes*, 1945, 20; Harden, 74 f.



astical separation, ‘it brought together two lines of thought which seemed irreconcilable.’<sup>39</sup> Dillard and McIntire made peace, the *Clarion* eventually went out of existence, and the Church was spared from ‘internal nightmares’ for another decade.

Nevertheless, the testimony of separation continued to be an issue in the Church. A representative, indeed classic, example is the case of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, North Carolina. The case is complicated and only the barest outline of it can be presented here. Originally Southern Presbyterian, the church had become Bible Presbyterian under the leadership of Dillard. Later when Dillard took a leave of absence to work with alcoholics, the ministerial duties were taken up by the Rev. Alonzo Hitchcock, who eventually led part of the congregation out of the denomination to form an independent church. The crisis came when an obscure Youth for Christ evangelist by the name of Billy Frank Graham, whose father happened to be an elder in the Charlotte church, came to his home town to hold a campaign under the sponsorship of an inclusivist council of ministers. The session was divided on the issue of whether to cooperate with the campaign and tried to solve the problem by refusing to cooperate officially while leaving the matter of participation up to individuals, many of whom took an active part. At any rate, the church split over the issue, the Carolina Presbytery had difficulty handling the matter, and it eventually came before a *pro re nata* meeting of Synod.<sup>40</sup>

Lon Hitchcock maintained that having been through three Presbyterian Church splits, he was sick of the whole-business. As opposed to emphasizing the major doctrines of the faith, the Bible Presbyterian Church is off on a doctrine

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39. *Clarion*, 1:11 (June, 1945). [[Page 1](#); [Page 4](#); [Page 5](#)]

40. *Minutes of the Pro Re Nata Meeting of the Bible Presbyterian Church-January 6, 1948* (Baltimore, Md.). This interesting document not only unveils the BP Church of the 1940’s in a most fascinating way, but is highly amusing. Perhaps the most amusing point is when Francis Schaeffer innocently inquires (p. 6): ‘Who is Billy Frank Graham?’

of second degree separation that is involving it in all sorts of troubles. He agrees with the Harvey Cedars resolution on ecclesiastical separation, but censures Dillard and McIntire for extreme applications of it, such as branding cooperation with the Billy Graham meetings as the 'sin of sympathy.'<sup>41</sup> Hitchcock finds no Biblical warrant for such second degree separation. 'My Bible tells me to separate from modernists, but I have yet to see a place in Scripture where I am commanded to separate myself from a brother. . . . We believe in separation from apostates but we don't believe in separation from fellow Christians.'<sup>42</sup> Ecclesiastical separation is being overemphasized at the expense of separation from the world. The Harvey Cedars resolution on worldly practices in fine, but not really binding on anybody. 'Let's have separation from the world as well as ecclesiastical separation.' Dillard points the finger at Dr. McQuilkin while neglecting to discipline open drunkenness in a member of the Charlotte church. What about the refusal to discipline H. McAllister Griffiths? What about the attempt of BP leaders to settle the Charlotte dispute privately without going through proper Presbyterian procedure? There seems to be a hierarchy of bishops in the BP Church.<sup>43</sup>

This charge was resented by McIntire and Dillard who were grieved that their attempts to avoid a split in the Charlotte church had proved unsuccessful. In the words of Dillard: 'So they are willing to separate from separationist testimony but not to separate from antiseperationist testimony.'<sup>44</sup> The judicial commission handling the case passed a similar judgment with regard to Hitchcock and the seceders.<sup>45</sup>

41. *Ibid.*, 15, 21 f. The *Christian Beacon* had carried an editorial espousing this position.

42. *Ibid.*, 17 f. Cf. the comment of elder G. Smith: 'Our movement is right, but when it goes to third and second degree, I'll fight it tooth and nail' (27).

43. *Ibid.*, 16 ff.

44. *Ibid.*, 29.

45. *Report and Decision of the Judicial Commission of the Bible Presbyterian Church on the Administrative Case Brought Before the Pro Re Nata Meeting of Synod Held in Baltimore, Maryland, January 6, 1948, By Complaint of E. A. Dillard Et Al.* (Mimeographed), 19.

In the early 1950's there were those who were becoming increasingly concerned that the Church's emphasis on ecclesiastical separation was at the expense of its witness in other areas. For instance, the Synod of 1950 passed a resolution emphasizing a spiritual life and evangelism. R. H. Cox was gratified that the Synod was giving attention to the need for reaching the lost, for 'the Bible Presbyterian testimony was raised up not only as a standard against modernism but also as a fellowship of kindred hearts and a beacon to attract souls to Christ.' Indeed, the Church was founded to this end, but at times it has seemed as though it has been concentrating on trying to get people to come out of apostate denominations more than reaching those who have never accepted Christ as their Saviour.<sup>46</sup>

Others were more concerned about the Church's witness to the Christian life. For example, Harold Hight appeals to the twofold character of the platform of Biblical separation and the necessity of teaching the whole counsel of God on the subject.

The force of our emphasis on the doctrine of Separation seems directed at only one aspect of this matter when the Scriptural position is clearly twofold. The impression gained from many outside our movement, and that not without reason, I fear, is that our concern is solely for the upholding of creeds of orthodoxy, and that our exhortation is limited to a call to separation from ecclesiastical fellowship with all who have turned from sound doctrine, and that we have little concern that those professing the name of Christ in our midst should live lives separated from sinful worldly indulgences.<sup>47</sup>

Others like John W. Sanderson, Jr., were concerned lest the practice, let alone principle, of separation degenerate into

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46. *NMR*, 3:4 (Aug., 1950), 16 f. In this connection, note the appeal of National Missions Secretary T. G. Cross in the same issue of the *NMR*: 'We dare not put off the call to establish new, Christ-centered testimonies throughout our land. We need, as a church, to seek to snatch every earnest Christian now in a church of the enemy to come to the side of those who believe and line up with the truth. We ought to be faithful in prayer for, and in earnest entreaty to, those who by right of belief should be counted within our number. Let us not put this off. Let us not be too late' (27).

47. H. Hight, 'Twofold Platform of Biblical Separation,' *Witness and Work* (ed. R. H. Cox), June-July, 1953, 6.

one of isolation, 'The second coming is an argument for separation, but not for isolation,' he exclaims. He argues that while the Bible clearly teaches separation from the 'world' in one sense, it teaches non-isolation from the world in another. Sanderson stresses in this connection the Calvinistic emphasis that, despite the fact of sin, the world in which we live is still God's world.<sup>48</sup>

Through the whole of its history there were those in the Bible Presbyterian Church concerned lest the Church fail to appreciate, even stray from, its distinctively Reformed doctrinal position. As early as 1942 Francis Schaeffer laid emphasis on the Church's strong and definite doctrinal basis in contrast to the doctrinal weakness and vagueness of modernist and fundamentalist alike. He stresses the importance of strongly maintaining the Reformed position in view of the fact that when Satan would gradually destroy a church he begins by insinuating that the finer doctrinal distinctions are unimportant. The Church should not make a fetish of its particularistic position, but it should realize the foolishness of trying to build on anything less than the consistent Christianity of the Westminster Standards.

Some of us have ceased to use the word Reformed as much as we once did, but we should not so easily give up a term that is rich in historical meaning in theology. It is as wrong for us to stop using the term Reformed as applied to us, because of its misuse by any group, as to stop using the word love simply because the Modernists have misused it. We are Reformed because we believe in the absolute Sovereignty of God.<sup>49</sup>

The character of the Calvinistic position of the Church became an issue in the late 1940's with the case of the Rev. Lester R. Bachman and his relationship to the Covenant Bible Presbyterian Church of Grove City, Pennsylvania. The church resented Bachman's undue emphasis in preaching the doctrine of election, while Bachman resented what he regarded as the church's Arminian tendencies—especially those of elder

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48. *NMR*, 7:3 (April, 1954), 5 f.

49. Schaeffer, *op. cit.*

George J. Howe and consequent opposition to his Calvinistic teaching.<sup>50</sup> Synod's judicial commission found, after some questioning, that Howe was not really an Arminian, and that Bachman had no doubt distorted the whole counsel of God in his preaching. It recognized the fact that the Bible Presbyterian Church is a creedal church, and that that creed is the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards, namely Calvinism.

The Bible Presbyterian Church is not narrow, however, in its Calvinistic testimony. Officers are required only to subscribe to the Calvinistic system of doctrine, not every detail or definition of the Westminster Standards. There is room for some divergence of opinion in many points of doctrine within the system held by our Church. It should be remembered also that the question of election and free will are sometimes difficult of definition. In these deep matters true Calvinists may agree in principle, yet differ somewhat in definition.

