

**AMERICA'S MISSIONS: THE HOME MISSIONS MOVEMENT AND THE
STORY OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC**

A Dissertation

by

BRIAN RUSSELL FRANKLIN

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,
Committee Members,

Head of Department,

Charles E. Brooks
Katherine Carté Engel
Troy O. Bickham
Dennis Berthold
David Vaught

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to enhance our understanding of the early American republic by providing a study of the home missions movement from 1787 to 1845. The home missions movement was a nationwide, multi-denominational religious movement, led by mission societies, and aimed at bringing the Protestant gospel to the various peoples of the states and territories. A history of this movement not only fills a gap in the historiography of early American religious history, but also enlightens our understanding of the broader socio-political world of the early republic.

The founding years of the home missions movement, from 1787 to 1815, were led by Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Despite interdenominational competition at home and diplomatic tension with Britain, Protestants tended to cooperate both interdenominationally and transatlantically in order to achieve broader, evangelical goals in their missions. Home missions societies also shed light on a third form of cooperation: cooperation between church and state. We can better understand the relationship between church and state in the early republic by rejecting the idea that these two entities functioned separately. Instead, they functioned within a complex system of *cooperation*, evidenced by consistent government subsidization of and participation in missions to both white settlers and Indians, as well as by a broad culture of cooperation with Protestant projects in American society. During the early antebellum period, the home missions movement underwent a significant transformation, from functioning as a nationwide group of loosely-affiliated societies, which focused on

nearby peoples, to a highly-centralized affair, dominated by a handful of national mission societies, which focused on the salvation of the entire nation. The growing importance of the population of the Mississippi Valley and the national trend toward a more centralized government and economic system played the two key roles in this transformation. This centralization – religious, economic, and political – helped give rise to the antimission movement, a nationwide Protestant protest against mission societies. This movement sheds light on the religious and ideological underpinnings of antebellum sectionalism.

To Janelle

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ~ Proverbs 31:10

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Home Missions Movement and the Historiography of the Early Republic	3
The Historiography of Home Missions.....	10
Chapter Outline of Dissertation.....	15
II THE FOUNDING OF THE HOME MISSIONS MOVEMENT.....	20
Colonial and Revolutionary Missions.....	22
Early Missionary Organization and the Climate for the Home Missions Movement, 1783-1795.....	24
The Climate for Home Missions in the 1790s.....	30
The Founding of the Home Missions Movement.....	33
A Summary of American Home Mission Societies, 1796-1810.....	51
Transatlantic Home Mission Societies.....	54
Atlantic Missionary Inspiration Goes Both Ways.....	57
Sharing Missions and Missionaries.....	62
Conclusion: American Nationalism and Evangelical Internationalism.....	64
III HOME MISSIONS AND THE COOPERATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.....	68
The Formation of State Constitutions and the Myth of Separation.....	74
State Constitutions and Religion: From Revolution to Constitution....	76
National Disestablishment, not Complete Disestablishment: Religion and Government in the United States Constitution.....	81

	Page
Religion and the State Constitutions After the Ratification of the U.S. Constitution	84
Religious Establishment in the States	86
Thomas Jefferson and the Relationship Between Church and State	89
Thomas Jefferson: Cheese, Church, and State	91
A Federal Interpretation of the Constitution and the Early Republic ..	95
State Provisions for Religion and Morality – Cooperation	98
Home Missions and the Cooperation Between Church and State.....	103
John Schermerhorn, Samuel Mills, and the Missionary Tour of 1812-1813.....	105
Church, State, and the Tax-Based Subsidization of Missions.....	106
General Jackson Gives the Missionaries a Free Ride.....	108
Government Officials and the De Facto State Subsidization of Missions	111
Schermerhorn and Mills Visit the Mississippi and Louisiana Territories	116
Home Missions and a Culture of Cooperation in American Governments	118
Conclusion.....	123
 IV THE COOPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN PROTESTANT MISSIONS TO AMERICAN INDIANS, 1789-1815.....	 125
Missionary Societies Assess Church-State Cooperation in Indian Missions	130
State Governments, State Missionary Societies, and Indian Missions, 1796-1810.....	133
New York Missionary Society: Chickasaw and Iroquois, 1799-1804 .	134
1804: The New York Missionary Society in Review	141
The Presbyterian Church in the USA and the Standing Committee on Missions	144
The Missionary (Mis)Adventures of Gideon Blackburn.....	147
The General Government Aids Blackburn's Mission to the Cherokee	153
The Presbyterian Mission to the Wyandot	155
The Cherokee Removal Crisis of 1807-1809	157
Financial Troubles at Blackburn's Cherokee Mission.....	160
Spying and Spirits on the Coosa River.....	162
The Presbyterian Mission to the Cherokee Ends	169
The War of 1812 and the Disruption of Indian Missions.....	171
 V THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF AMERICAN HOME MISSIONS	 176

	Page
Religion, Missions, and the Soul of the Nation.....	178
The Mississippi Valley: The Crucible of the Nation.....	184
The Settlement of the Mississippi Valley	187
The Call of Jonathan Going to the Mississippi Valley.....	197
The West	200
The Religious Implications of the Settlement of the Mississippi Valley	205
Anti-Catholicism and the Motivation for Protestant Missions to the Mississippi Valley	209
Home Missions and the Political Implications of the West	215
Centralization and Nationalization in the Early Republic.....	222
The Centralization and Nationalization of American Christianity.....	227
The American Home Missionary Society	232
The American Baptist Home Mission Society	236
Westerners Support Centralization and Nationalization	243
Conclusion: The Legacy of Centralization and Nationalization in the 1830s and 1840s	246
 VI THE ANTIMISSION MOVEMENT	 250
The Early Years of Protests, 1796-1811	254
Traveling Missionaries and the Practice of Raising Monetary Support	257
Daniel Parker and Antimissionism on the Frontier	265
John Taylor and the Antimission Movement in Kentucky	276
The Nationwide Reach of the Antimission Movement	281
The Black Rock Meeting of 1832	289
The Antimission Movement and the Simultaneous Nationalization and Sectionalization of America	293
The Antimission Movement as a Jacksonian Movement.....	295
Antimissionism and Jacksonian Political Ideals	299
Postscript on the Antimission Movement after Black Rock	308
Conclusion.....	311
 VII CONCLUSION	 315
Slavery and the Schisms.....	317
Home Missions and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837	319
Home Missions and the Baptist Schism of 1845.....	325
Conclusion.....	329
 REFERENCES.....	 332

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
1 States and Territories of the United States of America.....	216
2 The Home Missionary.....	217

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation seeks to enhance our understanding of the early American republic by providing a study of the most widespread and longest-lasting religious movement between 1787 and 1845: the home missions movement. The home missions movement was a multifaceted, multi-denominational religious movement, led by churches, denominations, and mission societies, and aimed at bringing the Protestant gospel to citizens of the states, Indians, and white settlers of the western lands.¹ These mission societies had their roots in the religious traditions of Great Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands, which had all produced organized Protestant mission societies since the early eighteenth century, including in the North American colonies. In the earliest years of the republic, American Christians began to consider how they would take up the mantle of missions in their own country. Starting in 1787 with the Congregationalist-led SPGNA (Society for the Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and others in North America), every major Protestant denomination in America commenced organizing their own missions societies – local, state, and national societies, societies for young men or females only, and cent-societies, to name a few. These societies would multiply

¹ The home missions movement should be distinguished from its fraternal twin, the foreign missions movement. Foreign mission societies were focused on carrying the Gospel to foreign peoples and lands, rather than to the various peoples of the North American continent. Depending on the person, church, or society in question, some American Christians considered Indian nations as "foreign." Still, even those who thought of Indians as foreign peoples, often considered missions to them as a natural part of a "home" or "domestic" missionary program, rather than a foreign program. The first foreign missionaries would not be sent from American soil until the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions appointed Adoniram and Ann Judson, Samuel and Harriett Newell, and Luther Rice to sail for India in 1812.

exponentially over the next six decades, placing missionaries throughout every state and territory. By 1826, these societies had become so prevalent that the secretary of the American Home Missionary Society (one of the largest missions organizations in the nation) could reasonably claim that home missions had grown to “exceed all other efforts in interest” in the burgeoning nation.²

But home missions were more than mere religious endeavors, set apart from the broader affairs of the nation. On the contrary, home missions played an important role in the social, political, and sectional development of the early republic. They laid patterns for voluntary organization and participation in early American society. They functioned as vehicles for cooperation between church and state. Mission societies, their missionaries, and organized opposition to them also played a role in influencing the tenor of westward expansion and the development of sectionalism in antebellum America. Yet, despite the clear importance of the home missions movement, no critical survey of this subject during any period of American history has appeared in over seventy years. Therefore, in addition to telling the story of the early American home missions movement as a religious phenomenon, this dissertation also seeks to integrate the movement into the social, political, and sectional interpretations of the period which have not yet been significantly informed by it.³

² *Constitution of the American Home Missionary Society, Recommended by a Convention of the Friends of Missions*, (New York, 1826), 71.

³ The last such survey to appear came from Colin Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier: With Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society* (Caldwell, 1939). This, as well as other surveys of the subject of home missions, will be discussed below.

The Home Missions Movement and the Historiography of the Early Republic

Over the last few decades, historians have produced dozens of volumes surveying the history of the early American republic between the years 1783 and 1845. Until recently, however, all of these works have given religion only a very minor role. A cursory survey of works dealing with the early republic reveals this omission. In the 1940s, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., produced *The Age of Jackson*, one of the most influential surveys of the period ever published. He gave his full attention to the power of politics and economics of the day, yet gave virtually no attention to religion at all. Since Schlesinger's work, surveys of the early republic have dealt similarly with religion, in one of two ways. The most common way historians have treated religion has been as a non-factor in the early republic, something present, but hardly worth detailed consideration in their assessments. Charles Sellers' *The Market Revolution* is the primary representative of the second manner in which historians have interpreted religion during the period, namely, as a guise donned by the rising middle class in order to attain social, political, or economic power.⁴

Only in the last decade have historians begun to focus on religion as a major, pervasive, or causative subject during the early republic. As part of the broader trend

⁴ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945). Works since Schlesinger's, which also treat religion as a hardly-present, non-factor include, Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (1982; revised and expanded ed., New York, 2007); Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990); Robert Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society* (New York, 1984); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York, 2006). Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian American, 1815-1846* (New York, 1991). Sellers' thesis has many parallels in the literature of the period, including in works such as Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York, 1997); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (1978; rev. ed., New York, 2004); Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (New York, 1994); and Robert Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society*.

toward studying what Seth Rockman calls "the politics of the public," historians have identified the myriad ways in which people participated in the public square. Richard Carwardine placed evangelicalism at the core of politics in antebellum America. In line with Alexis de Tocqueville's identification of Americans' "proclivity for joining voluntary associations," historians like Mary Hershberger have confirmed that religious voluntary societies (like women's anti-Indian-removal societies) are central for our understanding the gender, politics, and society of the early republic.⁵

Major surveys of the early republic have also departed from the more-or-less religionless surveys of the past. Daniel Walker Howe's 2007 *What Hath God Wrought* and Gordon Wood's 2009 *Empire of Liberty* have made religion a central feature in their stories. Wood devotes an entire chapter to "Republican Religion" and the intertwining of religion and political issues during the early-1800s. Howe treats religion even more comprehensively, discussing its role and impact in virtually every chapter of his book, including in discussions of democracy, social reform, war, and technology.⁶

While most surveys of the early republic have at least given some attention to religion broadly, none of them have given sustained consideration to the subject of missions: home, foreign, Protestant, Catholic, or otherwise. Surprisingly, the same can be said of surveys of the *religious* history of the early republic. Works such as Sydney Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People* and Mark Noll's *History of*

⁵ Seth Rockman, "Jacksonian America," in *American History Now*, eds. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, (52-74 (Philadelphia, 2011), 52-74; Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, 1993); Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *Journal of American History* 86 (June 1999), 15-40.

⁶ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York, 2007); Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York, 2009).

Christianity in the United States and Canada provide a wealth of information on the development of religion in America. But neither work considers missions as something influential, instead providing only minimal encyclopedic information on the activity of missions societies. In 2002 and 2003, respectively, Mark Noll and E. Brooks Holifield produced broad-sweeping interpretation of early American theology up through the Civil War. Although both works represent significant achievements in terms of understanding American history in light of theology, neither of them considers the development of missions or missional theology as important to the story.⁷

Even in works like Nathan Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity*, which are focused on the role of religion in the early republic, the subject of missions plays a minor role, at best. Protestants like Hatch's Baptists and Methodists spread their ideals *directly* through home missions, appointing visiting pastors and circuit riders as missionaries all over the country, thereby establishing themselves as the leading Protestant denominations by 1845. Yet despite the centrality of mission societies to this process, Hatch makes no attempt to address exactly how they functioned. Again, this perpetual oversight of missions in the survey literature of the early republic is a major oversight. Without missions in the early republic, there is no

⁷ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, 1972); Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, 1992). Another influential example of such treatments of religion and missions is Kenneth LaTourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. IV, *The Great Century in Europe and the United States of America, A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914*, (New York, 1941). Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 2002); E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought in America from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, 2003). It should be noted that Noll does in fact talk about missions in each of his works, making mention of various missions societies and how mission functioned within different denominations. However, his consideration is limited to the fact that missions were a seemingly-natural outworking of the theology and ecclesiology of evangelical denominations. Beyond this, he leaves unanswered the implications of the missionary movements for our broader understanding of the early republic.

flowering of evangelicalism, minimal spread of Christianity to the West, a different relationship between the realms of church and state, a weaker sense of manifest destiny, and a less-combustible sense of sectionalism, especially among Christians – in sum, a completely different story of the early republic.⁸

This dissertation also seeks to address the historiography of early-American religious reform, particularly during the era of the so-called First and Second Great Awakenings. One underlying aim in my argument is to address the periodization of religious revival and reform in early America by softening the strict separation between the First and Second Great Awakenings. Generally speaking, scholars have tended to equate the First Great Awakening with the revivals of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield in the 1730s-1750s, while focusing on the revivals inspired by Charles Finney in the 1820s and 1830s for the Second. However, by taking a broader view of the American religious landscape from 1730-1850, one finds a continuous cycle of revival and religious response in the country. With this view in mind, the ministries of famous men like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney appear not as anomalous religious outbursts, but as high points along the way. Scholars such as Thomas Kidd and Rhys Isaac, have written about this long view of the Awakenings, both claiming that the First Great Awakening can be traced through groups like the Baptists up through the 1790s. And most scholars, even those who focus their work on the Second-Great-Awakening revivals of the 1820s and 1830s, note that revival seasons had begun as early as the 1790s in places like Cane Ridge, Kentucky, and western Connecticut. For this reason, I

⁸ Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989).

choose not to make use of the term "Second Great Awakening" as an organizing concept in this study. Instead, I take a view of the early republic which consistently experienced religious revival and explosive growth among evangelical Protestant denominations.⁹

Scholarly focus on the revivals and reform of the 1820s and following has created two common interpretive problems. First, it has led to the impression that social reform in the early republic grew primarily out of these later revivals of the 1820s and 1830s, when in fact, the concept of organized, religious, social reform began decades before, in the wake of the sweeping religious, political, and social changes following the American War for Independence. Historians such as Mary Ryan, Whitney Cross, and Donald Mathews have emphasized this point, arguing that antebellum society witnessed economic and social upheaval precisely because significant social and familial changes began *earlier* in the 1790s. Similarly, Gordon Wood and Nathan Hatch place the fountainhead of political change not in the antebellum period, but in the release of democratic energy in the aftermath of the Revolution.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, 2007); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Paul Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, 1990); James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant: Frontier Missions and the Decline of Congregationalism, 1774-1818* (New York, 1995).