This is especially true with elders not formally trained in theology. Also, it should be remembered that the doors of the Church are open as wide as the gates of heaven.<sup>54</sup>

The question of the Church's distinctively Reformed testimony was kept before the Synod in the early 1950's by the agitation of George S. Christian and others. Christian laments the world-wide rumor that the Church is not really Reformed, that is, symbolically honest in its subscription to the Westminster Confession. He is concerned for the Church's *doctrinal* position as well as its *separated* position. 'Will the Bible Presbyterian Church be as valiant and as uncompromising in clinging to her Scriptural doctrinal position as she has clung in the past to her Scriptural ecclesiastical position?'<sup>52</sup>

50. *Report and Decision of the Judicial Commission of the Bible Presbyterian Church on the Administrative Case Brought Before the Twelfth General Synod Meeting at Baltimore, May 26-31, 1949 by Complaint of the Rev. Lester R. Bachman* (Mimeographed), 4 ff. It is interesting that the Rev. Francis Schaeffer as a previous pastor of this congregation did not precipitate the same adverse reaction.

51. *Ibid.*, 38 ff.

52. G. S. Christian, *Dispensationalism, Arminianism, Lutheranism and the Reformed Standards of the Bible Presbyterian Church* (Privately Printed), n.d., 1 f., 32. Cf. *Minutes*, 1953, 62-64; 1954, 14-16; 1955, 14, 89 f.

With regard to the Church's actual testimony taken as a whole, there can be no doubt that Carl McIntire was its foremost representative and publicizer. From the beginning of his connection with the Presbyterian Separatist Movement, McIntire was a fervent, indeed imitative, admirer of J. Gresham Machen. Perhaps he saw himself as Machen's successor in the leadership of the movement even before Machen's premature death. At any rate, from that point onward McIntire felt providentially appointed to succeed Machen as the recognized leader, not only of the Presbyterian Separatist Movement, but of the whole fundamentalist separatist movement as well.<sup>53</sup> To illustrate the point: Immediately after Machen's death, he inquires in the *Christian Beacon*: 'Upon whom will they [*i.e.*, the enemies of the movement] now center their personal attack? What next?'<sup>54</sup> Subsequent history has revealed that in Carl McIntire's mind at least, he himself is the answer to the first query; and his own self-directed Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, the answer to the second. Many years later, in early 1955, he doubtless expresses his own calling in terms of his conception

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53. Anyone who doubts this need only read Harden, 33 ff. *et al.* Cf. L. Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement*, 1963, 16: 'As a result [*i.e.*, of Machen's death and subsequent developments], Carl McIntire came to the forefront as a leader of the separatist branch of the fundamentalist movement.' Gasper's work is an informative, perceptive, and even sometimes sympathetic account of fundamentalism in America from 1930 to the late 1950's. 'An attempt was made in this book to present an objective and definitive account of the developments within the organized fundamentalist movement in American Protestantism since 1930' (v). Attention is given to such organizations as the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), both founded in 1941; and to such developments as the Billy Graham phenomenon. Cf. also R. Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 1962, 132: 'Carl McIntire, a leading organizer of the contemporary right wing opposition to modernism, was originally a protege of the highbrow fundamentalist, J. Gresham Machen.' Machen is earlier presented as an example of 'the more thoughtful critics of modernism' (123). That it is hardly true that McIntire was a protege of Machen in any special sense, or that the former was a replica of the latter, goes without saying.

54. *CB*, Jan. 14, 1937, 4. Cf. Gasper, *op. cit.*, 23: 'McIntire was not visibly disturbed by those who criticized his controversial mannerisms. Criticism apparently stimulated him into further aggressiveness, which his sometimes befuddled foes never seem to have observed. McIntire expected to be criticized and he was always ready for it.'

of Machen's: a thoroughgoing Calvinist leading the whole fundamentalist movement in its ongoing struggle in the whole of Christendom.<sup>55</sup>

Impelled by a deep sense of divine leading, McIntire was the leading organizer, and first president, of the fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) founded in 1941 as a parallel organization to the modernist Federal Council. In founding the American Council, McIntire was acutely aware of the fact that the fundamentalists' lack of an effective national organization was partially responsible for their disastrous defeat in the 1920's and 30's, and of the charge that they could not cooperate for mutually desired ends. The groups that have been called fundamentalists have been chided because they cannot get along together, but they are now proving to the world that the charge is false and that they can work together; for in the American Council they are united and helping to mold and lift the whole level of the evangelical testimony in America.<sup>56</sup>

At the same time, the American Council unlike the fundamentalist, but nonseparatist, National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), likewise founded in 1941, is to be a distinctively separatist organization. McIntire has little time for those fundamentalists who, like many in the NAE, are willing to fellowship and work with modernists, and in modernist-dominated churches. They argue that the salvation of souls is more important than all this controversy over modernism; whereas they should be interested in both, for it is criminal to leave new born babes in Christ to starve in the modernist churches. They are misleading the sheep in regard to the

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55. *CB*. Mar. 10, 1955, Review of Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 1954.

56. C. McIntire, *Twentieth Century Reformation*, 1944, 196. Cf. Gasper, *op. cit.*, v: 'In their first skirmish with modernism the fundamentalists were without any effective national organization to direct their efforts and as a consequence they were left demoralized by 1930.' For further reasons for this demoralization, see 18 f. and N. K. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy 1918-1931*, 1954, 178-181. Gasper also stresses the disastrous effects of internecine struggles among fundamentalists (15).

most vital issue facing the church in our day, and are not obedient to the plain commands of the Lord.<sup>57</sup> McIntire is a fervent follower of Machen's separatist principle: 'Separation must take place in one of two ways, either the unbelievers must be put out or the Bible-believers must withdraw; else the church ceases to be the church.'<sup>58</sup>

As an organizer of incredible energy and ability, McIntire gathered about himself an empire of organizations and activities which he styled the Twentieth Century Reformation. This empire included the huge Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, N.J., the *Christian Beacon*, and the Twentieth Century Reformation broadcast; such ecclesiastically independent institutions as Faith Theological Seminary, Shelton College, and Highland College—on whose governing boards McIntire was the dominating figure; as well as the American Council, and the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) founded in 1948 in opposition to the World Council of Churches organized in that year.<sup>59</sup> In McIntire's mind this empire is looked upon as a movement raised up by God to combat the modern ecumenical movement.<sup>60</sup> 'It is all a part of the great separation movement, or the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, as it is called.'<sup>61</sup>

As the Cold War progressed, McIntire more and more directed his energies toward preaching Americanism and combating Communism, particularly in ecclesiastical circles. Apparently this was an issue which fired the imagination of

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57. *Ibid.*, 186 ff. Cf. Gasper, *op. cit.*, 21 ff, 'The Dual Alignment of Fundamentalism.' For the founding of the ACCC, see 23 ff; the NAE, 25 ff.

58. *Ibid.*, 188 f. Cf. J. G. Machen, *The Separateness of the Church*, 1925.

59. On the founding of the ICCC, see C. McIntire, *Modern Tower of Babel*, 1949.

60. *Twentieth Century Reformation*, ix, *et al.*

61. C. McIntire, *Building the Superchurch Versus Preserving the Old Faith*, 1953, 28. The Twentieth Century Reformation Movement is presented in McIntire's many publications and books, some of which have already been referred to. For an analysis of the origins of the Movement, see Morton, *op. cit.* For a critical treatment on the part of an unbeliever, see R. L. Roy, *Apostles of Discord* 1953, 185-202. For a sympathetic biography of McIntire himself, see C. Laman, *God Calls a Man*, 1959.



people otherwise disinterested in the separatist cause of the Twentieth Century Reformation.<sup>62</sup> Due to this interest, as well as the issue of ecclesiastical separation, he became more and more involved in violent accusations, often difficult to justify, not only of enemies but of friends who in any way criticized his approach or methods. Such criticism evoked ever more censorious judgment upon fundamentalists who refused to align themselves with the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, especially those connected with the rival, love-lauding National Association of Evangelicals.<sup>63</sup>

McIntire took pains to defend himself and his position in a work entitled *The Testimony of Separation* (1952). In it the separation movement is identified with the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, whose origin and development is ascribed to the unexpected favor of God. 'God wrought a work no one dreamed would happen, but He did it. It is a movement; it is the Twentieth Century Reformation.'<sup>64</sup> The doctrine of separation is nothing more or less than the doctrine of the purity of the church. God's people are not to leave a church organization if they can possibly save it. Indeed, those who are working for the purity of a particular visible church are just as faithful to God's command as those who separate from it when they realize that modernist teachers cannot be removed from it.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, such separation is no easy thing.

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62. There is some truth in the remark of Hofstadter, *op. cit.*, 134: 'The conditions of the cold war and the militant spirit bred by the constant struggle against world Communism have given the fundamentalist mind a new lease on life.' For Machen's disgust with the brand of Americanism popular in his day, see N. B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, 1954, 304. It would be inaccurate, however, to equate the Americanism of the 1920's with that of the 1950's. At the same time, it would be very difficult to imagine Machen espousing the right-wing Americanism of today.