¹⁰ For examples of works which explicitly teach or implicitly assume that reform arose in response to the Finney-led revivals, see William McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York, 1959); and *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977* (Chicago, 1978); Charles Cole, Jr., *The Social Ideas of the Northern Evangelists, 1826-1860* (New York, 1966); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*. For those which identify the 1790s as the fountainhead of social reform, see Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865*. (Cambridge, England, 1981); Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, 1950); Donald Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1969): 23-43; Richard Shiels, "The Scope of the Second Great Awakening: Andover, Massachusetts, as a Case Study," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (Summer 1985): 223-46; and Ronald Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York, 1978). For those who identify the American Revolution as the source of the democratic energy exemplified by

This focus on religion and reform in the 1820s and beyond has led to a second historiographical and interpretive weakness : the deemphasizing of earlier, specifically religious reform movements – like missions – in favor of later, secular reform movements. The earliest successful reform movements in the United States began in the 1780s and 1790s, and were, in fact, distinctly religious in scope. These groups, including missions, tract, and Bible societies, have received scant scholarly attention. On the other hand, “secular” reform societies, which may have had religious motivations and participants, but had goals which were *not* necessarily religious, did not begin *en masse* until later in the republic, the 1820s and following. But these societies – temperance, women’s rights, and abolition, for example – have received far more attention than have their predecessors. When social reforms like these exploded onto the scene in the 1820s and following, they did not have to build from scratch. Rather than being born full-grown out of the revivals of the 1820s, these societies built upon several decades of religious motivation and organization by groups like mission societies.¹¹

voluntary associations, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; and Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty*; and *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992).

¹¹ Curiously, two of the few studies of early tract, Bible, and missions societies have focused on the South, the area of the country where the *minority* of such societies worked. See John Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprize: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Westport, 1982); John Quist, “Slaveholding Operatives of the Benevolent Empire: Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies in Antebellum Tuscaloosa County, Alabama,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 62 (August 1996), 481-526. Historians of Britain have also ignored the role of such religious reform societies in British history. This is the critique that Isabel Rivers makes in her article on the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, “The First Evangelical Tract Society,” *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 1-22. She claims (I think rightly) that historians have ignored tract societies in particular because they were so *non-commercial*, and thus, more difficult to tie to purely economic explanations of history. For works on temperance and temperance societies, see Paul Faler, “Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts, Shoemakers and Industrial Morality, 1826-1860,” *Labor History* 15 (Summer 1974), 367-94; Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium*; Bruce Laurie, “‘Nothing on Compulsion’: Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820-1850,” *Labor History*, 15 (Summer 1974), 337-66; W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, 1981); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*; Carol Sherriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of*

By far, the most dominant theme over the last thirty years regarding study of the era of the Second Great Awakening has been its relationship to the so-called Market Revolution and the social upheaval which it caused. In particular, historians have debated the question of whether religious reforms represented a genuine expression of charity, or a conservative reaction to the changing market by a middle class seeking to reestablish social control. This dissertation argues that as a general rule, proponents of home missions did *not* aim primarily at establishing social control over others, merely for the sake of gaining power or recreating some long-lost society of the past. Missionaries, arguably more than all reformers, often made extreme sacrifices for their cause, leaving homes and families behind for months, years, or even the rest of their lives. I find it simply untenable to support the idea (either intellectually or textually) that they did do so merely to gain a bit of power for themselves. However, I will also not ignore the fact that reformers, like all people, had assumptions about how their world

Progress, 1817-1862 (New York, 1996); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford, 1984). Work on women's rights has focused on issues such as voting, and equality within the workplace. See, for example, Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1700-1835* (New Haven, 1977); Thomas Dublin in *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York, 1979); and "Rural Putting-Out Work in Early Nineteenth-Century New England: Women and the Transition to Capitalism in the Countryside," *The New England Quarterly*, 64 (Dec. 1991), 531-573. The lack of study given to women's roles in early reform movements, such as missions, seems to be an oversight. My cursory research thus far has shown that women were highly involved in missions societies. Although they did not qualify as missionaries most of the time, they attended meetings and contributed significant amounts of money toward missionary societies, sometimes acting as the only things standing in between the missions societies and financial collapse. The literature on abolitionism is vast, but examples which pertain particularly to its rising in the American consciousness during the religious upsurge of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, include Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002); T. Gregory Garvey, *Creating the Culture of Reform in Antebellum America* (Athens, 2006); Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, 1990). Incidentally, Garvey argues that the institutionalization of abolitionism, most successfully achieved by William Lloyd Garrison, would not have succeeded without building upon the earlier rhetoric and work of religious societies, particularly tract societies.

should look – religiously, economically, socially, and politically – and sought to remake the world accordingly. The key interpretive element here is to reject the assumption that a person’s desire to make changes in their world according to their beliefs necessarily implies that they desire to establish control in an authoritarian or nefarious manner.¹²

The Historiography of Home Missions

Although the story of American home missions has yet to make it into critical surveys of the early republic, the subject has not gone completely ignored. In fact, religious denominations and missions societies have produced a mountain of information on missions societies, as have several more narrowly-focused critical monographs. In general, the works produced by religious groups and mission societies themselves have been produced for the faithful, in order to provide them with information on their denominations' past endeavors, lessons learned from those endeavors, and motivation for

¹² The literature addressing this question of social control is vast. For examples of works which support the social-control thesis, see Clifford Griffin, *Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865* (New Brunswick, 1960); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*; Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias*; Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore, 1995); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston, 1971); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution*. The list of historians who reject the social-control thesis in favor of a more religious explanation for the changes is just as voluminous. A few examples include, Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994); Lois Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," *The Journal of American History*, 60 (June 1973), 23-41; John Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues, 1812-1848* (Princeton, 1954); Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District*; Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution"; Leo Hirrel, *Children of Wrath: New School Calvinism and Antebellum Reform* (Lexington, KY, 1998); Bruce Laurie, "Nothing on Compulsion"; Richard Shiels, "The Scope of the Second Great Awakening: Andover, Massachusetts, as a Case Study," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (Summer 1985), 223-46; Richard Shiels, "The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut: Critique of the Traditional Interpretation," *Church History*, 49 (Dec. 1980), 401-15; Michael Young, "Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of U.S. National Social Movements," *American Sociological Survey*, 67 (Oct. 2002), 660-688. Although some historians reject the economic, social-control thesis, they also reject the idea that reformers acted in a primarily religious or benevolent manner. For example, Timothy Lockley argues that the primary subject which drove social reform in the antebellum South was not benevolence or reaction to economic changes, but *race* and *racism*. See his *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South* (Gainesville, 2007).

future prospects. As a result, these works are both invaluable, and uncritical: invaluable in terms of the important chronological, biographical, and organizational information they provide, uncritical in that they do not engage questions of how their respective missions societies fit into the broader story of American history.¹³

Despite the fact that historians have not critically incorporated home missions into the big-picture of the early republic, several scholars have contributed excellent studies of the roles of *particular* denominational or societal efforts of the era. One notable example is James Rohrer's *Keepers of the Covenant*. Rohrer's primary contribution is to explain why Congregationalism declined in the early republic: not because it was out of touch with expanding democratic ideals (as has been commonly argued), but because it remained more committed to its religious and ecclesiastical ideals than to popularity. The story is told primarily through missionary movements in the Congregational church, particularly the Missionary Society of Connecticut, one of the oldest such societies in the nation. Rohrer's examination of this society's interaction with its wider context is excellent, but his focus remains purposefully narrow: one missions society, of one denomination, in one region. My work purposefully builds

¹³ A few examples of these denominational or mission-society-commissioned histories include, *Baptist Home Missions in North America: Including a Full Report of the Addresses of the Jubilee meeting, and a Historical Sketch of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1832-1882* (New York, 1883); Nathan Bangs, *An Authentic History of the Missions under the Care of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1832); Austen De Blois, *John Mason Peck and One Hundred Years of Home Missions, 1817-1917* (New York, 1917); William H. Eaton, *Historical Sketch of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and Convention, 1802-1902* (Boston, 1903); Ashbel Green, *A Historical Sketch or Compendious View of Domestic and Foreign Missions in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1838); William Strickland, *History of the Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church: From the Organization of the Missionary Society to the Present Time* (Cincinnati, 1850); Charles White, *A Century of Faith* (Philadelphia, 1932).

upon works like his by providing an interpretation of the early republic which takes into account many missions societies, of many denominations, in many states.¹⁴

In the last century, only three works have been published which focus on the general home missions movement of the early national period. The first came from Oliver Elsbree in 1928, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815*. Elsbree's work aimed at injecting the study of social and religious history into the broader history of the United States, and doing so as more than a denominational historian. However, rather than providing a critical history of the movement and its relationship to early American history, Elsbree produced a synthesis (an extremely helpful one) of missionary work in the early republic, bringing together as much

¹⁴ Examples of other critical studies of particular denominations or missions societies include Michael Carter, *Converting the Wastelands of Zion: The Maine Missionary Society, 1807-1862* (Wolfeboro, NH, 1990); Derek Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation: Evangelical Missions and the Problem of Race in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2010); John Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprise*; Timothy Lockley, *Welfare and Charity*. Historians have also written about the work of missions societies within the context of studies focused on complementary subjects. Studies of the West, particularly religion in the West, have made mention of missions societies for decades. For example, Walter Posey identifies missions societies as the ultimate representation of resented religious work by the people of the South and West. See Walter Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845* (Lexington, KY, 1957). Amy DeRogatis examines the relationship between morals and landscape in the early republic by looking at the work of the Missionary Society of Connecticut in *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York, 2003). Ray Billington looked at the relationship between the parallel growth patterns of Protestant Home Missions and anti-Catholicism in "Anti-Catholic Propaganda and the Home Missionary Movement, 1800-1860," *The Mississippi valley Historical Review*, 22 (Dec. 1935), 361-84. See also T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago, 1964); William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 4 vols. (Chicago, 1931-1946); and *The Rise of Methodism in the West* (Nashville, 1920). In addition to this, missions societies have often found a place in the biographies of men who played some sort of role in the missionary movements of the period, men like John Mason Peck, Lyman Beecher, Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and Peter Cartwright. In each of these cases, however, the authors either consider missions as only a small part of the story, or do not explore the broader implications of missions in the life of their subject. See Robert Bray, *Peter Cartwright, Legendary Frontier Preacher* (Urbana, 2005); Stuart Henry, *Unvanquished Puritan: a Portrait of Lyman Beecher* (Westport, 1986); Helen Jennings, "John Mason Peck and the Impact of New England on the Old Northwest," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1961); and John McPherson, "John Mason Peck: A Conversionist Methodology for Social Transformation on the American Frontier," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985).

historical and denominational work on the subject as he could. In its description of the ins and outs of home missions societies, the print culture of the societies, and British-American religious relations, Elsbree's work is a success. But as a critical history, distinct from a religious chronicle, it falls short.¹⁵

In 1939, Colin Goodykoontz, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner, produced what is still the most comprehensive work on the early-American home missions movement. While focused almost solely on the American Home Missionary Society, Goodykoontz provides an excellent assessment of the Home Missions Movement, from its European backgrounds, to its early development in the late-18th century, and through the national organization of most denominations and societies in the nineteenth century. He identifies multiple contributions to the missionary spirit of early America, including frontier frenzy, anti-Catholicism, and the desire to mold the West according to Protestant, northeastern standards. This dissertation will agree with much of what Goodykoontz produced, but add significantly more to the picture. For example, while Goodykoontz locates the flowering of missions in the revivals in the early years of the Second Great Awakening, I place it in a centuries-long continuum of Protestant missionary movements. I also reject Goodykoontz's (and many other historians') assessment of mission societies as organizations dominated by New-England culture. Instead, I find that much of the prominent missionary work had its origin not only (or even primarily) in New England, but in cities like New York and Philadelphia in the mid-Atlantic. In addition, this dissertation will examine dozens of missionary societies,

¹⁵ Oliver Wendell Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815* (Williamsport, 1928).

missions societies' role in the church-state relationship, and the integral place missions maintained in the development of sectionalism in the antebellum period, none of which Goodykoontz addresses.¹⁶

In 1976, Charles Chaney published the third and latest book focused on the home missions movement in the early republic. The book aimed primarily at uncovering the “theological matrix from which American missionary organization came, to describe the erection of American missionary structures, and to delineate the missionary theology of the early National Period.” In his thorough consideration of the role of theology and cultural assumptions about “wilderness” in the organization of missions, Chaney provides excellent guidance. Despite providing a detailed introduction to the foundations of missions, Chaney quickly and systematically collapses these foundations and motivations, arguing that by 1815, religious missions had become completely “subservient to the mission of the nation,” little more than denominational building. Although this dissertation will also offer critiques of the home missions movement regarding its blending of religious and national ideals, it will present the story, especially after 1815, in a more complex manner.¹⁷

¹⁶ Colin Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier, with Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society* (Caldwell, 1939). Goodykoontz undertook this study specifically because of his mentor Frederick Jackson Turner's belief that "the religious aspects of the frontier make a chap[t]er in our history that needs study." See J. Orin Oliphant, review of *Home Missions on the American Frontier, With Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society*, by Colin Goodykoontz, *Church History*, 9 (June 1940), 182-184.

¹⁷ Charles Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, 1976), xii, 298, 204, 295

Chapter Outline of Dissertation

Chapter One of this dissertation chronicles the founding years of the American home missions movement, from 1787 to 1815. After winning their independence in 1783, American citizens could no longer depend upon British and other European missionary societies to spread the Gospel in North America. Instead, representatives from every Protestant denomination immediately began organizing their own missionary projects. This chapter surveys the work of many of these denominations, but focuses on Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. It argues that despite interdenominational competition at home and diplomatic tension with Britain, Protestants tended to cooperate both interdenominationally and transatlantically in order to achieve broader, evangelical goals in their missionary projects.¹⁸

Chapter Two picks up on this theme of cooperation in early American missions by examining a third form of it: cooperation between church and state. I argue that we can better understand the relationship between church and state in the early republic (especially in the first three decades after the ratification of the Constitution) by

¹⁸ In this chapter, and throughout the dissertation, I have chosen to focus on three major denominations: Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. The primary reason for this is that these denominations were the first groups to officially organize mission societies as entities distinct from their denominations' every-day call to spread their faith. The most prominent group I have chosen *not* to examine in-depth is the Methodists. I have done this for several reasons. First, although the Methodists were incredibly active and successful in the early republic (arguably the *most* successful group in terms of sheer growth), they were late to organize mission societies as separate entities from their typical denominational efforts. The first such Methodist society was not founded until 1819, more than two decades after the other denominations had begun their work. Still, although the Methodists practiced missions differently, I do not intend to imply that their story was wholly different from the stories of the denominations I am choosing to tell. In fact, they shared similar patterns with these other groups (especially the Baptists): rapid growth, focusing efforts on the West, phenomenal growth in the early republic, and resistance to their efforts on the frontiers, including from people within their own denomination. For three of the most recent, helpful, and excellent studies of early American Methodism, see Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, 2000); and David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, 2005); and John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (New York, 2009).

assuming not only the *separation* between them, but also the system of *cooperation* between them. The first half of the chapter elaborates on this subject by giving attention specifically to the subject of religious establishment in the state and national constitutions and its relation to Thomas Jefferson's famed "wall of separation" between church and state. The second part of the chapter uses the story of two missionaries touring the country in 1812 and 1813 to exemplify the various ways in which this cooperation took place: through direct subsidization, through the practice of government officials, and within a broad culture of cooperation which American citizens and officials alike approved of.

With the lens of cooperation between church and state in place, Chapter Three surveys missions to Indian nations across the same time period. During the early republic, government officials and mission societies worked together on both the state and national levels. They shared financial burdens, pursued complementary goals, and often used one another for their own purposes. By surveying the intersections between church and state in Indian missions, I hope to illuminate how often the two realms cooperated, and how that should affect historians' interpretation of both early American missions, constitutional history, and early American diplomacy.¹⁹

By the early-1830s, a significant transformation had taken place in the home missions movement. The movement had begun as a nationwide group of loosely-

¹⁹ Works on missions to Indians which have been especially influential or helpful in this study include R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians* (Saint Louis, 1966); Robert Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787-1862* (Lexington, KY, 1965); Derek Chang, *Citizens of a Christian Nation*; William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven, 1984); Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca, 2008).

affiliated local mission societies, which focused primarily on people in their nearby regions. By the 1830s, it had become a highly centralized affair, dominated by a handful of national mission societies, which focused on the salvation of the nation as a whole. Chapter Four tells the story of this transformation, and argues that there were two principal, intertwining contributors to it: the growing belief that the people of the Mississippi Valley would determine the religious and political future of the nation, and the general trend in the North and East toward a nation with a more centralized governmental and economic system.

Throughout the early republic, as home mission societies grew in size and scope, and as they progressively centralized their governments and resources, they met various forms of opposition. Surprisingly, the most widespread challenge to their work came from within American Protestantism itself: the antimission movement. The antimission movement was a nationwide, loosely-organized opposition movement which arose in the late-18th century and flourished up through the 1840s. Supporters hailed from many denominations and from a wide geographical base throughout this period, but most came from the Baptist tradition, and the strongest opposition came from the South and West, particularly the Ohio River and Central Mississippi Valleys. Organized into societies and associations throughout the nation, Antimissionists opposed the work of mission societies, not because they opposed the idea of missionary work (which they did not), but because they believed that the missions societies were going about it in all the wrong ways, too closely intertwined with the ways of the state and the ways of the world. Many scholars have given cursory notice to the antimission movement, but in the last

century, only three have examined the movement as a subject worthy of independent study. Each has either identified the movement as primarily an outworking of political ideals, economic frustration, or regional idiosyncrasies. I argue that the antimission movement is better characterized as a social and cultural movement, based upon foundational theological and ecclesiastical beliefs, as well as common political and economic ideals.²⁰

In the conclusion, I argue that deep disagreement over the theological and ecclesiological elements of the home missions movement played a central role in the division of the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations in the 1837 and 1845, respectively. Most scholars have identified the subject of slavery as playing the decisive

²⁰ The three historians who have given significant attention to the Antimission Movement are John Ayabe, "Evangelicals and the Antimission Crisis: A Study of Religious Identity in the Central Mississippi Valley, 1820-1840" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Saint Louis University, 2007); Byron Cecil Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Leaders, 1800-1840* (New York, 1980); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture," *The Journal of Southern History*, 36 (Nov. 1970), 501-529. Ayabe's work is, by far, the best and most historically engaged. However, even his work limits the movement more than my study, focusing solely on the central Mississippi Valley. Lambert identifies the movement almost completely in terms of political and democratic ideals, while Wyatt-Brown sums the movement up as an economic and social reaction. Technically, the first study devoted to the antimission movement came from Baptist pastor, scholar, and mission-society supporter B.H. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism* (Louisville, KY, 1902). I do not include this, however, as an example of a critical or historical study of antimissionism, because it functions more like a diatribe against antimissionism, and an apology or institutional hagiography for American Baptist mission societies. Historians who have mentioned the Antimission Movement in short-article form, or as a small part of a larger work, include John Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South: 1815 to the Present* (Gainesville, 1998), 55-85; Larry Davis, "'A Malignant Warfare': The Anti-Mission Controversy in Missouri, 1818-1840 and Beyond," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 23 (2004), 7-33; Joseph Early, Jr., "Daniel Parker: A Common Man for the Common People," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 23 (2004), 50-64; Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 97, 177-79; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America*, 286-90; Kimberly Kellison, "A Seceding State of Mind: The Antimission Controversy and the Roots of Secession in Upcountry South Carolina," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 23, (2004), 35-48; David Loggins, "The Anti-Mission Controversy in Alabama," *The Alabama Baptist Historian*, 32 (1996), 21-36; Randy Mills, "The Struggle for the Soul of Frontier Baptists: The Anti-Mission Controversy in the Lower Wabash Valley," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 94 (1998), 303-322; T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 88-90, 145-58; Walter Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 68-70; Dan Wimberly, *Frontier Religion: Elder Daniel Parker, His Religious and Political Life* (Austin, 2002).

role in these denominational divisions. While I agree that slavery was the prominent point of contention in each schism, I argue that this dispute occurred within the context of wider debates over theology and ecclesiology, especially as they pertained to the practice of home missions. When all of these subjects converged, neither the denominations – nor the nation twenty years later – would survive intact.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDING OF THE HOME MISSIONS MOVEMENT

From 1787 to 1845, domestic missions flourished in the new republic. Part of the explanation for this lies within the context of the explosive growth of evangelical Protestantism as a whole. Since the early seventeenth century, most North Americans in the colonies which would become the United States claimed loyalty to Protestantism, especially when placed in opposition to the Catholic powers of France and Spain. However, it wasn't until the mid-eighteenth century Great Awakening that evangelicalism exploded onto the scene, boosting church membership across the board and fueling the meteoric rise of the Baptist and Methodist denominations. By 1783 and the end of the American Revolution, these groups had invested their religious and political inheritance in nationwide expansion. This expansion, Protestant groups hoped, would happen in two ways: by increasing numbers in their current congregations, and by spreading their faith and organizations into the frontier settlements of the states and territories.¹

¹ Historians have long-documented the explosive growth of Protestant evangelical denominations in the era of the American Revolution and the early years of the United States. These include Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton, 2000); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Daniel L. Dreisbach, Mark David Hall, and Jeffrey H. Morrison, eds., *The Forgotten Founders on Religion and Public Life* (South Bend, 2009); Oliver Wendell Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit in America, 1790-1815* (Williamsport, 1928); Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989); Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York, 1997); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York, 2010); Monica Najjar, *Evangelizing the South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York, 2008); Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002); Steven

Church growth in established cities along the ocean and waterways of the East would happen by natural increase, and by building upon the land, institutions and resources already in place. But in order to expand their influence to the droves of settlers in the frontier regions, denominations needed to establish new foundations, new systems, and find new leaders. In every denomination, this expansion would happen via home, or domestic, missions.

Beginning on a small, and relatively disorganized scale in the revolutionary era, Protestants began sending missionaries out as itinerant preachers, circuit riders, and even long-term residents among the frontier settlements. By the 1790s and the first decade of the 1800s, each denomination would begin to organize their projects into societies: voluntary groups with constitutions, elected leadership, a system of collecting and dispensing money, and a process for recruiting and communicating with their missionaries. Like the nation as a whole, Protestants had begun in the wake of their political independence to consider what sort of country they wanted to inhabit, and what they needed to do in order to make it so. This chapter argues that the home missions movement was one integral way in which Protestants chose to do this.

Just as people and states with varying political interests had to come together in the early years of the republic in order to build and maintain a nation, so home mission societies had to pursue cooperation with various other sectors of society in order to accomplish their primary goal of building up the kingdom of God. This chapter will chronicle the rise of the home missions movement during the earliest decades of the new

Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York, 2008).

republic, from 1787 to 1815. These years were filled with competition: in the religious world, between denominations competing for new members; in the political and diplomatic world, between the new American nation and its former ruler, Great Britain. And yet, the story of the rise of the home missions movement does not primarily belie a sense of competition, but of cooperation between Protestants for the sake of a common evangelical goal. This interdenominational and transatlantic cooperation should therefore influence how we view both the development of evangelical Protestantism in the United States and the complicated relationship between American and British citizens during the early republic.

Colonial and Revolutionary Missions

When the first mission societies began to form in the 1790s, they built upon the legacy of two centuries of European missionary activity, and local denominational organization in North America. Missions, at their core, involve the purposeful carrying of religious ideas from one place to another, and from one people to another. In this way, some of the earliest 17th-century British colonies, such as Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay, may rightly be called missionary enterprises. John Winthrop and the people of Massachusetts Bay desired in the 1630s to start anew with freedom to worship according to their own consciences, but they also famously desired to be a "city upon a hill." This city would be a light to the people of Europe, and an outpost for carrying the Gospel to their Indian neighbors. Such settlers viewed their religious calling as crucial not just for the kingdom of God, but for the success of their colony. Ashbel Green, a nineteenth-century Presbyterian leader in home missions, summed up

this religion-centric model of European colonization by arguing that it "possessed, essentially, the character of a Missionary enterprise."²

In the century and a half following the establishment of Massachusetts Bay, Protestants' desire to shine as a light to their neighbors through missions continued unabated, especially in the New England region. John Eliot, David Brainerd, and Jonathan and Sarah Edwards represent just a few of the most prominent links in this decades-long chain of missionaries who would spend portions of their lives as missionaries to Indian nations. Their mission projects commonly consisted of one man – or in the Edwardses' case, one family – who with the permission of the Indians, would moved into their region as religious leaders. Missionaries would receive funding and support from European mission societies like the New England Company and the

² The literature on colonial era missions, particularly within the British Empire, is vast. For some of the studies most helpful to this study, see R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians* (Saint Louis, 1966); Charles Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, 1976); Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA, 1956); Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, UK, 2004); Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 2004); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York, 2006); and Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca, 2008). On the local organization of denominational bodies and the beginnings of missionary movements within the American colonies, see Charles Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America*, 101-128. In this study I purposefully do not address Spanish or French colonial missions or mission societies. The reason for this is simple: the American Home missions movement in the early republic was decidedly Protestant, and drew its primary inspiration from its Protestant forbears, including Great Britain, the Netherlands, and to some extent, Germany. Although Catholic countries and mission societies would play a vital role as motivations for Protestant mission societies to do their work during the early republic, they did not provide theological or historical foundations for them. The economic nature of British religious colonies, especially those in New England, has also been well-documented. For two excellent examples, see Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill, 1988); Karen Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1642: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York, 1993). For the quotation from Green, see Ashbel Green, *A Historical Sketch or Compendious View of Domestic and Foreign Missions in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1838), 13.

Society in Scotland for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), as well as from their fellow colonists.³

However, in the wake of the declaration of American independence, the burden fell to the American churches. The business of war took a toll on most religious and benevolent activities, including missions. As early as April of 1775, the same month Americans fought British regulars at the Battle of Bunker Hill, the leaders of Congregational churches in Connecticut met for their annual General Association. They expressed regret over the fact that despite the missionary plan they had approved in 1774, "the perplexed & melancholy State of public Affairs has been a Discouragement to this Design, & a Reason why the Collections have not been brought in, as was expected." Still, even they found resources to support some measure missionary service, sending two pastors to Vermont in 1780 for short-term visits, and supporting individual churches in New England which attempted to do the same until hostilities ended.⁴

Early Missionary Organization and the Climate for the Home Missions Movement, 1783- 1795

After the American Revolution ended in 1783, evangelical Protestantism began to flourish in America like never before. Congregational churches of Connecticut began to see the pressing need for missions not only to Indians, but to their white neighbors in "the settlements now forming in the wilderness to the westward and northwestward."

³ Richard Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians Before King Philip's War* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); John A. Grigg, *The Lives of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon* (New York, 2009); George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, 2003); Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*.

⁴ Oliver Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 56; Colin Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier, with Particular Reference to the American Home Missionary Society* (Caldwell, 1939), 112.