63. On this point and its importance for the division of 1956, see Harris, *op. cit.*, 5; and T. G. Cross, *Historical Background and Development of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod*, 1968, 13 ff. These pages are a ready introduction to the division of 1956 from the majority standpoint.

64. C. McIntire, *The Testimony of Separation*, 1952, 102. (*cf.* 2, 106). This book, which is perhaps Dr. McIntire's most significant work, is a reply to 'Separation' Is Separating Evangelicals by former NAK president, Stephen W. Paine.

65. *Ibid.*, 5, 15.

Separation involves controversy—hard, grueling controversy. It involves attacks—personal attacks, even violent attacks. It involves salaries—food, houses; it tests faith. It involves the attempts of those on the other side to confuse in every way possible. Men who walk down the road of separation know the realities of all that is involved along that road. But Christ walks that road, too. . . . Separation involves the grace of God, loving one's enemy, keeping sweet, manifesting boldness for Christ's sake.<sup>66</sup>

It is the devil who preaches brotherly love in order to hold men in apostate churches. He is the one who preached peace and love to prevent the disruption of the modernists when they first arose in the church. With this argument he has captured the churches which have become apostate. To yield to this serpentine call would destroy the rising Twentieth Century Reformation.<sup>67</sup> It would also destroy true evangelism.

Do we realize the seriousness and the awful nature of unbelief and how it damns souls for eternity? Can we be silent about it while we join with unbelievers to win souls? If we can have an evangelism that is separated from the realities of church history and the nature of the church, then we do not need the church—we never needed the church. . . . We are men, redeemed by the blood of Christ, commissioned to preach the whole counsel of God and concerned about the whole church of Christ and its witness and glory on earth.<sup>68</sup>

It would appear that in Carl McIntire's mind the Bible Presbyterian Church was simply another part of his empire. In a sense it was, in that he always seemed to have his way. It was not that his activities escaped criticism, for as early as 1943 E. A. Dillard branded the American Council a 'sacred cow' and the Council's published statistics were questioned at Synod;<sup>69</sup> but simply that no one was willing to stand up to him at the cost of splitting the Church. However, eventually a group of young ministers could tolerate this situation no

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66. *Ibid.*, 44.

67. *Ibid.*, 79.

68. *Ibid.*, 99.

69. McIntire, To the Ministers and Elders, *etc.*, Sept. 7, 1944, 4; *Minutes*, 1943, 37.

longer. Their challenge to the McIntire version of the testimony of separation was to propel the Church into the throes of controversy.

### **The Throes of Controversy**

The Bible Presbyterian Synod of 1953 called upon all Bible-believing Christians in the various Presbyterian Churches to join with it in its vigorous attempt to perpetuate the historic Reformed Faith as set forth in the Westminster Standards—with the prayer that the Lord would protect them from being divided into small Presbyterian bodies, as opposed to a united stand for the faith once delivered unto the saints.<sup>70</sup> However, the Church would have to despair of an immediate answer to this prayer, for the next three years would be ones of internal nightmare for the Bible Presbyterian Church itself.

There was much unrest in the Church in 1953 and 1954: Is ours really a Presbyterian Church or simply another association of independent fundamental churches believing in infant baptism? Are the church courts being circumvented by McIntire and the *Christian Beacon*? How close is McIntire to being a pope? Are we really interested in building the BP Church? Why are National Missions so little supported? What would be the result if McIntire gave as much time to building the Church as he does to the ACCC and ICC? Are these Councils assets or liabilities to the Church? What is the truth about their statistics? Are McIntire and the *Beacon* assets or liabilities to the BP Church? How many are scandalized by the *Beacon*? Are we becoming a separation sect rather than a true church? Would informed evangelicals in the modernist Presbyterian Churches join us before we cleaned house? 'Will we have to separate from the Bible Presbyterian Church in order to solve these problems? Will McIntire's closest friends

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70. Harden, 87.

react in an emotional way if he is honestly criticized? How about McIntire himself?<sup>71</sup>

Open controversy was first manifested at the Synod of 1954 when Dr. Robert G. Rayburn and others expressed a strong reaction against certain attitudes and practices of the American Council under Dr. McIntire's inspiration and leadership. This criticism involved three things: 1) an unbalanced and unwise application of the doctrine of separation from apostasy; 2) a careless attitude toward ethical responsibilities, such as carelessness with statistics and publicity statements; and 3) oligarchical and undemocratic governmental procedures.<sup>72</sup> The general desire was that the Church should look into these matters, exerting its influence in reforming the various independent agencies which it approved. In this connection, there was also a growing desire for the Synod to establish certain agencies which would serve the interests of the Church, rather than the Church's serving the interest of independent agencies.<sup>73</sup>

This trend was vigorously combated by McIntire, both as an affront to his personal character and leadership and as an attack upon the historic position of the Bible Presbyterian Church with respect to independent agencies. He was convinced that his critics were attempting to undermine his personal leadership of the separatist movement which had long made him the most influential man in the Church. It was he who was the moving spirit behind the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement. He was the God-ordained and appointed leader of the Movement, and this criticism from the Church was an attack upon the whole Movement.<sup>74</sup>

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71. J. Miller to J. E. Bennet, July 19, 1954.

72. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Independent Fundamental Churches of America had previously left the ACCC with similar objections. For an account of the IFCA withdrawal, see *Christian Life*, July, 1953, 23. For an account of the controversy over the ACCC within the BP Church, see Gasper, *op. cit.*, 31-37.

73. *Minutes*, 1954.

74. *Cf.*, for example, C. McIntire to Session of Collingswood Church (Mimographed), June 14, 1954.

This attitude was expressed in the immediate pressure put on Rayburn and others sympathetic with him by the McIntire-controlled agencies by which they were employed. These men were put under suspicion for a ‘tendency to compromise on separation principles.’<sup>75</sup> Eventually Rayburn was forced out of the presidency of Highland College by a board of trustees to whom the college’s purpose was to train leaders for the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement as directed by Dr. McIntire. He had identified himself from the floor of Synod with ‘those who seriously challenged the integrity of the leadership and aggressive position of the American Council of Christian Churches.’<sup>76</sup>

Others saw Rayburn’s challenge as evidence of a healthy concern for the balanced testimony of the Church. For instance, Collingswood elder McGregor Scott commented: ‘I feel that the Bible Presbyterian Synod this year showed definite signs of coming to maturity. The men were doing their own thinking and making decisions on the basis of facts presented, and not on appeals to emotions. . . . I am sorry some have concluded that an emphasis on a deeper Spiritual life, undermines our separated stand, and that the preaching of the doctrine of love is an indication of, “going soft on the issue.”’<sup>77</sup>

There was much tension in the Church throughout the remainder of 1954. At the end of the year missionary John M. L. Young remarked that differences of opinion could arise to blow the Church to bits before he set foot again on American soil. ‘If so, it will not be because we lack a good pattern to follow, but because we have not followed it, each seeking

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75. J. Miller to C. McIntire (Mimeographed), June 30, 1954.

76. Both sides of this controversy may be seen in the following mimeographed letters to friends of the college: J. E. Janbaz, March 5, 1955; R. G. Rayburn, March 16, 1955. The quotation is taken from the first letter.

77. M. Scott to B. Peterman, July 19, 1954. As an elder in Dr. McIntire’s church, Scott was not unappreciative of his ministry. See *Reformed Presbyterian Reporter*, 101:4 (Feb., 1967), 5: ‘Dr. McIntire was a tremendous influence in my life.’

not the good of the whole but his own ends first.’ However, controversy was to be expected ‘in a Church such as ours, born in a controversy, with a ministry of rugged individualists, composed of men with a fearless spirit of nonconformity, enabling them to stand alone to light, break with and continue to defy apostasy.’<sup>78</sup>

In the spring of 1955 George S. Christian circulated an appeal for peace entitled *Let’s Not Talk About a Split in the Bible Presbyterian Church*. Christian is critical of both McIntire and Rayburn. Rayburn’s criticisms are basically valid. However he has no more right to split the Church over McIntire’s overemphasis on separationism than McIntire had to split the Presbyterian Church of America over the Orthodox Presbyterian overemphasis on Reformed exclusivism. Nevertheless, the Church must be reformed to arrest the further development of that ‘Presbygational’ type of government, whereby it does not have control over independent agencies dominated by McIntire and those under his influence.<sup>79</sup>

As the Synod scheduled for early June approached, certain of the McIntire party seemed to feel that many of the younger, less successful pastors were envious of Dr. McIntire and in their frustration wanted to demonstrate their importance by putting him in his place at Synod. They wanted to control the Synod and then have the Synod control everything in order to become important in the Church. The tail was wanting to wag the dog.<sup>80</sup>

Although a motion to withdraw from the American

78. J. M. L. Young, *Some Observations After a Year’s Furlough* (Written Nov., 1954; mimeographed and circulated in the spring of 1955 by retiring moderator Linwood L. Gebb). Regarding the issue of separation, Young wrote: ‘We must remember that no strong Church can be built on one doctrine and thus not allow our proximity to this issue cause us to give a disproportionate amount of time to this doctrine, to the neglect of others. We separated not for separation’s sake but for doctrine’s sake, to build a Church to preserve and proclaim it, to be a pillar and ground of the truth, and this must be our major effort.’