For decades, despite British bans on migration across the Appalachians and war throughout the 1760s and 1770s, white settlers had continued to pour into the frontier. These settlers, many American Christians believed, represented the future trajectory of the country, both geographically and spiritually. They thus considered missions to these settlers of paramount importance. So, when the SSPCK appointed new correspondents in Boston 1787, Boston ministers had a choice to make: continue with the program of the SSPCK which was solely focused on plight of Indians, or start anew "on a more extended plan; with powers to send Missionaries to the new plantations on [their] own borders, as well as to the native Indians." They chose the latter, and in November of 1787, passed an act incorporating the first missionary society created in the United States, the Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and others in North America" (SPGNA). In support of this project, and foreshadowing the enduring climate of church-state cooperation in American missions, the General Court of Massachusetts (the state's legislature) voted to annually provide hundreds of pounds to the mission for over a decade.⁵

Unlike the highly-organized founders of the SPGNA, Most American Protestant denominations would spend the 1780s and 1790s stitching together missionary plans via local churches and associations of churches. Perhaps the greatest struggle would be finding suitable, committed missionaries. A life on the frontier, with no established congregation, was no small commitment for a pastor. A pastor with a settled ministry in

⁵ Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 56; James Hunnewell, *The Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and Others in North America: 1787-1887* (Boston, 1887), 17, quoted in Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 139. I will discuss the subject of church-state cooperation at length in Chapter Two.

town could generally count on a stable home-life and on consistent financial support from his congregation. However, a move to the frontier put these at risk. Frontier regions throughout the states and territories tended to be sparsely populated and less organized than towns. This meant that social life in general would be less stable, as would organized efforts at collecting money or establishing regular church services.

If a man (and it was always a male) understood these difficulties, and still maintained his desire to conduct a mission, he would appeal to his local church, or association of churches in the region. Through discussion with the potential missionary, the elders of the church, or the committees of elders appointed at regional associations, would determine the details of the mission: the people, geographic location, time frame, and monetary compensation, if any. Once agreed upon, the leaders would provide the missionary with a commission: an official call and plan of action for him.⁶

Reverend Mr. Eells, a pastor in Connecticut received a typical missionary commission with his appointment by the General Association of Connecticut in 1793. The leaders of the association recorded that Eells would be "appointed to go two months,...on Mohawk river and to proceed westward as far as Fort Stanwix, visiting all settlements north and south of said river, to such a distance as he shall judge proper, and can be accomplished with convenience during the term allotted him." Missionaries like Eells would end up with a short time-frame for doing their work, with low-pay, and little

⁶ For a general description of this process, especially among Congregationalists, see Colin Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier*, 111-14.

specific direction given to them – far from the standard of living enjoyed by most Christian ministers.⁷

While these sorts of missions did not have the design or stability which an established society might be able to provide, they still provided a basic way for individuals, congregations, and associations to cooperate with one another in the years following the Revolution. Even denominations like the Congregationalists, which generally governed themselves without input from other churches (hence the name, "congregational"), saw the benefit of cooperating with sister churches in ecclesiastical and missionary endeavors. In the late-18th century, Congregational Churches in the New Haven region came together in this way to form the New Haven West Association. In 1787, they pooled money together and cooperatively sent a pastor to frontier Vermont for a few weeks to preach to the scattered population, which had no established Congregational church. In 1788, the General Association of Connecticut followed New Haven's lead and appointed a missionary committee of four, including Jonathan Edwards, Jr., the son of pastor and home missionary Jonathan Edwards. The Association charged the committee with designing a plan for sending missionaries to the frontier, with the goal of organizing permanent congregations. In Massachusetts,

⁷ For Reverend Eels's experience, see "Minutes of the Doings of the Committee of the General Association of the State of Connecticut, relative to the Missionaries to be sent into the New Settlements: begun June 20th, 1793", from Goodykoontz, *Home Missions*, 113. This sort of ill-defined and minimally-paid "tour" was common among early missionaries. Generally, missionaries would be appointed by their sending society to a general area, and promised a salary based on the number of weeks they served. These missionaries would then embark on their journeys, informing the mission societies after the fact of the details of their mission (including miles traveled, towns visited, numbers baptized, revivals observed, etc.) This can be observed in the minutes of virtually every early mission society, and especially in the annual "Narratives" and "Reports" which the societies published for the general public.

Congregationalists of the Essex North Association came together in 1791 and 1792 for a similar purpose, sending missionaries into nearby New Hampshire.⁸

Like Congregationalists, Baptists believed that each congregation had the right to rule itself, and yet organized associations with one another for the purpose of cooperative missions. The Warren Association of Massachusetts had begun sending out missionaries to the Connecticut River Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire in 1779. Baptist missions boomed in these northern frontier regions, so much so that in 1790, when the SPGNA sent missionaries to native peoples in Maine, it found that although Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists had a limited presence, religious teachers of the "Baptist persuasion" were everywhere. Baptists in the mid-Atlantic joined together for missions as well, especially those in the Philadelphia area. In October 1787, three months after the national Constitutional Convention, the Philadelphia Association of Baptists convened to discuss plans for evangelization. With reports from all over the country about locally-organized missions, coupled with the creation of the new federal constitution, they rejoiced in hope: these events were "portentous...of the speedy accomplishment of the promises made by the Father to Christ, King of Zion." Led by pastors like Richard Furman, Baptists also experienced early missionary success in the South, primarily through promoting the work of itinerant preachers throughout the region.⁹

⁸ Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 140-41. For Congregational missions in the 1790s, see Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York, 2003); James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant: Frontier Missions and the Decline of Congregationalism, 1774-1818* (New York, 1995).

⁹ For observations of the SPGNA in Maine, see letter from Daniel Litle to Peter Thacher, from Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 142-144. Information on the Philadelphia Association comes from A.D.

Presbyterians organized missions on local levels in much the same way as Congregationalists and Baptists. In the late-1770s, without formal societies, Presbyterians participated in missions through their regional presbyteries and synods. For example, in 1779, at a meeting for the Synod of Virginia, Rev. Samuel Smith called for Presbyterians to "turn their attention" to missions." Synods and presbyteries, he argued, should be actively sending out missionaries in order to ultimately plant new churches in the wilderness, thereby extending the ministry of Presbyterianism to regions where it did not yet have any influence. Presbyterians in every state heeded this call, establishing new churches and presbyteries in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky, (to name a few) in the 1780s.¹⁰

While most of these missionary projects in the 1780s and early-1790s had strong moral support and a basic level of organization, comprehensive mission plans were simply not taking root. This was the case for each Protestant denomination during these early years, including the groups already discussed, as well as Methodists, Dutch Reformed, and Episcopalians. Without steady streams of income above their budgets, individual churches could not support missions on their own. Even with money,

Gillette, ed., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: From 1707-1807* (Philadelphia, 1851), 230-231. On the growth of the Baptist denomination in the South during the mid- and late-18th century, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, 2007); Monica Najar, *Evangelizing the South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York, 2008); Walter Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845* (Lexington, KY, 1957); James Rogers, *Richard Furman: Life and Legacy* (Macon, 1985).

¹⁰ Presbyterian government included various levels of authority, from the local church, up to presbytery, synod, and General Assembly. The presbytery consisted of the elders of the various churches in a small region, who came together to oversee those churches. Synods functioned in much the same way, but oversaw the affairs of various *presbyteries* in an even larger region. The General Assembly was the national body, which oversaw the affairs of all Presbyterians. This system could be fairly compared to secular government today, working up from city, to county, to state, and to nation. For Samuel Smith's quotation, see Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 144-45.

associations and presbyteries could not establish regular missions without an adequate pool of educated pastors who volunteered. Finally, even with money and men, planting permanent missions and churches required organization and long-term commitments, something that loosely organized groups of churches could not accomplish well.

The Climate for Home Missions in the 1790s

It was in this climate of desire for a more organized system of missions in the 1790s that the home missions movement was born. The religious climate in particular was ripe for its rise. Eighteenth-century America had played host to a continuous cycle of widespread revivals and the steady growth of Christian denominations, especially those influenced by evangelicalism. Oftentimes, historians relegate the revivals and denominational growth of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America to studies of particular preachers, or to periods of intense revival concentration. Because of this, the story of early American religion and revival is often dotted by great preachers like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, Samuel Hopkins, and Charles Finney, and by a few major revivals centered around the 1740s Massachusetts Congregationalists, 1770s Virginia Baptists, 1800s Kentucky camp meetings, and the 1830s Burned-Over District of upstate New York. This has led historians to proclaim two separate revival periods: the eighteenth-century First Great Awakening, and the early-nineteenth century Second Great Awakening.

Such periodization may help categorize broad periods of particularly intense revivalism, but it also makes the consistent growth of the missionary spirit during the period appear like an anomaly. In fact, like the steady growth of mission societies from

the 1790s on, religious revivals were *consistently* present in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States. In their early annual addresses and reports, mission-society leaders and missionaries made this clear, often placing their desire to begin the mission-society movement within the context of revivals in their midst. The 1790s, rather than existing as a religiously-dead period between the so-called First and Second Great Awakenings, were *full* of religious growth and revivals. From New England to Kentucky, citizens attested to the surprising works of God occurring, and responded by participating in that work through opportunities like missions.¹¹

The ecclesiastical and political climates were ripe for the flowering of the missions movement as well. By the 1790s, newer Protestant evangelical denominations, like Baptists and Methodists, had grown extensively throughout the country, and had begun to challenge the dominance of older denominations like Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians. While most of these Protestants viewed representatives of other denominations as Christian coworkers, they also viewed each other as competitors for conversions and members. Each with their own theology and ecclesiology, Protestant denominations were not comfortable ceding religious territory to

¹¹ While I do not embrace the idea of the First or Second Great Awakenings as clearly-defined historical events, I do recognize their usefulness as historical trends, not bounded by a few regions, preachers, or decades, but as broad periods characterized by common characteristics: the advent of worldwide evangelicalism during the First Great Awakening, and the democratization and mass-spread of American Protestantism in the Second Great Awakening. For the best tellings of the long First Great Awakening, see Thomas Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven, 2007); and Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*. For important works emphasizing the 19th-century creation of the idea of the First Great Awakening, see Jon Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction" *The Journal of American History*, 69 (Sept. 1982), 305-25; and Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton, 1999). For the best long views of the Second Great Awakening, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Mary Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class*; and Donald Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly*, 21 (Spring 1969), 23-43.

just anyone, in the name of cooperation. Instead, each denomination desired to expand its own conceptions of the truth, and its own influence. This created a strong climate of sectarian competition for winning souls and establishing churches, a healthy climate for the founding of mission societies dedicated to those very purposes. Buttressing this competition was a general growth in support of benevolence in general in late-18th century America. Led by Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Hopkins, and many of the heirs of Jonathan Edwards's theology and missionary work, Protestants spent much of the 1790s extolling missions and preaching the necessary connection between good theology and good deeds.¹²

These budding denominations also drew on the fuel provided by the friendly political climate of the United States, especially the guarantee of religious freedom in the Bill of Rights. Whereas almost every colony had once maintained religious establishments, and *every* colony had existed within a British system of national religious establishment, the new Constitution made religious freedom and disestablishment the new norms. As a result, even while several states maintained established churches during the 1790s (and for decades after), the general American climate for religion had shifted. Dissenting evangelical denominations, even in states with established churches, could now effectively compete within a freer religious marketplace

¹² On the legacy of Jonathan Edwards in American theology and reform, especially in the Northeast, see Joseph Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Eugene, 2008); Douglas Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 2003); and Mark Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York, 1994).

The most important element contributing to the rise of the missions movement in American society in 1790s was westward expansion. With the American Revolution won, and barriers like Britain's 1763 Proclamation behind them, Americans stormed the frontiers. Unlike the cross-country treks which would come in the 1830s and 1840s, the westward migrations of Americans in the 1790s came in smaller steps. With the majority of the population still clustered along the waterways of the eastern seaboard, "frontier" land included everything toward the west, including the western portions of most coastal states, lands immediately bordering states, and newly-organized areas like the Northwest Territory. So, for example, many Virginians moved to Kentucky, Pennsylvanians moved to Ohio, New Yorkers moved to western New York, and so on. Such mass migration awakened desires among easterners to see these frontier communities settled in a Christian manner, just as they believed their own communities had been settled two hundred years previously. Mission societies would fill this gap, allowing eastern Christians to connect to friends, relatives, and fellow citizens who had left home, and providing a practical method of Christianizing the ever-expanding United States populations.¹³

The Founding of the Home Missions Movement

On September 21, 1796, a group of ministers and laymen in New York City came together to form the first uniquely-American home mission society: the New York Missionary Society (NYMS). Although chiefly from Presbyterian backgrounds, these

¹³ The best works on the connection between missions and western settlement include DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*; S. Scott Rohrer, *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630-1865* (Chapel Hill, 2010); James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant*; Goodykoontz, *American Home Missions*; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*.

men came from a variety of Protestant churches in the city, including Associate Reformed, Reformed Dutch, and Baptist. This interdenominational cooperation was reflected in the leadership of the society: a Presbyterian president, a Reformed Dutch vice president, and Associate Reformed secretary, and a Baptist director.¹⁴

The NYMS Constitution reflected this cooperation as well, specifically insisting that members might "be admitted from all religious denominations indiscriminately," provided that they could agree on its basic theological principles. The directors explained that the Constitution explicitly contained "a summary of the doctrines of the reformation, usually called the doctrines of grace." In other words, this was a Calvinist (or Reformed) document, for a Calvinist society. Their "doctrines of grace" included the belief in the total depravity of humans, God's unconditional election of his people (commonly referred to as predestination), the full atonement of all God's people, the irresistible nature of God's work, and the perseverance of all God's chosen people. At the same time, the constitution did *not* specify any requirements regarding baptism,

¹⁴ The first mission society of any kind founded in the United States was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Indians and others in North American (SPGNA), in 1787. However, I do not place this group first in my story for two reasons: First, it existed long before 1787 as a Boston-Branch of the Society IN SCOTLAND for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and merely established itself in 1787 as its own governing body. Second, as alluded to by its name, this society worked primarily among local Indian groups, paying little attention to "others." It is the movement to send missions to these "others" – all the peoples of American society, including Indians – with whom I am concerned. For information on the society and its officers, see *The Address and Constitution of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1796); Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D.LL.D.: Second Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, at Princeton, New Jersey, volume I* (Philadelphia, 1869), 105-106; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 51.

sacraments, or church government, subjects which would have divided Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and Baptists, who otherwise agreed on most theological points.¹⁵

It wasn't as if no tension existed between the various protestant denominations of New York. The doctrines of grace, which dominated the language of the constitution of the NYMS, effectively excluded non-Calvinist denominations, including the burgeoning Methodist movement. The leaders of the NYMS acknowledged these divisions in their instructions to missionaries in 1799. In their annual report, the Directors instructed all missionaries, to be "careful not to speak of the divisions which so shamefully prevail in the Christian world." The divisions existed, even amidst cooperation. The goal was for like-minded Christians would put aside their gossip and back-biting for the greater pursuit of Christian missions. This attitude was in keeping with the general political climate of the 1790s, which despite its share of political vitriol, viewed "party interest" as damaging to the republic, and something to be avoided.¹⁶

In 1797, a group of clergy and laity from various Protestant denominations met in Albany, New York, to form a second, complementary mission society – the Northern Missionary Society of New-York (NMS). In their first annual report, the directors of the New York Missionary Society reported the formation of the NMS, pleased that they were "founded on the same doctrines, devoted to the same objects, and desirous of co-operating in the same plan" as they were. The directors of the NMS had not only

¹⁵ *The Address and Constitution of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1796), 13-14; *Thoughts on the Plan for Social Prayer, Proposed by the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1797), 6-7.