79. This article is a very interesting analysis of the problems facing the Presbyterian Separatist Movement in 1955.

80. *Bible Presbyterian Observer (BPO)*, No. 1, Oct., 1955, 6 f.: J. E. Bennet to C. McIntire, May 4, 1955.

Council was defeated by a 67-21 vote, the actions of the Synod of 1955 favored the tendency toward the greater authority of Synod. For instance, Synod approved the establishment of a denominational college and magazine.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, on the last day of Synod McIntire organized in protest the Committee for True Presbyterianism to supply information to the members of the Bible Presbyterian Church. To implement this purpose, the Committee began a new publication known as the *Free Press*.<sup>82</sup>

The first issue of the *Free Press*, prepared by Dr. Allan A. MacRae, appeared at the end of June. Its thrust involves an exposition of the nature of true Presbyterianism as discouraging Synod-controlled agencies. Seven reasons are given why the increase of Synod-controlled boards and agencies is undesirable: 1) A similar development led to the necessity of separating from the old denomination. 2) It is a definite step in the direction of that prelacy abhorrent to true Presbyterianism. 3) It is contrary to original Presbyterianism, practically unknown before 1790, and without warrant either in the original Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., or in the Westminster Standards. 4) Such agencies are nowhere commanded in the Bible, nor evidenced in the apostolic church. 5) Synod-controlled agencies tend by their very socialistic nature to inefficiency. 6.) The existence of such agencies makes it difficult for the Synod to carry on the spiritual work which actually belongs to it. 7) Synod-controlled boards inevitably lead to the development of harmful ecclesiastical machines.<sup>83</sup>

To sum up, according to MacRae there are in the Church two basic viewpoints. The one says that in a true Presbyterian Church all power is in the hands of the Synod. It is up to the

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81. Harden, 91 ff.

82. *Free Press (FH)*, 1:1 (June 30, 1955). Cf. D. J. MacNair, *Documentation Regarding the Division in the Bible Presbyterian Church*, 1961, 9. This paper is a helpful introduction to the controversy from the standpoint of the Synod men.

83. *FP*, 1:1 (June 30, 1955). Cf. Harden, 94.

Synod to determine what is to be done. The presbyteries carry out the commands of the Synod, individual churches carry out the commands of the presbytery, and individual church members do what the church session tells them to do. The other viewpoint is simply this, that the Synod's purpose is judicial, not legislative or administrative. The Synod's responsibility is to guard the Church from false doctrine, while its outreach is to be carried on by those whom God raises up for that purpose. 'True Presbyterianism involves a system of graded courts which protect the members of the denomination from the entrance of false doctrine, and guard the entrance of the sacred ministry. These courts should perform their proper Presbyterian function, but should not attempt to issue commands to the people, to order the details of their missionary or educational work, or to set up Boards and Agencies.'<sup>84</sup>

Later, MacRae took care to point out that he was not saying that such agencies are wrong, unscriptural, or unconstitutional, simply that they are unwise. While the Constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church *permits* them, it does not *require* them—as some were zealous to maintain.<sup>85</sup>

The opposing position is presented by Rayburn and others in a small pamphlet entitled *The Ideological Division Within Our Church*. The tract is directed against McIntire's 'Congregationalist' point of view and his 'Congregationally minded' followers. The basic thesis is: 'We are part of the majority who want a truly Presbyterian church, and not a loose "association" in which men can say anything about anyone at any time without ever being called into account.'<sup>86</sup> The conflict is between Synod-controlled agencies and independently-controlled agencies. Someone always has to run everything. This is the case with the self-perpetuating boards

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84. *FP*, 1:3 (Aug. 25, 1955), 13 ff. (*cf.* 1).

85. *FP*, 1:4 (Jan. 26, 1956), 3.

86. R. G. Rayburn, C. Bunzel, W. E. Lyons, *The Ideological Division Within Our Church* (Mimeographed), n.d., 1 ff. *Cf.* *FP*, 1:4 (Jan. 26, 1956), 7 f., 16.



running the independent agencies approved by the Church. ‘Which is Presbyterian—an independent agency controlled by independent men who are responsible to no one but themselves, or an agency which is subject to “review and control” by the body of which it is a part? . . . We are not objecting to independent agencies as such. But we are objecting to the attempt to picture independently controlled agencies as Presbyterian rather than as Congregational.’<sup>87</sup> It may well have been that a hybrid mixture of Presbyterianism and Congregationalism was effected in 1938. ‘In fact, our present ideological division became apparent only after men began to recognize the hybrid structure of the Bible Presbyterian Church.’<sup>88</sup>

The document makes crystal clear what is meant by the ideological character of the division. ‘We contend that the present division within our Church is ideological in nature and therefore beyond reconciliation. When we speak of the ideological division in our church we mean that equally sincere men hold concepts, ideas, and philosophies that cannot be harmonized.’ It also makes clear the ecclesiastical implications of the ideological division. ‘This means that the Bible Presbyterian Church must decide whether to continue its outward organizational Form, within which this irreconcilable division is certain to be perpetuated, or to go our separate ways.’<sup>89</sup>

We thus see from the foregoing the development of two opposing camps, each claiming to represent true Presbyterian church government. The one, while admitting that Synod-controlled agencies are permissible, has practically come to rule them out as unwise, due to fear of the unhealthy intentions of the majority in the Synod. The other, while admitting the constitutional propriety of independent agencies, has practically come to rule them out as unpresbyterian, due to fear of the unhealthy control of Synod-approved agencies by

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87. *Ibid.*, 4.

88. *Ibid.*, I.

89. *Ibid.*

a small group of men under the influence of Carl McIntire. Each side presents the church government issue from the outset as an ideological one which admits of no compromise.<sup>90</sup>

It is also apparent that certain of the supporters of Synod had become disillusioned with McIntire's leadership and had become convinced that it was causing the Church to suffer. They had tried to reform that leadership, but to no avail. He always had to have his way, either through his influence upon the independent agencies or his intimidation of the Synod.

With respect to the former, there were those who had become convinced that only Synod-controlled agencies could solve the problem. Regarding the latter, there were many more who were convinced that McIntire's influence was hurting the Church. We note the following comment of Thomas G. Cross:

Dr. McIntire is a leader, and in some instances he did lead us in the right direction by showing the reasonableness of the position which he supported. However, no leader is always right and when Dr. McIntire could not convince men that he was right by reasonable argument, time and again he got his way by threatening to leave the Synod. I can produce a great many witnesses to this fact, if you doubt my word. I am sorry that men ever gave in to such a threat, but they did; it is a fact and there are many witnesses who will so testify.

There were many who were no longer willing to give in, and were determined that Dr. McIntire would either have to subject himself to his brethren in some measure, or leave the Church.<sup>91</sup>

There were also those who, while becoming more and more disillusioned with Dr. McIntire, were still much in favor of independent agencies, although very disturbed with the

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90. D. J. MacNair attributes the eventual division of the Church to a 'differing ideology' regarding the nature and purpose of the Church. *Op. cit.*, 14 (cf. 11).

91. T. G. Cross to W. Albany (Mimeographed), May 16, 1958, 2, Cf. G. S. Christian, *David, Not Rehoboam: Mid-Synod Reflections of a Presbyter to the Nineteenth General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church* (Mimeographed). Cf. A. Miller to C. McIntire, Dec. 8, 1954. With this letter Miller, a long-time elder in the Collingswood Bible Presbyterian Church, resigned his office. The letter evoked a very moving handwritten reply from Dr. McIntire.

position of the Committee for True Presbyterianism and the statements of the *Free Press*. Their attitude resulted in the publication of two special editions of the *Bible Press* and, later, of the *Bible Presbyterian Observer*—both published by the Bible Presbyterian Church of St. Louis.

The first special edition of the *Bible Press* stressed that both independent agencies and Synod-controlled agencies are proper and Presbyterian. Drs. Buswell and Harris disputed the historical validity of Dr. MacRae's arguments regarding the wisdom of independent agencies and the nature of true Presbyterianism. They pointed out that the old Church had greatly prospered with denominational boards, that independent agencies had often gone modernistic before church-controlled agencies, that the issue in separating from the old organization had been modernism not denominational agencies, and that the latter had not been a real issue in the Division of 1937.<sup>92</sup>

Buswell also pointed out that the Form of Government (10:6) of the Bible Presbyterian Church permits both kinds of agencies. In addition, Synods do have administrative powers, and the Bible Presbyterian Synod has always exercised them. Moreover, the charge of socialism is ridiculous. Furthermore, an independent altitude can be very dangerous, as well as an undue reverence for certain leaders, which regards any disagreement with them as an attack upon God-given leaders and thus an attack upon the cause itself.

In my opinion our separatist movement is threatened with prelacy but this threat is far more likely to develop at the present juncture in agencies not directly responsible to the churches. I am concerned about the tendency to make honest criticism of leadership and of certain policies appear to be disloyalty to the cause. I sometimes blush for shame at the leadership which sponsors erroneous opinions in place of historical facts, and appeals for personal sympathy.<sup>93</sup>

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92. *Bible Press (BP)*, July 22, 1955. Cf. R. H. Cox (ed.), 'Voluntary Associations,' 'Boards,' 'Committees': *A Compilation and Analysis of Historical Data Relating to Certain Aspects of Church Polity in American Presbyterianism* (Mimeographed), May 1955. 93. *Ibid.*, 13. Buswell obviously had McIntire in mind.

The second special edition of the *Bible Press* contains some important remarks on the doctrine of separation from apostasy by Donald J. MacNair. He appeals for a healthy approach to the doctrine of separation which does not entail preaching on it all the time. This particular doctrine, however important in the present hour, must not be elevated above its proper place in the whole counsel of God. 'There are those, however, who feel that it must be the foremost dogma of the church. . . . These men have the right to consider the emphasis of doctrine this way. However, when they thus choose so to do, they must be careful not to feel that any question about their actions, *etc.*, is automatically an indication of the lowering of standards and convictions about the issue of separation.'

The main article of the edition, however, is by Buswell entitled, 'How Is The Free Press Free?' The *Free Press* is free from responsibility to the Church in that it is not responsible to any denomination or local church; free from the facts (especially as to the meaning of the acts of the 1955 Synod); free from balance, especially in the use of loaded terms like 'machine'; free from historical distinctions, for example, the claim that the Bible Presbyterian Synod has from the beginning been opposed in spirit to denominational agencies; and free from correction, when its mistakes are pointed out.

Buswell defended the right and motives of the younger ministers in their criticism of the founding fathers. He also defended their motives in the 1955 Synod.

There was a clear-cut majority of ministers and elders who were deeply convinced that the democratic processes outlined in the Constitution of our church must be allowed to function, and that the contemptuous attitude with which presbyteries and individuals had sometimes been treated, must not be allowed to prevail. There was a manifest desire, not to let 'a little group of men set themselves up to rule the church.'<sup>94</sup>

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94. *BP*, Sept. 9, 1955, 2, 5 f. *et al.* With respect to freedom from facts, Buswell did not accuse McIntire and the *Free Press* of dishonesty. For instance: 'In my own mind I do not call this misstatement [*i.e.*, that the Synod had given its new

About this time the October issue of *Christian Life* carried an unfortunate article entitled ‘BPC’s “Young Men” Revolt.’ The article contains many misstatements of fact. It represents ‘Rayburn’s group’ as holding to the propriety of both church-controlled and independent agencies, whereas McIntire ‘has now repudiated all church-controlled agencies.’ It quotes Buswell as stating that the issue is an ‘irresponsible autocratic fundamentalism,’ and states that the feeling among Bible Presbyterians is that McIntire’s days as a ‘one-man denomination’ are numbered.<sup>95</sup>

McIntire pointed out many of the factual errors in the article. He also maintained that both Rayburn’s position and his own had been misrepresented. For Rayburn explicitly states that independent agencies are Congregational, while Synod-controlled agencies are truly Presbyterian. As for his own view: ‘My position in the Bible Presbyterian Church has been that of the constitution of the church, which leaves the Synod-controlled agencies, or both, purely within the “discretion” of the Synod, and does not make them an integral or inherent part of what Presbyterianism itself consists of!’<sup>96</sup>

In the November issue of the *Bible Presbyterian Observer*, Rayburn published an article on the statistics of the ACCC, maintaining that the American Council’s figures were unrealistic. It is not a matter of the personal integrity of the ACCC leaders, but of their ethical right to count as members those of whom there is no clear-cut record of their position, those who have not specifically asked to be members, and those who are members of organizations in the National Council of Churches. When the errors are all corrected, the criticism will

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college committee ‘unlimited authority’ to commit Synod financially], made since Synod about the college committee, “a deliberate lie.” My own theory is that the mind of a genius quite free and independent of responsibility to the brethren, has leaped forward to a conclusion which is quite free from factual basis’ (4).

95. *Christian Life*, Oct., 1955.

96. Statement by Carl McIntire Concerning Article in *Christian Life*; October, 1955, ‘BPC’s “Young Men” Revolt’ (Mimeographed).

stop. 'The solution to this problem lies in a willingness to be utterly frank with the American public, to admit that we are small, to count only those whose names we can produce on an acceptable record and to look to the Lord Almighty to make us strong against the enemies of the Gospel by His own miraculous power!'<sup>97</sup>

The issue also contained a copy of a recent resolution of the session of the Greenville, S.C., church advertised as 'a pattern that could be used by various churches.' The gist of the resolution is that the session, after diligent study, will stand by the actions of the 1955 Synod on the ground that the Form of Government requires it, in that the ordination vows of every minister and elder commit them 'in solemn obligation to actions and the government of the church courts.' To remain true Bible Presbyterians, they would have to abide by and support the decisions and actions of the Synod.<sup>98</sup>

In November Dr. Rayburn and Dr. Flournoy Shepperson, pastor of the Greenville church, were dropped from their positions on the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions because of their position at the 1955 Synod. Two others were likewise dropped from the board of Faith Seminary. Finally, Dr. Buswell was removed from the presidency of Shelton College. A minority of the Independent Board and the faculties at Faith and Shelton protested, maintaining that a man's fitness to serve in institutions and agencies should be tested by the Bible, not by loyalty to the persons of certain leaders.<sup>99</sup>

A resolution appeared in the December issue of the *Bible Presbyterian Observer* protesting a 'gathering of power' on

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97. *BPO*, No. 2 (Nov., 1955), 8 (*cf.* 1 f.). For a reply see *FP*, 2:1, July 26, 1956, 23 f. For the challenge of a hostile critic on ACCC statistics, see Roy, *op. cit.*, 196 f. For other discussions of the issue, see Gasper, *op. cit.*, 32 ff.; MacNair, *op. cit.*, 1 ff.

98. *Ibid.*, 4. As one might suspect, and as will be readily seen, the McIntire faction would not let this statement slip by without severe criticism.

99. *BPO*, 3 (Dec, 1955), 3.

the part of the small group in control of various independent agencies. It was signed by a long list headed by J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. The objection is not to independent agencies as such, but to repressive actions of a small interlocking group within the executive committees of these agencies. Buswell warns of the 'ideology of domination' as opposed to that of democratic procedure. It is now vitally necessary to resist this ideology. 'Where some agencies may have fallen completely under the ideology of domination, others must be raised up.' Nevertheless, it is Buswell's conviction that neither the ACCC nor the Twentieth Century Reformation is, as yet, lost to this ideology.<sup>100</sup>

Writing in November, 1955, Kenneth A. Horner, Jr., still had hopes that a Church split could be averted. He saw three basic areas of disagreement in the controversy: 1) divergent principles of church government; 2) divergent views on the application of the doctrine of separation; and 3) divergent approaches to holiness, revival, and growth:

The *church government* issue goes back to the origins of the Bible Presbyterian Synod in the late 1930's. Its founders suffered much at the hands of the old denominational machine, and were forced to leave the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., because they supported Bible-believing independent agencies. They were determined that this history should not repeat itself. Therefore, due to a fear of ecclesiastical machines, they determined that the main work of the Church should be accomplished through independent agencies.<sup>101</sup>

However, as the Church had grown and new men had come into it, many of them were questioning whether it is good for practically all the work of the Church to be done outside the control of the Synod. Though both types of agencies are constitutionally permitted, it seemed impossible ever to organize a major agency under Synod direction.

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100. *Ibid.*, 1, 8, 14.