¹⁶ "Instructions from the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society to their Missionaries among the Indians," printed in *Two Sermons, Delivered before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1799), 85-97.

proposed cooperation, but had also submitted "articles of union" to the NYMS, in hopes that the two groups would refrain from competition. In his sermon at the first annual meeting of the Northern Missionary Society in 1798, Alexander Proudfit proclaimed the demise of "party" spirit among Christians in the missionary business. Such a spirit was "unsocial" and "unchristian," and had no place in the home missions movement.¹⁷

Within a couple years, the directors of these interdenominational societies had begun to make important progress. The NYMS held its first general meeting in November 1796, at which prominent New York minister Alexander McWhorter preached a missions-focused sermon. They then organized a plan for "social prayer," a program which would help surrounding churches to join in the missionary effort by calling them to prayer, and providing a calendared reminder of missionary news. Within the year, they had raised nearly \$1700 from individual and congregational donations.¹⁸

During its first three years, the directors of the NYMS reported three significant instances of missionary activity. First, in 1798, they sent \$100 to assist John Sergeant, a missionary among the Stockbridge Indians, the same group to whom Jonathan Edwards had been a missionary in the 1750s. Secondly, they granted sixty dollars to "Paul an Indian preacher" who preached among the "remains of the Shinnecock, Montack, and Poospettuck tribes in Suffolk county, Long Island." Paul's mission would have moderate

¹⁷ *The Constitution of the Northern Missionary Society in the State of New-York* (Schenectady, 1797); "Appendix: Report of the Directors of the Missionary Society," printed in *Hope for the Heathen: A Sermon, preached in the Old Presbyterian Church, before the New-York Missionary Society, at their Annual Meeting, November 7, 1797* (New York, 1797), 45-47; Alexander Proudfit, *A Sermon Preached before the Northern Missionary Society in the State of New-York, at their First Annual Meeting, in Troy, February 8* (Albany, 1798), 28-29.

¹⁸ *The Address and Constitution of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1796); Alexander McWhorter, *Blessedness of the Liberal: A Sermon Preached...Before the New-York Missionary Society, at their first Institution, November 1, 1796* (New York, 1796); *Thoughts on the Plan for Social Prayer* (New York, 1797).

success, and continue with support from the NYMS for several more years. Finally, in December 1798, they appointed Reverend Joseph Bullen of Vermont as a missionary to the Chickasaw Indians along the western borders of Georgia.¹⁹

The New York Missionary Society would find much greater success when it broadened its interdenominational practices even further. In 1800, the NYMS joined forces with the New York Baptist Association (NYBA) to support Reverend Elkanah Holmes as a missionary to the Six Nations in upstate New York. Holmes's mission had begun four years earlier in 1796 when the NYBA called him from his pastorate on Staten Island to consider the Six Nations mission. They assured Holmes that the Association would support him financially if he would agree to undertake multiple six-month preaching tours through Iroquois country over the course of the next three years.²⁰

In 1799, after those three years expired, the NYBA wanted to restructure the agreement on broader, interdenominational terms. Short on money, and with several of Holmes' home-church members upset about him being absent for six months at a time, the New York Baptist Association reached out to the New York Missionary Society for assistance. Appealing to the interdenominational sensibilities of the NYMS (which included Baptist members and leadership), the Association explained their reasoning for soliciting the NYMS: "Being confident that your views in the Missionary business are

¹⁹ "Report of the Directors," printed in *Two Sermons Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society: The First on April 23d...The Second on April 24th* (New York, 1799), 98-99; Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America*, 159. On the legacy of Jonathan Edwards's mission to the Stockbridge Indians, see Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca, 2008). I will discuss Joseph Bullen, his mission to the Chickasaw, and its implications for our understanding of church-state relations in the early republic in Chapter Three.

²⁰ A summary of Holmes's story can be found in Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 52; Chaney, *The Birth of Home Missions*, 159.

not confined to any particular denomination of christians, we are induced and encouraged to solicit your pecuniary aid. " The Iroquois wanted Holmes to stay among them, and the association wanted the same. However, without enough resources on its own, the NYBA hoped the NYMS would help them remove "every log, and brier, and stone" from Holmes's path.²¹

The NYMS agreed to cooperate with the NYBA, and in 1800, helped send Holmes to preach primarily among the Seneca and Tuscarora peoples. Holmes would experience great success among both peoples for the next two years, gaining many friends and confidants even as some chiefs and prophets came against him. In his sermon preached at the annual meeting of the NYMS in 1802, Reverend Samuel Miller specifically pointed out Elkanah Holmes, who was sitting in the audience with John Wautung'naut, a young Mahican from New Stockbridge:

"Our Missionary, who went, soon after the last annual meeting, on a second mission to the northwestern Indians, has just returned, and is now in this assembly ---- Servant of the living God! we hail thy return! may a rich blessing crown thy labours! and may the Head of the Church give to thee, and to us, the pleasure of seeing his work prosper abundantly in thine hands!"²²

Unfortunately for Holmes, the New York Baptist Association announced later in 1802 that they would have to suspend their support. Baptists jealously guarded the two primary marks which distinguished them from Presbyterians: the belief in credo-baptism (the baptism of *professing* Christians only), and the belief in congregational authority. Many members and leaders of the churches involved in the NYBA had grown concerned

²¹ "The Field for Missionary Labors is Enlarging Before Us," printed in *The New-York Missionary Magazine*, 1 (Jan. 4, 1800), 292-93.

²² Samuel Miller, *A Sermon Delivered before the New York Missionary Society, at their Annual Meeting, April 6th, 1802* (New York, 1802), 55.

that too much sustained cooperation with Presbyterians and Congregationalists might weaken their own people's commitment to covenant-baptism (the baptism of professing Christians *and* their households). Because the NYBA only had as much authority as its member churches allowed, its leaders had no choice but to end their cooperation with the NYMS when the people of the churches called for it. This schism between credo-baptists and covenant-baptists spread over the next few years, culminating in the complete withdrawal of Baptists from the New York Missionary Society in 1808. Still, this did not deter the work of the NYMS, which continued the mission among the Seneca and Tuscarora until 1821, when it was turned over to the United Foreign Missionary Society.²³

Even as the New York Missionary Society was losing one opportunity for missionary cooperation, it was adding far more. At the annual meeting of 1802, the directors were pleased to announce that they had begun regular correspondence with the Missionary Society of Connecticut, the Hampshire Missionary Society, the Missionary Society of New Jersey, and the Missionary Society of the United Brethren (Moravians). In addition, they reported the presence at their annual meeting of the presidents of seven other missionary societies: the Northern Missionary Society, the Missionary Society of Connecticut, the Massachusetts Missionary Society, the Hampshire Missionary Society,

²³ The term "credo-baptist" refers to those Christians who believed baptism should only be applied to those who had professed a belief (or creed) in Jesus for their salvation, and should occur by bodily immersion into water. Baptists were the only major group who advocated this belief in the early republic. "Covenant-baptists," also known as "paedobaptists" believed that baptism should be applied to all those who professed a belief in Jesus for their salvation, *and* to their entire households (including their children, which in the Greek was "paedo"). This was a sign of God's covenant with believers and their families. The medium of baptism could vary, including sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. This belief was held by virtually every other Protestant denomination in the world, including Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, and Episcopalians. For the transfer of the mission to the United Foreign Missionary Society, see Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 159.

and the Missionary Society of New Jersey, as well as transatlantic partners from the London Missionary Society and the Netherlands Missionary Society. Cooperation was alive and well.²⁴

Following close on the heels of the NYMS came one of the most productive, lucrative, and cooperation-conscious of the regional home mission societies: the Missionary Society of Connecticut. In 1797, the year after the formation of the NYMS, and in the same year as the Northern Missionary Society, the Fairfield West Association of Connecticut proposed the formation of a mission society. The General Association, the statewide representative body of the Connecticut Congregational Church, approved the idea. They formed a Committee of Correspondence responsible for receiving, processing, and reporting written correspondence between themselves and the various associations. They also appointed a committee to draft an address to these associations, which would exhort them to join in the missionary effort. Their strategy for soliciting support revolved around promoting two key ideas: the dire straits of their "brethren in the northern and western settlements," and the need to unite with their "dearly beloved brethren in Europe and America" in the missionary movement already taking place.²⁵

The next summer, in June 1798, the General Association voted to form the Missionary Society of Connecticut (MSCT). In order to keep watch over the society, the General Association itself would *be* the missionary society, rather than establishing a separate body which functioned on its own (as was the case with the New York

²⁴ "Annual Report of the Directors," printed in Samuel Miller, *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1802), 70-74.

²⁵ *An Address of the General Association of Connecticut, To the District Associations on the Subject of a Missionary Society* (Norwich, CT, 1797), 5-6; Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 160-61.

Missionary Society). All of the appointed directors of the society were delegates from the Congregationalist General Association, with one exception: Samuel Miller, the New York Presbyterian minister who was already heavily involved in the New York Missionary Society, and a close associate of several leaders in the Connecticut General Association. The General Association also elected twelve trustees, who would be responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the MSCT. The trustees, evenly represented by six clergy and six laymen, would make missionary appointments, oversee funds, and conduct all necessary business in the months between the annual meetings of the General Association.²⁶

The Missionary Society of Connecticut, possibly more than any other missionary society, arose in direct relation to westward migration. In the 1790s, thousands of settlers were leaving Connecticut and migrating to nearby frontiers in New York, Pennsylvania, and especially to the Western Reserve. The Western Reserve, also known to many at the time as "New Connecticut," was a strip of territory west of the Pennsylvania border, which had been claimed by Connecticut since the seventeenth century. The state of Connecticut retained rights to this land, even after it ceded much of its territorial claims to the general government after the American Revolution. In 1796, the state sold its title to this land to the Connecticut Land Company, a group of investors which divided and sold the land to settlers, many of whom came from Connecticut.²⁷

²⁶ Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 161; Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier*, 130ff; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 56-57.

²⁷ In 1800, the state of Connecticut finally ceded its sovereignty over the Western Reserve, allowing it to be absorbed by the general government as part of the Northwest Territory. For details on the history of the Western Reserve, otherwise known as "New Connecticut," see Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*; James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant*.

In the late-1790s, settlers were expanding into frontiers like the Western Reserve at a far quicker pace than the Congregational Church was growing. For Congregationalists in the East, this was a troubling truth. In a 1799 letter to the Trustees of the MSCT, some Christians in New York's Ontario County expressed their concern:

From the rapid settlement of this country, a rapidity we believe scarcely equalled by your conceptions, there are many towns and places among us entirely destitute of the preaching of the gospel or but very partially supplied; a consideration of this may suggest many sorrows to your pious hearts. *The harvest is great, but the laborers are few: Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into the harvest.*²⁸

The Missionary Society of Connecticut was not alone in its belief that the frontier needed some sort of organizing social principles to keep it from spiraling out of control. The Connecticut Land Company, the company responsible for surveying, organizing, and selling western lands for the state of Connecticut, feared that the disorder of frontier society would lead to social chaos and immorality. The MSCT could thus play an integral role in western development by sending missionaries and establishing churches, thereby "promoting social stability and moral order" in what appeared to them as a religious wasteland.²⁹

If this religious or familial appeal was not enough, then missionary leaders called on the people of Connecticut as *debtors*: they *owed* the western settlers. For those in the

²⁸ "Extract of a Letter from Sundry Inhabitants of Middletown, Ontario County, dated Nov. 5, 1799," printed as part of the "Appendix" in *The Constitution of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1800), 25-26.

²⁹ Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*, 50 (especially Chapters 1 and 3). DeRogatis does well to see the goals of the MSCT as broader than merely theological. They hoped that their religious principles would permeate all of society. However, she argues that this view was significantly prejudiced, and more representative of the *beliefs* of eastern Congregationalists, rather than *reality* on the frontier. My primary critique with this argument is that the frontiers were, in fact, rather disorganized. One need not make a moral judgment to observe that without stable institutions like local courts or churches, frontier regions tended to be lacking in social organization.

settled eastern regions of the state, the trustees argued, financially supporting missionaries to western Connecticut and the Western Reserve was "in a sense but paying debt they owe to those settlers." The Trustees asked, "Are not our children schooled in part at least by the avails of the purchase money which has been paid for that land?" If city-dwelling Christians did not understand or agree with the *religious* reasons for contributing to the missionary program, the Trustees hoped that a consideration of their children's education might do the trick.³⁰

After spending the 1790s sporadically sending out pastors for weeks at a time, the Congregationalists of the Missionary Society of Connecticut sent out Seth Williston as their first missionary to *live* on the frontier in 1799. Williston's plan would be to establish a settled church in western Connecticut, and then give part of his time to itinerate in the surrounding areas. Along with Williston, by 1800, the Missionary Society of Connecticut was sending out almost a dozen missionaries every year throughout the Western Reserve, Pennsylvania, and the wider western frontier, each for at least four months at a time. Among them: Salmon Giddings, who had crossed the Mississippi River in 1800, becoming the first Protestant missionary to St. Louis; and David Bacon, who had attempted missionary tours to the Indians of the Detroit and Lake Erie regions.³¹

In 1801, the MSCT would experience its greatest success yet when it appointed Joseph Badger as a missionary. A veteran of the Revolutionary War and a graduate of

³⁰ "A Narrative, &c," printed in *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions, and a Statement of the Funds of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1802), 13.

³¹ *The Constitution of the Missionary Society of Connecticut...with an Address...and a Narrative on the Subject of Missions* (Hartford, 1800), 8; Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 161-62; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 57-58.

Yale College, Badger desired more than anything else to spread the gospel to the people of the Connecticut frontier. After approval by the Trustees and Directors of the MSCT, Badger left home and family in January 1801 to plant the first church in the Western Reserve at Austinburg. One year later, after establishing the church, Badger returned home to prepare his family for a permanent move. After deliberating with the MSCT about his future plans, Badger agreed to return to the same field of labor with his family, for the compensation of seven dollars per week. He made arrangements to exchange family-owned land in for new land in the Western Reserve. In February 1802, Badger, his wife, and his six children, left most of their belongings behind and made the 600-mile trek back to Austinburg, arriving in June of 1802.³²

In addition to trying to establish a church near Austinburg, Badger travelled incessantly throughout the surrounding area. In June 1803, after spending several weeks at home with his family, he embarked on one of his usual preaching tours. On June 10 and 11, he met with Christians in the Western Reserve towns of Hartford and Vienna to encourage them to form regular churches, preaching to groups of about twenty people. As he met with people, he would have shared with them a document written by the Trustees entitled "An Address to the Inhabitants." Missionaries like Badger were instructed by the MSCT to read this letter to Christians along their routes. It expressed the mission society's appreciation for the people of "the New-Settlements," and

³² Joseph Badger, *A Memoir of Rev. Joseph Badger: Containing an Autobiography, and Selections from His Private Journal and Correspondence* (Hudson, OH, 1851), 36ff; Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier*, 131.

encouraged them to "get wisdom" by "constantly keeping up the public worship" among themselves, especially when provided by the missionary sent to them.³³

After preaching in homes and small venues for weeks, Badger found that many settlers desired more consistent Sabbath and revival meetings, but had few established pastors or churches to lead them. In mid-June, Badger spoke with brother Weeks, a Christian settler in Coitsville, about organizing a major revival meeting of his own. The following week, just on the heels of preaching to groups of twenty, he led a revival meeting in Salem, Pennsylvania, attended by five hundred people. It was such a "time of extraordinary prayer and singing" that the meeting lasted from Saturday afternoon until at least midnight, continuing through the evening by candlelight. After a short night of sleep, Badger stayed through the next day as other preachers continued to preach sermons, and lead in prayer and singing.³⁴

Like other revivals reported throughout the West, including famously at Cane Ridge in 1801, Badger reported numbers of people having all sorts of bodily experiences in reaction to the revival. Many people fell, and "could give no reason why they fell, only that their strength instantly failed them." The next week, during a another revival meeting in western Pennsylvania, Badger reported even more extreme physical manifestations of the Spirit. Preaching from a stand raised four feet above the crowd of three thousand people (the largest he had ever seen assembled), Badger witnessed remarkable responses:

³³ *An Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, to the Inhabitants of the New-Settlement* (Hartford, 1801), 3-5.

³⁴ Badger, *A Memoir*, 47-48

There were many who cried out, and fell into a perfectly helpless situation. There remained a slight respiration, the only symptom of remaining life. In this situation many lay from two to six hours, without strength to move or speak; others were taken with trembling and loss of strength, and yet could talk freely. I could not learn from any with whom I conversed that their views of sin and of their danger and criminality, were anywise different from what was common in revivals in New England, with which I had been conversant. But the effects on the system, so different and alarming, were totally inexplicable by any.³⁵

Amidst all the physical manifestations of the Spirit's work, Badger remained consistently preoccupied with the *internal* manifestation of this work: orthodox theology. As a Congregationalists minister and missionary, his responsibilities were always twofold: encouraging Spirit-filled conversions *and* teaching Congregationalist standards. So, while Badger encouraged the enthusiastic involvement of western laymen in the formation of western churches, he did so with strict attention to their theological and ecclesiastical standards, and to the standards of their eastern sending societies.

Among his Presbyterian and Congregational counterparts, Badger's dual commitment to evangelism and theology, to new western converts and old eastern standards, was par for the course. As James Rohrer argues in *Keepers of the Covenant*, Congregational missionaries (and many like them) considered orthodox, Calvinistic theology of the utmost importance in their missions. Their refusal to sacrifice their theological and ecclesiastical standards for conversion numbers, he argues, is in fact what prevented them from expanding at a rate comparable to groups like Methodists and Baptists (who *tended* to exercise less theological oversight over their missionaries).

³⁵ Badger, *Memoir*, 49-50. For some of the best histories of the Cane Ridge revivals, see John Boles, *The Great Revival, 1787-1805: The Origins of the Southern Evangelical Mind* (Lexington, KY, 1972); Paul Conkin, *Cane Ridge: America's Pentecost* (Madison, 1990); and Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989).

When faced with the choice between church growth and church purity, Congregationalist missionaries chose purity. The Board of Trustees of the MSCT made their theological commitments clear in their 1800-examination of missionary candidate of Jedidiah Bushnell:

[Bushnell] appeared before the Board, in compliance with a vote passed at the last session, with a view of receiving ordination. Having examined him with respect to his acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, his belief in those doctrines, his ability to teach them to others, his experimental acquaintance with the truth, and his views in entering on the work of the ministry, and gaining full satisfaction on these points, the Trustees voted to separate him to that work, and he was accordingly ordained at the North Presbyterian Meeting-House in Hartford, January 15th, 1800.³⁶

Missionary candidates like Bushnell had to adhere to the strictest Calvinist theology and ecclesiology if they wanted to represent the MSCT. Contrary to many of their critics' opinions, commitment to Calvinistic doctrines like predestination did not stunt the growth of missions. In fact, Calvinistic doctrines were central to the constitutions of almost every home missionary society formed in the first few decades of the republic, including that of the MSCT.³⁷

And these doctrines certainly didn't limit the MSCT financially. From their earliest days, the MSCT was extremely well-funded. In 1801, only two years after forming, the treasurer reported over \$3,000 in their account, by 1803, \$10,000; by 1809,

³⁶ James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant*, 146-51; *The Constitution of the Missionary Society of Connecticut: With an Address From the Board of Trustees, to the People of the State* (Hartford, 1800), 9.

³⁷ Excluding the Methodist church and the scattered Episcopal efforts at missions, every home mission society I have examined in the first three decades of the republic explicitly stated or implicitly implied the centrality of Calvinistic doctrine in their missionary efforts. This includes Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, Associate Reformed, and Baptists. This evidence of the persistent presence of Calvinistic theology in the early republic goes against much of the literature on religion in the early republic which argues that Calvinism was in decline and Arminianism on the rise. Although it is true that Arminian Methodists and Arminian Baptists, were experiencing high rates of growth, this does not negate the fact that traditional Protestant Calvinism was growing as well. James Rohrer argues this specifically for Connecticut Congregationalists in *Keepers of the Covenant*, 144.

\$29,000. Beginning in 1800, this flood of donations was augmented by proceeds from the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*. The MSCT produced this magazine in order to provide religious news to subscribers and to promote the missionary cause at home and abroad. In its first year, the magazine netted over \$1700 of profit, \$1,000 of which was given to the Directors of the MSCT, the rest invested back into the publication.³⁸

The MSCT had generous donors and a profitable publishing plan, but it also had a very conservative business model. So conservative, that by 1802 (only four years after its formation), people were already asking questions about why the society kept so much money on hand (about \$4,000 at that point). In their annual narrative of the labors of the organization, they responded:

³⁸ *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 1 (June 1801), 478-82; *A Second Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1801), 15-20. For 1803, see *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 3 (Mar. 1803), 327-332. For 1809, see *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions for the Year 1808; and a Statement of the Funds of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1809, 13-18); For profit in the first year of the magazine, see *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 2 (August 1801), 78-80. Religious publications like the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* had become wildly popular in the late-eighteenth century Atlantic World, with the British press leading the way. As the NYMS looked to the London Missionary Society for its plan of organization, the owners of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* looked to Europe for inspiration in the world of religious print. In their first issue in July 1800, the proprietors explained their motivations for publication by noting that "the usefulness of periodical religious publications hath been long experienced in the Christian countries of Europe." Inspired by, but not to be outdone Europeans, the proprietors also pointed out that there seemed to be "in the public mind a growing confidence in the abilities of American writers and divines to equal their European brethren in evangelical diffusion." See *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 1 (July 1800), 4-5; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 60). The world of print in general had exploded, expanding communication and citizens' participation throughout the Atlantic, and the world of *religious* print outstripped all other forms, making items like the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, *The New York Missionary Magazine*, and the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* ubiquitous. At only 12 ½ cents per monthly issue, the magazine was affordable for most families interested in having it. And in the MSCT's case, the payoff was exponential, because every family which subscribed to the magazine was bound to develop an attachment to or a stake in the broader goals of the MSCT. One of the most successful missions magazines of the early republic, if not the most successful, was the *The Panoplist*, published in Massachusetts, beginning in 1805. In the first printed issue of the magazine, its editors noted in the Preface that its purpose was to spread knowledge of religious intelligence around the world, especially the missionary work of Great Britain. In doing so, they hoped to foster an interdenominational spirit, not "the SHIBBOLETH of a sect." From *The Panoplist...For the Year Ending June, 1806* (Boston, 1806), v.

The Trustees think it advisable to keep a considerable sum on hand; that if at any time there should be a call for an extraordinary number of missionaries, they may have it in their power to send them; and also, if any prospect should present itself of doing something effectual among the Indians, that they may not lose the opportunity for want of funds.

The problem was that funds continued to flood in, while that "extraordinary number of missionaries" never arrived.³⁹

Unfortunately for the missionaries, the Missionary Society of Connecticut was also able to keep so much cash on hand because they did not pay their missionaries well. From the beginning of his missionary ministry in 1801, Joseph Badger had asked for an increased salary of \$7 per week. He claimed that the common \$6-per-week salary for missionaries, fell short of what he needed in order to care for his family, particularly in the Western Reserve. For missionaries in Vermont, Badger argued, the \$6-per-week salary may have been enough. By 1803, that state had more people, with more organized towns, which were closer to one another. But in the Western Reserve, Badger had to travel dozens of miles between meagerly-populated settlements to do his ministry. This increased the time he spent away from home, and increased the risks he had to take while riding through woods, fording rivers, and fleeing bears. To add insult to injury, Badger complained that even as the MSCT repeatedly denied his requests for a raise – even \$1 more each week – they sent him with "a large number of books to distribute, which added much to my labors." By 1806, he had had enough:

On my return to the Reserve, I came to the determination to resign my Missionary labors under the direction of the Connecticut Missionary Society...I felt myself and family exceedingly injured by their vote to reduce the means of

³⁹ *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions and a Statement of the Funds of the Missionary Society of Connecticut.* (Hartford, 1802), 14.

my support. I had encountered indescribable hardships, with my family, in performing missionary labors, and had repeatedly written to them respectfully on the subject. The subject had also been represented to them by gentlemen who were my neighbors, and well knew that my reduced pay to six dollars per week was much below the necessary expenses of my family...It seemed astonishing to me that men of wisdom and of superior talents, after having been repeatedly informed of missionary trials and wants, should continue to load their missionary with labor, by sending horse loads of books to be distributed among the people, and not move a finger towards alleviating the burden.

Badger, still desirous of being a missionary, joined the Western Missionary Society, an organization based out of the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh. He would spend the next several years ministering with them to various Indian nations.⁴⁰

Two years later, in December 1808, Badger gained a new cooperative partner in his missions from an unlikely place: the Missionary Society of Connecticut. While traveling through Hartford, Connecticut, Badger had arranged to meet with the trustees of his former sending society. Sorry for their inadequate support of his mission in the past, and still sitting on thousands of dollars, the Trustees compensated him with \$284, the equivalent of forty seven weeks of salary (at \$6 per week). Furthermore, after learning that Badger was currently on a missionary tour under the direction of the Western Missionary Society, they donated another \$100 toward his efforts.⁴¹

A dozen years after they sent their first missionary out, the MSCT still struggled with the same main problem which most other societies struggled with: a low supply of

⁴⁰ Badger recorded a simultaneously terrifying and humorous story of being treed by a bear in his *Memoir*, 54-56. While treed overnight, Badger reflected humorously on what the bear's opinions on the relationship between church and state might have been. For his request for a higher salary, see *Memoir*, 68-69. For the quotation regarding being asked to distribute literature, see *Memoir*, 109-111. The distribution of literature had in fact been one of the greatest strengths of the MSCT, even if they misjudged how they should handle all of their funds and missionaries. In their first twenty years of ministry, the MSCT reported that they had sent over 42,000 books and pamphlets to the Western Reserve alone. See Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier*, 134.

⁴¹ Badger, *Memoir*, 111-112.

missionaries. In 1810, the MSCT still only employed thirteen missionaries. Its organization was precedent-setting, and its fundraising ability phenomenal, but like every other early, regional missionary society, it simply could not recruit enough men to match its money. In 1810, the balance in its account was \$30,799.62.⁴²

A Summary of American Home Mission Societies, 1796-1810

Within fifteen years of the formation of the first home mission societies, the movement had proliferated throughout the country and had inspired every Christian denomination. In addition to the successful societies already established in New York and Connecticut, local and regional societies sprung up everywhere: in Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Missionary Society in 1798, and the Western Missionary Society in 1802; in Massachusetts, the Berkshire and Columbia Missionary Society in 1798, the Hampshire Missionary Society in 1801, and the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in 1802.

In 1801, northern Presbyterians and Congregationalists joined together on a regional level to form a cooperative missionary and church-planting plan: the Plan of Union. Because the two denominations held so much in common, leaders from both groups had come to believe that their people had been unnecessarily competing with one another for decades. Without communicating with one another, they often sent pastors and missionaries to the same areas, which led to competition for church members. Meanwhile, other nearby areas would be left completely unreached by both groups.