101. Cf. McIntire, *CB*, Jan. 27, 1955.

It was the feeling of these men that, although they approved of the principle of the freedom to organize and support independent agencies, there were certain weaknesses in such agencies, weaknesses which were hard to correct. If ever the Bible Presbyterian Church disapproved of any major action or actions of one of the independent agencies, it had no effective recourse by which to show its disapproval except to refuse to recommend the agency anymore and stop supporting it. This was looked upon as a very ineffective recourse since it could mean that an institution or organization into which years of money and labor had been thrown by the church could be lost overnight and there could be no remedy for it but to stop supporting it and start another agency.<sup>102</sup>

Horner is himself of this persuasion and maintains that, whatever types of agencies are employed, they should feel in some way responsible to the Church as an organization, and should think of themselves as agencies of the Church. 'They should seek to feel the pulse of the church in matters of great consequence and not act precipitously expecting the church to follow without having been instructed or consulted.' Horner does not feel that two irreconcilable forms of church government are involved, and is indifferent as to whether the Church works through Synod-controlled or independent agencies, as long as Scriptural principles of church government are respected; that is, as long as workers feel responsible to their brethren in the Church.<sup>103</sup>

The second major issue involves the matter of *separation* from apostasy. Both sides claim to agree to the theoretical principles laid down in the Harvey Cedars Resolution, but differ in their application of them. Over the years certain rules, with respect to separation from various evangelical but unseparated organizations, have become common practice in the sphere of expediency so as to have the authority of the

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102. K. A. Horner, Jr., *An Analysis of Troubled Conditions in the Bible Presbyterian Church and the Separation Movement* (Originally prepared November, 1955; mimeographed, May 17, 1956), 2. This analysis is an excellent historical introduction to the controversy from the majority point of view. It is perhaps the most judicious document to come out of the whole controversy.

103. *Ibid.*, 4 f. For Horner's own views on 'Biblical Church Government' see his series of articles in the *National Missions Reporter* (Jan.-Feb., April, May, 1955) and the *Bible Presbyterian Reporter* (Nov.-Dec, 1955; Jan., 1956).



Word of God in some circles. More recently there have been those who feel expediency might suggest cooperation in many cases with a view to advancing the separatist cause. They feel that rigid adherence to these traditional rules has so completely cut off the Church from contact with many fellow-believers that there is little possibility to assist them to understand and adopt the separatist position.

As some have broken these rules, they have been severely criticized as compromisers betraying the separatist cause. Their 'softer approach' has been designated as evidence that they are no longer in the separatist movement. On the other hand, those so criticized maintain that separation is not the most important doctrine to be preached, nor is it an end in itself. The extreme separationists are alienating more and more of the Lord's people from the movement. Horner's own conviction is that the Church's policy needs reassessment. 'Perhaps the softer approach and more balanced emphasis could do more for separation and the whole cause of Christ in the long run, and it may be that those who advocate this have some real wisdom for those who now regard them as compromisers.

The third point at issue involves the *holiness, growth, and revival* of the Church. Why is the Church not growing as it should? There are those who seem to be so interested in the statistics of the ACCC and ICCC that they seem to be little concerned with the evangelistic outreach of the Church. Moreover, while they prize organizational *separation* they seem to undervalue personal *holiness*, and thus are needlessly alienating many from the Church. They seem unwilling to listen to any criticism in any of these matters, or to tolerate any difference of opinion from their own views. Moreover, they seem to be especially careless with the truth. All of these factors may be hindering the Lord's blessing upon the Church. On the other hand, those who are criticized for

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104. *Ibid.*. 5-7.

demonstrating an undue preoccupation with the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement see this criticism as hurting the whole movement and thus the Church. If, however, both sides will take their critics seriously, examine themselves, repent of their sins, and confess them, division might be averted.<sup>105</sup>

However, Horner's hopes were soon to be dashed. Given the controversy of 1955, it is not difficult to see that the Division of 1956 was bound to come.

### **The Division of 1956**

In the fall of 1955 a small disillusioned group had left Dr. McIntire's huge church in Collingswood, N.J., to form the Bible Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield. In January, 1956, they applied for membership in the New Jersey Presbytery which was under the control of their former pastor. However, the Presbytery refused to hear their request on the ground that they were schismatics. Accusations were leveled against the elders without their being allowed to speak in self defense.<sup>106</sup>

At the end of January the next edition of the *Free Press* appeared, denying that the McIntire group was grasping for power. The issue especially attacks the Greenville Resolution as unscriptural and unpresbyterian in that it follows the line of the Mandate of 1934, maintaining that one's ordination vows bind his conscience to the decisions of church courts, thus placing the word of man above the Word of God. McIntire, with an appeal to the Form of Government (10:5), maintains that 'one is not bound to abide by the decision of the majority if he feels in conscience that he cannot do so, and he does not have to leave.' At the same time he maintains that the dissident elders in his own Collingswood church are

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105. *Ibid.*, 7-10.

106. *BPO*, 4 (Mar. 1956), 11 f. This is Buswell's version of the meeting. For McIntire's see *FP*, 4 (Jan. 26, 1956), 19, 23.

bound by their ordination vows not to leave the church in schismatic disagreement.<sup>107</sup>

From the foregoing it is obvious that both sides appeal to their liberty to dissent from, even disobey, the majority opinion in Christian organizations to which they belong, and still remain with them, while at the same time expecting the other side to comply with majorities which they themselves represent in other organizations. The McIntire group was in control of the independent agencies and protested tyranny in the Church; while the Synod-men were in control of Synod and protested tyranny in the independent agencies.

The 1955 Synod, in approval of a motion of Dr. McIntire, had upon its adjournment decided to meet at a time and place to be specified by the moderator, who happened to be Dr. Buswell. There was much sentiment in the Church for an April Synod in the mid-west, no doubt for the purpose of grappling with the issues of the controversy as soon as possible. Accordingly, Buswell called for the 1956 Synod to meet at St. Louis in early April.<sup>108</sup>

In view of the approaching Synod, the St. Louis church, under the leadership of MacNair, published an unfortunate resolution breathing the spirit of an ultimatum. The congregation threatened to withdraw from the Bible Presbyterian Church if the group in control of the Church-approved independent agencies did not relinquish control of these agencies at the close of the Synod, or leave the Bible Presbyterian Church. Other congregations were invited to join in. The St. Louis church did not view this as a schismatic act, but as an indication of the presence of schism already in the Synod.<sup>109</sup>

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107. *FP*, 2:4 (Jan. 26, 1956), 5, 8-10, 15, 19. The Form of Government (10:5) reads: 'Although the deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and other actions of the General Synod are to be accorded the weight which is proper in view of the character of the body, yet wherever . . . such deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and other actions are additional to the specific provisions of the Constitution, they shall not be regarded as binding unless they become amendments to the Constitution.'

108. *BPO*, 4 (Mar. 1956), 1, 7.

109. For a discussion of this whole incident, see J. Sickert, 'The St. Louis

In reply the *Free Press* labeled the St. Louis Resolution ‘the Mandate of 1956.’ According to McIntire the Synod was still intact, but the St. Louis Ultimatum demanded a separation. They had to have their way, or else they would split the Church.<sup>110</sup> A petition was sent to Dr. Buswell to call off the Synod in favor of one in June, the customary time, at Harvey Cedars, N.J. McIntire labeled the St. Louis Synod ‘improper’ and announced his intention to boycott the Synod, calling upon others to follow suit.<sup>111</sup>

The March issue of the *Bible Presbyterian Observer* set the tone for the Synod. MacNair concludes that the Church is not being served by the independent agencies, but is rather the servant of these agencies. This does not mean that the Church is forced to Synod-directed agencies in every case, but that such centralization of power has to go and must not occur again. Buswell declares: ‘The basic issue in the present discord is between the Scriptural democratic processes of Presbyterian Church government on the one hand, and on the

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Ultimatum’ (Unpublished Paper, Covenant College). Sickert does not view the ultimatum as unfortunate: ‘Indeed, it was an ultimatum—one which came at the proper time and in the spirit of real concern for the testimony of the Bible Presbyterian Church’ (6). The time had come for division. ‘The handwriting was on the wall, and the Resolution read it out loud’ (7). It seems, however, that Dr. Buswell’s analysis is to the point: ‘Will not this threat from the St. Louis Church be seen as just another McIntireism . . . ? Will not this action of the St. Louis Church appear as a matter of second degree or third degree separation in the extreme? You threaten to withdraw from a Synod in which the large majority are endeavoring, by parliamentary processes, to eliminate the evils. To set a deadline within two months, and say, We leave your communion if the evils are not eliminated by that date, is quite extreme’ (J. O. Buswell, Jr., to D. MacNair, Feb. 11, 1956). For MacNair’s defense of the St. Louis Resolution, see *BPO*, Mar., 1956. The defense appeals to the good motives of the St. Louis church: the resolution was not intended for wide distribution, and its spirit has been misrepresented.