⁴² *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions and a Statement of the Funds of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1810), 17.

Rather than both groups using their ministers and money so inefficiently, they agreed in the Plan of Union to cooperate with one another. In what many critics of the time deemed "Presbygationalism," the two denominations would strive to communicate with one another, to avoid sending multiple competing pastors to the same regions, and to respect whichever form of church government was set up in a particular area, whether led by a Presbyterian or Congregationalist missionary. Although this plan was contested from its beginning, and would eventually lead to the schism of the Presbyterian Church in 1837, it did provide a practical and successful way for Protestants to cooperatively expand missions.⁴³

Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists in the South had begun organizing and participating in missions as well, although rarely through the mission societies common in the North. Instead, southerners tended to send preachers and missionaries through the their already-established ecclesiastical bodies, such as local churches, associations, presbyteries, and conferences. By the turn of the nineteenth century, southern Protestants had already developed a tradition of overseeing their own affairs, rather than taking direction from denominational authorities or extra-ecclesiastical societies in the middle and northern states.

For example, when the Presbyterian Church in the USA organized the Standing Committee on Missions in 1802 as its denominational guide for missions, the synods of Virginia, Pittsburgh, Kentucky and the Carolinas decided to oversee missions

⁴³ The only major difference between most Presbyterians and Congregationalists was their view on church government. Presbyterians maintained a complex representative system of government which worked up from congregations, to presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, all of which had their proper spheres of authority. Congregationalists, on the other hand, like Baptists, believed that each congregation should rule itself, and owed no obedience to any other ecclesiastical authority.

"separately from the [General]Assembly." These synods included regions in the states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. They elected to forego the Standing Committee's non-binding direction and oversight in favor of overseeing and conducting their own missions, in their own regions.⁴⁴

By 1810, mission societies had formed in every state north of Virginia, and southerners in every state had organized their own local systems of missionary support. The majority of these efforts involved some level of purposeful, interdenominational cooperation. While every denomination maintained strove to maintain its theological and ecclesiastical distinctives, they also found that the broader missionary project would have more success if each groups shared communication, resources, and volunteers with the others.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ See Minutes of the Standing Committee on Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 31 March 1803 (Microfilm, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia), 21 (these minutes will be cited hereon as "Standing Committee"). Conducting religious reform and charity through individual congregations, or small associations, was the common practice in most southern states, throughout the early republic. Timothy Lockley identifies more than 600 private societies devoted to charitable relief of the poor, insane, or incapacitated in the South, the vast majority of which were run on the community level. See Timothy Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South* (Gainesville, 2007). Also see Seth Rockman's discussion of religious reform in early America in his essay "Jacksonian America," in eds., Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, *American History Now* (Philadelphia, 2011), 58.

⁴⁵ Other local societies formed during this era include: Massachusetts Missionary Society (1799), Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society (1802), New Jersey Missionary Society (1802), Vermont Missionary Society (1807), Piscataqua Missionary Society (NH, 1803), Maine Baptist Missionary Association (1804), New York Baptist Missionary Society (1806), New York Northern Missionary Society (1807), Baptist Philanthropic Missionary Society of North Carolina (1809), Genessee Missionary Society of western New York (1810), Essex Missionary Society (MA, 1814), and the Black River Baptist Missionary Society (NY, 1817), to name a few.

Transatlantic Home Mission Societies

This burgeoning of interdenominational cooperation in the foundation of the American Home missions movement of the 1790s and 1800s was not limited to national boundaries. In fact, the *American* home missions movement came into being and kept its bearings by explicitly and consistently appealing to the work of *European* missionary societies in the years up through the War of 1812. By conversing and cooperating with European Protestants, American home mission societies created a movement that was based in transatlantic evangelical ideals, even as it focused on domestic practice.⁴⁶

That American mission societies were dependent on the precedent of European missionary plans, particularly those in Britain, cannot be overstated. In his century-old work on the rise of missions in America, Oliver Elsbree argued that "American Christians, whether Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, or Baptists, all felt a sense of dependence upon their brethren across the Atlantic." As noted earlier, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in North America (SPGNA) owed its existence to the Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), formed in 1698. Rather than having to create a mission society from scratch, in 1787, it merely changed its status from being a branch of the SSPCK to being an independent society.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ This is my timeline endpoint *not* because missionary cooperation stopped here, but because it seems to have marked a shift from regional mission societies to nationally-organized mission societies. In fact, during and after the war, Emily Conroy-Kutz argues that British and American missionaries cooperated regularly, possibly even *more* than they did in times of peace. From Emily Conroy-Kutz, "Anglo-American Connections in the American Missionary Entrance to India, 1790-1815," (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, 14-17 July 2011, Philadelphia).

⁴⁷ Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 48.

Even more important than the SSPCK for the inspiration of American home missions was the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792) and London Missionary Society(1795) in Britain, as well as the Netherlands Missionary Society (1797). These were part of a general rise in missionary work among Protestants and Catholics throughout Europe in the late-18th century. It was within this Atlantic missionary climate that American Protestants began developing their own mission plans, deliberately patterning them after their European counterparts and setting a precedent for cooperative Atlantic missions for the entirety of the nineteenth century.

The New York Missionary Society was the first American society to set this pattern of looking across the Atlantic for inspiration and organization. In a sermon preached to the first annual meeting of the NYMS in 1796, Reverend Alexander McWhorter urged the congregation to pursue missions to both white settlers and Indians. For inspiration, he exhorted:

Contemplate, for a moment, what the zealous Christians in *Europe* are doing amidst the horrors of war, and the din of arms. They are propagating the gospel in *Africa*, the *islands* of the *South Seas*, and even in the *East Indies*. The great souls are sending Christianity round the globe; their intention is to plant it in every land; that the Son of God shall have the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The Christians in *Denmark*, *Moravia*, *Scotland*, and *England*, seem all moving in this glorious work, and lavishing their *thousands* and *ten thousands* for its accomplishment.⁴⁸

Of all these Atlantic inspirations, Americans considered Great Britain the most important. In 1797, the directors of the NYMS explained in a pamphlet that it was the example of "the uncommon exertions...by their brethren in Great Britain" which

⁴⁸ Alexander McWhorter, *Blessedness of the Liberal: A Sermon, Preached...Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1796), 22-23 (emphasis is in the original).

particularly inspired them. In 1801, along with their annual report, the directors of the NYMS published letters written by William Carey, the world-famous English Baptist missionary to India and founder of the Baptist Missionary Society. In the same publication, Rev. John Abeel appealed to a two-decades old speech by Edmund Burke to buttress his call for people to donate money to help those in need.⁴⁹

Mission societies throughout the United States expressed their approbation of British missionary precedents and constantly looked to Britain for inspiration. The Massachusetts Missionary Society, founded in 1799, consistently made room in their periodical *The Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* for inspiring news of European missionaries, especially British ones. In their April 1804 issue, the editors praised the London Missionary Society for its interdenominational spirit and success. In the December 1805 issue, the editors reprinted the financial dealings of the London Missionary Society, using their remarkable donations – over \$60,000 in one year – to inspire Americans to donate as well. In 1806, they went so far as to devote an entire issue to reprinting the minutes from the 11th annual meeting of the London Missionary Society. In 1813, the Trustees of the New Hampshire Missionary Society rejoiced at all of the "shining examples of evangelical liberality multiplying" around them, particularly in Great Britain, where "wonders of this kind" were common. In 1838, Ashbel Green, wrote a lengthy pamphlet on the history of American Presbyterian missions up to his

⁴⁹ *Thoughts on the Plan for Social Prayer, Proposed by the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1797), 3; Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 158-59; John N. Abeel, *A Discourse, Delivered April 6th, 1801...Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1801), 16-17, 63.

present day. The entire home missions movement, he judged, was more than simply "inspired" by British and European efforts; it "owed its origin" to them.⁵⁰

American home mission societies went beyond expressions of admiration for European mission societies by initiating regular correspondence with them. They hoped that maintaining religious ties across the Atlantic would transcend political boundaries and bind Protestants together in common cause. "The kingdom of Christ is not of this world," the directors of the London Missionary Society told the directors of the Missionary Society of Connecticut in 1803, "but is of the most essential service to the peace and prosperity of every country." Christians should rejoice in a peace which "united Christendom in one great community." When the Standing Committee on Missions of the Presbyterian Church began meeting in 1803, one of the first orders of business was drafting a letter to *all* of the known missionary societies in Europe and America in order to establish communication with them. "A mutual communication of the plans, purposes and prospects, of the various missionary association in Europe and America, with the effects of their exertions already produced," the committee explained, "may greatly encourage and assist each other."⁵¹

Atlantic Missionary Inspiration Goes Both Ways

In the Atlantic world of missions, inspiration and cooperation cut both ways. In 1801, the Netherlands Missionary Society wrote the NYMS, encouraging them to

⁵⁰ See *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 2 (Apr. 1804); *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 3 (Dec. 1805); *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 3 (Jan. 1806); *Report of the Trustees of the New-Hampshire Missionary Society* (Concord, 1813), 20-21; Ashbel Green, *A Historical Sketch*, 45-46.

⁵¹ *Communications from the London Missionary Society to the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1803), 8, 5; Standing Committee, 31 March 1803.

continue taking advantage of their "favourable position" in America by sending missionaries to the "immeasurable fields to the westward, which open beyond your frontiers." The Netherlands Missionary Society had begun in 1797, only a year after the NYMS, and had begun at a disadvantage, trying to rebuild missionary projects which had been long neglected or abandoned, due to the "irreligion" of their nation. The work and prospects of the New York Missionary Society inspired *them*.⁵²

While Europeans had formed the first missionary societies, and so inspired Americans, it was Americans who perfected and inspired one specific mission-society strategy: the auxiliary society. Auxiliary societies were interdenominational or non-denominational organizations which formed in order to financially support mission societies already in existence. Without the cooperation and great success of these auxiliary societies, many American mission societies simply would not have been able to accomplish their work. Generally, these auxiliaries were organized by groups of young men, or by women of various ages. Sometimes, they formed these groups because they simply wanted Christian fellowship with people in similar social situations. In these groups, like-minded people could come together across typical denominational lines in order to support a grand cause, like missions. Young people and women also often formed their own societies, because they were barred from full participation in the leadership of the central mission societies, which were all governed by older men. Unwilling to sit back and let older men lead the entire home missions movement, these people came together to form societies of their own.

⁵² Letter printed in *A Discourse, Delivered April 6th, 1801, ... Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1801), 61, 48.

The most successful of these groups, by far, were the cent- and mite-societies organized by women. Inspired by the widow in the Gospel of Mark who contributed two mites – all she had – to the work of God, these societies required members to merely contribute a mite or cent each week for membership. These pennies added up quickly, providing mountains of funds each year to mission societies across the United States.

Women of the late-18th and early-19th century may have been barred from direct participation in the political realm, but as we see in these auxiliary organizations, this did not stop them from playing an active role in society at large. In fact, many women believed that they could play a stronger, more important role in society by *foregoing* politics and focusing on religious and social reform instead. Auxiliary mission societies, with their potential to unify women of various denominational or social backgrounds, were one powerful method they chose to utilize. Within a few years of the founding of the Missionary Society of Connecticut (1798) and the Massachusetts Missionary Society (1799), female auxiliaries began forming around them. In 1804, the women of Litchfield, Connecticut, banded together to form the Charitable Female Association of Litchfield. As the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine* encouraged later that year, female societies could form anywhere in the state for the purpose of collecting money for the work of the MSCT. Membership would require only one cent per week, or fifty cents per year, all of which was donated to the MSCT. Groups of women throughout New England would join together in much the same way in the years to come.⁵³

⁵³ In her plenary address at the annual meeting of SHEAR in July 2011, Susan Klepp addressed the mass involvement of women in religious and reform societies in the late-18th and early 19th centuries. She argued (rightly I think) that historians have not paid nearly enough attention to this activism, but have instead given almost all of their attention to the beginnings of *political* involvement in the 1820s and later.

If measured by their importance to home missions, few of these female societies were merely "auxiliary." All of them played key roles in raising much-needed funds for missionary societies. Some of them played *crucial* roles, representing the greatest single source of income for the society. This was certainly the case for the Massachusetts Missionary Society in its early years. In 1802, this group reported just under \$700 in total receipts from the previous year. Yet by June 1804, the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* reported that the Massachusetts Missionary Society had received a little over \$1,350 in donations and member-dues in the previous year. Ladies involved in cent institutions all over Massachusetts had contributed liberally - \$85.67 "from a number of ladies in Charlestown," \$65 "from a number of ladies in Salem," and so on. In the end, female cent societies contributed over \$500 toward the Massachusetts Missionary Society, making up more than one-third of their total receipts for the year. In an exemplar of understatement, the editors of the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*

This attention to voting and political rights implies that women were weak, or at least unempowered before the 1820s. On the contrary, Klepp argued, women were already asserting their interests and rights by the 1790s in the home, and by organizing and getting involved in religious and reform societies. They didn't approach the political realm, not because they weren't involved in public affairs, but because they simply didn't find politics as empowering or effective as family life and religious reform. Why would the women of southern New Hampshire push for the vote when they exerted plenty of influence on what seems to have mattered most to them: their homes, and missions to the Indians and white settlers to the frontiers. From Susan Klepp (Plenary Address, presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, 14-17 July 2011, Philadelphia). For a discussion of women's assertion of power and rights within the home, see Susan Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill, 2009). For the role of women at the intersection of religion and politics, see Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, 1993); Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, 2002); and Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *Journal of American History*, 86 (June 1999): 15-40. For the role of women societies in the Missionary Society of Connecticut, see *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, 5 (Oct. 1804), 147-48; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 58.

noted that "This CENT INSTITUTION, 'small and inconsiderable' as it may seem, promises to be very productive."⁵⁴

A decade later, female cent societies still exercised this sort of disproportionate generosity and monetary power. In its 1813-report, the Trustees of the New Hampshire Missionary Society acknowledged this crucial role played by local female cent societies. In 1812, the society collected a total of \$1,520.58 from a combination of annual member-dues, the sale of various forms of literature, and scores of individual contributions. About ten percent of this amount came from the donation of individual women. On top of this, the female societies of the towns of New Hampshire raised another \$728.63, bringing the total receipts of the society to \$2,249.21. This means that the contributions of the women's cent societies had constituted one-third of the entire income of the New Hampshire Missionary Society that year.⁵⁵

The trustees of the New Hampshire Missionary Society reported that \$300 of the total donation would go immediately toward supporting a missionary in Bridgewater village for an entire year, and the remainder would be used to purchase Bibles, hymnals, theological books, and catechisms for distribution. The trustees were so impressed with the "Female friends of Zion" and their "liberal hearts and hands" that they chided their

⁵⁴ *A Sermon Delivered Before the Massachusetts Missionary Society...The Annual Report also of the Trustees* (Newburyport, MA, 1802), 42-45; *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 2 (June 1804), 41-44; Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 62-65.