110. Cf. J. W. Fulton, An Open Letter to the Bible Presbyterian Church of St. Louis, Mar. 14, 1956.

111. *FP*, 1:5 (Mar. 6, 1956). According to the *FP*, the petition was signed by 110 ministers and elders. According to the count of elder J. E. Krauss of the Wilmington, Del., church, there were 32 ministers and 87 elders in favor of a June Synod and 65 ministers and 81 elders in favor of an April Synod (*Factual Report of the Bible Presbyterian Synod Meeting at St. Louis—April 5 to 11, 1956*. Mimeographed).

*History Behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod*, pp. 244-296.

other hand, domination, through interlocking directorates, by a small group.’ Dr. G. Douglas Young levels with the editor of the *Christian Beacon* as one who is following a policy of ‘control or removal’ of any who express a different point of view.

He is gradually alienating more and more persons and groups. He is stifling the movement which God used him to found, and he is making the names ACCC and ICCC even the very word ‘separation’ a stench in the American Church world, fundamental world at that. He is not winning, but alienating—and it need not be. For this reason many are openly, or in secret, repudiating not only your leadership but, far more tragically, are cooling off on their enthusiasm for the ACCC and ICCC. It is not the position of these organizations but your attitude which is doing it. I am perfectly sure that this is the opinion of the members of Synod who have in any way expressed dissatisfaction.<sup>112</sup>

In reply the *Free Press* stressed the oft-repeated slogan: ‘If the American Council were stopped, the road to Calvary would be closed within twenty-five years.’<sup>113</sup> Clarence Laman likened McIntire to Moses and the Synod to the rebellious children of Israel. ‘Men, do you not realize that Carl McIntire is our God-appointed leader? Who is there among our brethren like him? There is not one of us who has the ability to carry on a work like he carries on. It is mainly because of him that we have a Bible Presbyterian denomination.’<sup>114</sup>

After much discussion the Nineteenth General Synod, by a 70-16 vote, elected to withdraw from the ACCC in the following terms:

Reaffirming its position on the purity of the visible church and its position on separation from modernism and inclusivism, the Nineteenth General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church finding sufficient cause for dissatisfaction in its representation by the American Council of Christian Churches, hereby terminates the power of that agency to represent said denomination and directs the Stated Clerk of this Synod to give immediate notification of this action to the American Council of Christian Churches.

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112. *BPO*, 4 (Mar. 1956), 5, 8, 6, 7.

113. *FP*, 1:7 (April 6, 1956). To the Synod men this slogan was a most audacious claim.

114. C. Laman, A Letter to My Bible Presbyterian Brethren (Mimeographed), Mar. 22, 1956, 2.

The Synod also adopted a similar motion to withdraw from the ICCC. Most of those who wanted to stay in the Councils had hopes that corrections could be made. However the vast majority thought that past experience proved this a hopeless cause.<sup>115</sup> While certain actions of the respective boards were deplored, the Synod commended the work of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions and Faith Seminary. However, it did not approve that of Highland College, Shelton College, or the *Christian Beacon*.<sup>116</sup>

The Synod also found the action of the New Jersey Presbytery with respect to the Haddonfield Church in error. The minority of the Presbytery who were present at Synod were directed to meet for the purpose of admitting the Haddonfield Church. With respect to the Committee for True Presbyterianism, the Synod disapproved it as divisively representing a false concept of Presbyterianism and directed that a committee be appointed by the moderator, Dr. Harris, 'to confer with the officers of the Committee on True Presbyterianism with an effort to resolve problems and to restore peace.' The committee was instructed to study the whole problem and to bring any necessary administrative or judicial cases to an appropriate court of the Church.<sup>117</sup>

Horner was a prominent member of this committee. He had personally abandoned the hope of seeing the Church held together on the ground that the events surrounding the April Synod precluded any reconciliation, remarking: 'Only a miracle of God could avert division now.' Therefore, of the three possible solutions to the problem, only two were feasible. The two sides could agree to disagree and separate in a friendly manner, or as a last resort, the matter could be committed

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115. *Minutes*, 22 ff.

116. *Ibid.*, 17 f.

117. *Ibid.*, 18, 35 *et al.* Cf. *Bible Presbyterian Reporter (BPR)*, 1:6 (April, 1956), 17: 'Although the administrative cases and the number of overtures indicated unrest and widespread disapproval of the activities of a portion of the Church, the Synod showed a remarkable degree of unity and solidarity and a desire to go forward in a constructive way in the service of the Lord.'

to the courts of the Church. Horner would, at this point, be very pleased if the former could be worked out.<sup>118</sup>

However, all attempts to meet with the Committee for True Presbyterianism were rebuffed. The McIntire faction responded with the formation of the Bible Presbyterian Church Association (BPCA) as an independent agency inside the Church for the purpose of representation in the ACCC and ICC. McIntire declared: 'The Bible Presbyterian Church has repudiated its own history. It is becoming a different kind of a church. It is now going to command [commend?] only its Synod-controlled agencies.'<sup>119</sup>

In September a judicial commission met in Columbus, Ohio, to investigate the rights of the BPCA along with other matters. The majority opinion maintained that the BPCA violated the spirit of the Constitution and regarded it as 'unwise and disruptive.' Membership of presbyteries in it is unconstitutional because of 'the peculiar unity of Presbyterianism in which the Synod is the bond of union, peace, correspondence and mutual confidence.' The New Jersey Presbytery is declared in danger of being found in contempt of Synod for not complying with its decisions. 'To fail to comply with the decisions of Synod and [in?] administrative cases regularly

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118. K. A. Horner, Jr., *An Analysis of the Problems in the Bible Presbyterian Church and Separation Movement*, May 16, 1956, 1, 10. Horner expressed his own view of the problem as follows: 'Briefly stated, it is my feeling that this whole difficulty began when sincere men of our church began to seek for some necessary reforms which would make our church and movement a more effective instrument in the hands of the Lord to do His work in these last days of apostasy. It is my conviction that the suggestions made and the helpful criticisms offered have been completely misinterpreted and misunderstood as attacks upon certain individuals and attempts to scuttle the separation movement. Although mistakes have doubtless been made by those who sought to attain these reforms and improvements, it is my personal conviction that their basic motive has been good and not evil. Because I personally have seen the same necessity for the same improvements and have shared in the opinion that the helpful criticisms were necessary, I stand with this group in the controversy. I believe it is unwillingness to listen to helpful criticism, to properly evaluate it and heed it which is so seriously damaging our church, our movement, our mission agencies, our colleges and seminary.' Cf. K. A. Horner, To Members of Faith Bible Presbyterian Church and Missionaries supported by Faith Church (Mimeographed), Dec. 14, 1956, 8.

119. *HP*, 2:1 (July 6, 1956) 9, (cf. 12 f., 22).

appealed to it, is as impossible in the Presbyterian system as for an American citizen to reject or ignore a ruling of the Supreme Court.’ The minority report, of course, could not agree. Dr. McIntire had walked out in the middle of the proceedings.<sup>120</sup>

The Twentieth General Synod was scheduled to meet in Columbus, Ohio, at the end of November. Meanwhile, McIntire called for a rival Synod at Collingswood to combat the ‘revolutionary change’ which had taken place in the Church. The St. Louis Synod was ‘illegal’ in that the standing rules of Synod were neglected. There are four major issues before the Church: 1) Tighter control over the local church on the part of Synod. 2) Repudiation of the ACCC and ICCS’s militant policy of ‘consistent separation from apostasy.’ 3) The attempt to discredit Carl McIntire. 4) The failure to recommend the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. The Collingswood Synod opposes all of these. What will be the character of the Collingswood Synod? ‘Under the constitution of the Bible Presbyterian Church a Synod meets and when it adjourns it is “dissolved” and that is the end of the Synod. The Synod is not something that continues, or that men belong to throughout the year.’ One must make his choice between the Collingswood or the Columbus Synod.<sup>121</sup>

When the Collingswood Synod met at the end of November, its theme was ‘A 20th Century Synod Promoting a 20th Century Reformation.’ With Carl McIntire as moderator, the

120. *FP*, 2:2 (Nov. 9, 1956), 7-13.

121. *Ibid.*, 1-7. For the argument concerning the ‘illegality’ of the St. Louis Synod, see especially 3 f. For a reply, see *Minutes of the Twentieth General Synod*, 66 f. Cf. *BPO*, 4 (Mar. 1956), 1, 7, MacNair, *op. cit.*, 9 ff. Note Dr. Harris’ appeal for men to line up with the Columbus Synod: ‘Let us further assure all concerned that we do not wish the slightest change in the Bible Presbyterian testimony. We wish no “tighter” Synod than we have always had. . . . Brethren, we urge you to make a decision on the basis of the evidence and stay with the Church and its legal Synod and Presbyteries. Anything else will only further besmirch the whole Separation testimony in the eyes of Christians and non-Christians alike.’ R. L. Harris, To the Brethren of the Bible Presbyterian Church (Mimeographed), Nov. 20, 1956.



Synod affirmed its loyalty to the ACCC and ICCC and applied for readmission to the two Councils. At the same time, the Synod claimed to be preserving ‘the historic and consistent testimony of the Bible Presbyterian Church since 1937,’ accusing others of desiring to change that testimony in terms of a ‘softer approach’ to the issues which brought it into being. It goes without saying that the Collingswood Synod claimed to represent ‘the true constitutional succession of the Bible Presbyterian Church.’<sup>122</sup>

At a *pro re nata* meeting called to deal with certain pressing matters regarding the controversy, the Columbus Synod was aware of the fact that it was ‘faced not with a rival synod merely, but with a painful division of the Church itself.’<sup>123</sup> It maintained that the Collingswood Synod had no constitutional continuity with the first nineteen Synods and was therefore illegal. It declared that all ministers who have joined that Synod have in fact joined ‘another body’ according to the Book of Discipline (6:3), and therefore advised all presbyteries that the names of all who have joined the Collingswood Synod should be erased from their rolls.<sup>124</sup>

Regarding the division in the Church, the Twentieth General Synod, in view of the breach caused by divergent concepts of the work and fellowship of the Church, passed the following resolution:

Be it resolved that this Synod, recognizing its responsibility to contend for the faith, repudiates that fundamentalism which, while giving lip service to a militant defense of Biblical truth, in practice dishonors the Lord by something less than strict adherence to truth.

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122. Harden, 97-100. See Harden 97 ff., for the history of the Collingswood Synod since 1956 (*i.e.*, until 1965).

123. R. L. Harris and R. Hastings, To the Brethren of the Bible Presbyterian Church (Mimeographed), Nov. 12, 1956, 3.

124. *Minutes*, 48. The section reads: ‘When a minister renounces the jurisdiction of the Bible Presbyterian Church by abandoning his ministry and membership therein, or by declaring himself independent, *or by joining another body not deemed heretical without a regular dismissal*, the presbytery shall erase his name from its roll and record the reason in its minutes [Italics ours].’ *Constitution*, 172: *Book of Discipline*, 6:3.

And also, while we affirm and maintain unyielding loyalty to the doctrine of the purity of the visible Church, we repudiate that extreme separatism which ignores our responsibility to demonstrate the love of God toward our Christian brethren as the distinguishing mark of our discipleship.

In so declaring our loyalty to these principles of truthfulness and love, we do so with heart-searching confession of our own failures, in these regards in the past, and we caution ourselves against future transgressions with regard to the dangers which we here cite.<sup>125</sup>

Horner was glad that the Synod had not been vindictive, but had heeded wise counsel and followed the path of moderation. Along with many others, he regretted the necessity of the division, but was beginning to feel much relieved now that the actual separation was taking place. Their criticisms of Dr. McIntire and his group had been for the most part valid, but had only met with bitter antagonism. Not that they themselves were undeserving of criticism. Far from it. 'It must be admitted that at times our group has used the wrong approach to try to get the other side to understand our position and to satisfy our grievances, and for this, we are to be blamed.' The days were critical, but the Lord would lead them as he had in the past.<sup>126</sup>

With the actions of the several presbyteries loyal to the Synod in early 1957, the Division of 1956—by which some 40 percent of the Church was lost to the Synod—was consummated in an organizational way. Dr. McIntire protested the 'ecclesiastical executions' and, in the name of honesty, the change in the character of the Bible Presbyterian Church.<sup>127</sup>

### **Conflict with Movementism**

The foregoing history of the Bible Presbyterian Church raises many questions about the character of that Church and the rationale of its development from the late 1930's to the mid 1950's. In conclusion, we shall only mention one of

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125. *Minutes*, 59. For an Orthodox Presbyterian's appraisal of the Columbus Synod, see the article of N. B. Stonehouse, *PC*, Dec. 15, 1956.

126. K. A. Horner, Jr., Mimeographed Letter of Dec. 14, 1956, 2, 5, 9.

127. *FP*, 2:5 (Apr. 12, 1957).

them, namely, What seems to be the chief problem confronting the Bible Presbyterian Church throughout its history?

One could answer in a word, McIntire! In a sense this is true. For—despite many fine qualities and wonderful gifts, and a remarkable vision which on paper could fail to inspire only the deadest of souls—his ‘rule or ruin’ mentality, ever more evident and inflexible as the years passed, lay over the Church like a dark cloud from the beginning—becoming ever more sinister as time wore on. Yet it is doubtful whether there would ever have been a Bible Presbyterian Church without Carl McIntire. Given these two facts, it is not surprising that events developed in the way they did. In so far as the original Bible Presbyterian vision was bound up with Carl McIntire there is historical validity to his charge that the Church of the Columbus Synod was not the Bible Presbyterian Church of 1938. At the risk of oversimplification, we may conclude that there were those who had difficulty separating the vision from the man, and they would be prone to follow him to the bitter end. On the other hand, there were those who having separated the two, would eventually come to see a conflict between them.

Nevertheless, it may be the case that the chief problem facing the Bible Presbyterian Church throughout its history was bigger than Carl McIntire, though no doubt embodied by him. Could it have been the subtle spirit of movementism which, from the nature of the case, endangered the Presbyterian Separatist Movement from the beginning?

The mentality of movementism involves dedication to what is held to be a holy cause under divinely-appointed leadership, often narrowed down to one extremely gifted man. The movement is born in the midst of severe opposition and suffering but slowly gathers strength. All those who are on the right track will give themselves wholly to the movement in recognition of the rightness of the cause and the God-given character of its leadership. As the movement progresses, a movementistic altitude is revealed when any devia-

tion from that leadership is viewed as a compromising betrayal of the cause and provokes severe counter criticism. Significant differences of opinion are looked upon with suspicion, and more and more of the originally enthusiastic adherents are alienated from the movement until finally only the slavish followers of the leadership remain.

The seeds of the movementistic mentality, which from the nature of the case existed in the separatist movement from the beginning, were watered by the struggles of the 1930's. The subtle spirit of movementism may have endangered the ministry of Dr. Machen and his most loyal followers. There can be little doubt that movementism has vitiated the ministry of Carl McIntire who has looked upon himself as Dr. Machen's successor; or that it has captivated the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement, so that to McIntire and his followers everything is viewed in terms of the Movement. Everything is subject to the organizational success of the Movement.<sup>128</sup>

This is the conclusion of H. D. Morton's recent analysis of the *Origins of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement* (1967). He maintains that 'organizationistic movementism has tended to constitute an ultimate and often apparently intolerable imposition upon the loyalties of the fundamentalist separatist.' This 'organizationistic movementism' is the distinctive feature of the Twentieth Century Reformation in that its genuine followers are ultimately loyal to the organization and not to the principles which it claims to uphold. There is thus a 'tendency to absolutize the Movement.' Morton supports this thesis by an appeal to incidents in the history of the Movement since 1955.<sup>129</sup>

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128. Cf. J. O. Buswell, *BPO*, 3 (Dec, 1955), 13: 'The basic issue is between direct loyalty to the Word of God and Biblical principles and democratic organizational procedure on the one hand, and subservience to human leaders and fallible human organizations on the other.' Cf. *ibid.*, 3, for a similar statement by the 1955 faculty of Shelton College.

129. Morton, *op. cit.*, 108-142, 'Movementism' (see esp. 109-114). The thrust of the historical analysis is: 'Fundamentalism and separatism were pre-

In a recent publication of the Collingswood Synod, entitled *A Brief History of the Bible Presbyterian Church and Its Agencies* and prepared at the request of Dr. McIntire and dedicated to Dr. McIntire, we read: 'Dr. McIntire has had an active part in helping to found and continue almost every one of the independent agencies endorsed by the Synod. . . . The Bible Presbyterian Church exists today, in large measure, because of the faith and vision and tireless activity of one of its ministers, Carl McIntire.'<sup>130</sup>

To the members of the Columbus Synod, this was precisely the problem. In the minds of many the Bible Presbyterian Church was Carl McIntire and the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement. The Church merely existed for the benefit of the Movement and was swallowed up in it. This unhealthy situation could not be allowed to continue. The Church therefore either had to come to maturity by freeing itself from movementism or be destroyed by it. For while a church may be brought to birth by a movement, it is not ultimately sustained by, or compatible with, the movementistic mentality.

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requisite to the organization of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement. There is evidence which suggests, however, that fundamentalism and separatism alone will be inadequate to the formulation of an historical definition of the Twentieth Century Reformation Movement. It appears that a third element, which may be called movementism, should be considered together with fundamentalism and separatism by anyone who would work toward an historical definition of the Movement. These three elements—fundamentalism, separatism, and movementism—are therefore each important in any analysis of the origins of the Movement' (109).

130. Harden, 3.