⁵⁵ Individual women accounted for \$103.14 of donations in this year, almost ten percent of the total money collected through member-dues, sale of materials, and individual donations. See *Report of the Trustees of the New-Hampshire Missionary Society* (Concord, 1813), 11-15.

leaders and male readers: "Shall the poor *widow*, and small *children*, out do us in feeling for the cause of Zion, and for perishing souls?"⁵⁶

The editors of *The London Evangelical Intelligencer* likewise stood in awe of the success achieved by American women with their mite and cent societies. The editors dreamed along with their readers:

Were such a method adopted in England, among all the females of all religious congregations, and devoted by a committee of each society to the missionary cause, or to any other institutions intended to promote the good of souls, what a vast sum might be accumulated without inconvenience to individuals.

For English observers, it was clear that a key portion of the success of the American missionary cause lay in the cooperative efforts pursued by groups of Protestants – like female auxiliary societies – which had previously been kept outside of the work.⁵⁷

Sharing Missions and Missionaries

In the first few decades of the early republic, mission societies in America and Britain went beyond communicating with and inspiring one another, to actually sharing the missionaries themselves, and the financial burdens associated with them. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Standing Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) corresponded with their Scottish brothers in the SSPCK to collect funds which Scottish Christians had donated for American missions among Indians. This money had been collected in Scotland over several years, and was intended specifically for the use of the Standing Committee in America. The Standing Committee

⁵⁶ *Report of the Trustees of the New-Hampshire Missionary Society* (Concord, 1813), 10-18.

⁵⁷ *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 4 (June 1806); Elsbree, *The Rise of the Missionary Spirit*, 64.

also took it upon themselves to support European missionaries who made stops (planned or unplanned) in America. In November 1804, a Rev. Josiah Roberts wrote to the Standing Committee from London. He notified the committee that he had received word that some German missionaries from the Berlin Missionary Seminary would soon be arriving in Charleston, South Carolina. These missionaries, although bent on ministering to Indians in America, appear to have been ignorant of or undecided about the details of what their mission would look like. Nevertheless, the Standing Committee let Mr. Roberts know that when the missionaries arrived, the PCUSA would do everything they could to "afford them all the aid and advice in their power."⁵⁸

A similar episode of transatlantic cooperation occurred in early 1809. Under the direction of the London Missionary Society, William Lee sailed west from England toward his missionary destination in the East Indies. However, after making what he thought would be a short stop in Philadelphia along his way, "his progress was arrested by the Embargo." In December 1807, President Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had pushed through Congress the Embargo Act, a group of laws designed to protect American interests by ceasing American exportation of goods, keeping American ships from sailing out of foreign ports, and imposing high taxes on American imports from Britain and France. Through economic attrition, Jefferson hoped to punish Great Britain for its treatment of American ships and sailors during its own war with France. The Act and its corresponding non-importation acts became incredibly unpopular, incredibly fast.

⁵⁸ The first mention of this correspondence regarding funds is in Standing Committee, 28 May 1803. The secretary of the Standing Committee made notes about this continued correspondence through at least 1805. For notes on Rev. Josiah Roberts, see Standing Committee, 13 November 1804.

In early 1809, however, these laws were still in effect, and applied to all British ships entering American ports, including the one on which William Lee arrived.⁵⁹

Since his East-Indies transportation was sequestered in Philadelphia, Lee wanted to use his time there to begin his missionary work. The presbytery of Philadelphia, with the support of the Standing Committee, supported this idea, and agreed to appoint him temporarily as a missionary in Philadelphia. Lee would spend his time preaching in various communities in Philadelphia, and would likely act as a guest preacher in various churches in the area. The Committee continued this moral and financial support until Lee left for the East Indies in the late-Spring of 1809.⁶⁰

The Standing Committee did the same thing in 1811 for George Sprat, another missionary appointed by the London Missionary Society. On his way to his appointed mission in East India, Sprat stopped off in Philadelphia. The Standing Committee supported him from June to December of 1811 as a missionary in Philadelphia and its surrounding communities, with committee-member Jacob Janeway prescribing his routes. Janeway and the Committee hoped that he would be able to cooperate with established local ministers and churches in the presbytery, so as to supplement their work, rather than supplant it.⁶¹

Conclusion: American Nationalism and Evangelical Internationalism

It is important to highlight the transatlantic nature of the early American home missions movement, because it places a nascent national missions movement within its

⁵⁹ Standing Committee, 22 May 1809.

⁶⁰ Standing Committee, 22 May 1809, 65-66; 11 June 1811, 146; 19 October 1811, 148.

⁶¹ Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Missions, 1812 (Microfilm, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

international historical context. The American home missions movement did not begin only with a spirit of independence, but with a spirit of *interdependence* on the broader Protestant world of missionary work. Without the foundation of decades of European Protestant missions in America, and without the world-leading missionary efforts of the British in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the American home missions movement would have had far less success, if it had gotten off the ground at all.

This focus on international context is not meant to imply that American missionary institutions were guided only by a one-with-the-world philosophy; far from it. As much as they saw themselves as part of a worldwide Protestant project, American mission societies also championed patriotism and nationalism as motivations for their work. In fact, the home missions movement in the United States began earlier than any serious push for foreign missions *precisely* because most American denominations believed they should begin preaching in their home country first, before preaching abroad. This strategy, many believed, fell in line with Jesus's command to the apostles in the first chapter of the Book of Acts to preach in Jerusalem and Judea (their home regions) before going to Samaria and the ends of the earth (foreign regions). It would also appeal to Americans in the early and uncertain years of the 1790s and 1800s who were unlikely to give away money for the building up of foreign lands when their own nation needed it just as badly. If American Protestants were going to sacrifice their

money, it would have to be in line with their desires for both a sense of a robust nationalism, and a commitment to an evangelical internationalism.⁶²

This dual commitment to Protestant nationalism and Protestant internationalism in missions played an important role in the development of evangelical alliances both at home and abroad. One key indicator of this connection between evangelicalism on one hand, and the coexistence of nationalism and internationalism among early American mission societies on the other hand, can be found by observing *which* international mission societies American cooperated with, and which they ignored. Groups like the Missionary Society of Connecticut and Standing Committee on Missions of the PCUSA claimed that they desired correspondence with every missionary society in the Atlantic world. To a large extent, they achieved this goal by establishing regular relations with groups like the London Missionary Society and the Baptist Missionary Society. However, curiously, these American societies never expressed a similar desire to correspond with the oldest and most lucrative Protestant society of all – the missionary society of the Anglican church, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). In existence since 1703, the SPG had been sending missionaries to North America (and throughout the world) for a century. Why would American mission societies avoid such a knowledgeable and powerful ally in the international gospel-cause? It is likely that American mission societies of the early republic ignored the SPG for the same reasons that Americans had been suspicious of it in the decades leading up through the American

⁶² Acts 1:6-8.

Revolution: as missions-focused as the SPG was, it retained direct ties to the British crown.⁶³

The SPG, since its beginning, represented the missionary interests of the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church, unlike American Protestant denominations, functioned under the direct authority of the state: the British crown. As such, the SPG existed not only to fulfill the interests of Anglican Christendom, but the interests of the British Empire. So, while American home mission societies were very intentional about emulating and cooperating with independent evangelical groups like the London Missionary Society and Baptist Missionary Society, they were just as intentional about ignoring the work of the SPG. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that amidst both international tensions and a nationalistic context, the American Home missions movement was rooted firmly in two sorts of cooperation: national interdenominational cooperation, and international evangelical cooperation.

⁶³ For discussions of the connections between the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the British empire, as well as Americans' perceptions of this connection in the revolutionary era, see Thomas Kidd, *God Of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution* (New York, 2010); Paul Langford, "The English Clergy and the American Revolution," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990); Dan O'Connor, *Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701-2000* (London, 2000); Nancy Rhoden, *Revolutionary Anglicanism: The Colonial Church of England Clergy During the American Revolution* (New York, 1999); Laura Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia, 2004).

CHAPTER III

HOME MISSIONS AND THE COOPERATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

There is perhaps no principle more sacred to the American experience than the separation of church and state. In both the scholarly world and the public square, the prevailing belief is that the founding of the United States ushered in a golden age of separation between church and state. Under this view, the national and state governments quickly began undergoing the process of disestablishing state churches after the Revolution. This resulted in an early republic during which church and state functioned separately from one another, rarely crossing into the territory of the other.

My argument is simple: in the early republic, this was simply not so. A study of home mission societies during this period shows us instead how religious groups consistently *cooperated* with governments, on both the state and national levels. I argue then that we can better understand the relationship between church and state in the early republic by minimizing our focus on the idea of their "separation," and instead assuming a complex system of *cooperation* between them.

The public square, while full of complexities, has tended to divide into two broad camps regarding this issue of church-state separation. Those on the political and religious right tend to extol the framing of the United States as led by men who believed in providence, who practiced some form of Protestant Christianity, and who separated the realms of church and state for one reason: to keep the state out of church affairs, not

to keep religion out of the state. On the other hand, those who identify with the political left view the framing of the United States government as a touchstone in religious freedom, influenced primarily by Enlightenment ideals, and led by liberal men who sought to keep the church and state completely out of one another's affairs. As divergent as these two groups are on issues such as the beliefs of the Framers or the role of religion in government, they agree on one thing: *both* sides assume that the United States established itself early on as a place based on the separation of church and state. Both sides then are missing an essential part of the story: cooperation.

Scholarly historical literature has also tended to maintain what David Sehat calls this "myth of separation," the idea that church and state were substantially separate in the early United States. Historians have managed to maintain this myth by limiting their focus on religion and politics in the early republic to three primary models: by producing mountains of studies on "founding fathers" and their political and religious beliefs; by studying the legal and constitutional history of the principle of "separation"; and by focusing on the role of religion in social reform and voting patterns. Certainly, these methods are insightful and necessary to understanding the role of religion in the early republic. By examining the religious and political ideals of "founders" or "framers" who actually participated in the early debates and decisions regarding the relationship between church and state, historians have provided us with rich understanding of the plethora of opinions on the matter in the early republic. Recently, scholars have even begun to turn their attention to "forgotten" founders who shaped the relationship between

church and state in the early republic, but who have been left out of the pantheon occupied by Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin.¹

Scholars of legal and constitutional history have also provided invaluable contributions to the subject of church-state relations in early America. They have delved into the many meanings of the Constitution, the religious establishment clause of the First Amendment, and the history of the concept of the separation of church and state in American law. These scholars have also shown that the story of the separation of church and state in American history has in fact been a liberal or progressive one, from less religious freedom, to more. America has changed from a land of colonies with their own

¹ In a recent book, David Sehat has argued similarly, claiming that the idea of the separation of church and state, particularly in the early United States, is nothing more than a "myth." Far from establishing separation, the constitution protected a federal system which allowed a "moral establishment" to rule in place of official ecclesiastical establishments in virtually every state in the union. See David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (New York, 2011), 4-5. While I think Sehat goes too far in consistently using the word "myth" to describe church-state relations in America, I do agree with his general premise: that the church and state always worked in tandem, in some way, in American history. "Myth" is too strong of a word, because even though it is true that church and state have never been fully separated in American history, the desire, and even practice, of separating state *establishments* from church *establishments* is undeniable. For works on the so-called founders and religion, see John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?: A Historical Primer for Christians* (Louisville, KY, 2011); David Holmes, *Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (New York, 2006); Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton, 2003); Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (New York, 2006); and Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York, 2008). For some helpful studies of so-called "forgotten founders," see Daniel Dreisbach, Mark David Hall, and Jeffrey Morrison, eds. *The Forgotten Founders on Religion and Public Life* (South Bend, 2009); Thomas Kidd, *Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots* (New York, 2011); and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute's series "Lives of the Founders," including Bradley Birzer, *American Cicero: The Life of Charles Carroll* (Wilmington, 2010); Gary Gregg and Mark David Hall, eds., *America's Forgotten Founders* (2008; 2d ed., Wilmington, 2011); Melanie Miller, *Forgotten Founder, Drunken Prophet: The Life of Luther Martin* (Wilmington, 2008); Michael C. Toth, *Founding Federalist: The Life of Oliver Ellsworth* (Wilmington, 2011). Regarding the relationship between church and state, one very influential in this study has been William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA, 1971). McLoughlin not only interrogates legal interpretations of the relationship between church and state in the New England states, but tells the story of how these legal interpretations actually played out in each state. He reveals that despite a long tradition of the idea of separation, each state's leadership worked with an assumption of *cooperation* with their respective religious establishments until popular support for separation overcame this. Baptists, who championed the idea of the separation of church and state, were the oddity in the earliest years of the republic.

established churches in the seventeenth century, into a land with governments which outlaw religious establishment and provide freedom for people of all religious faiths.²

Finally, scholars over the last several decades have thoroughly explored the role of religion in antebellum social reform, and to a lesser extent, in antebellum voting patterns. In the early republic, religious people, with religious ideals, sought to change law and society according to their beliefs. This was the case for every major social reform, including temperance, Sabbatarianism, prison reform, abolition, and missions, to name only a few. Because religion and social reform were so inextricably bound in the early republic, it was never a huge leap of interpretation for historians to explore the role of religion in promoting and instituting all sorts of reform during this period, including political reform. In fact, several scholars have shown us that Americans welded religion to their voting patterns just as powerfully as they did to social reform.³

² For some notable works on the Constitution, including the place of religion in it, see Richard Beeman, *Plain Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* (New York, 2010); Pauline Maier, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York, 2011); Jack Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (New York, 1996); Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (1969; reissue, Chapel Hill, 1993). Works which focus specifically on the constitutional development of religious liberty include J.M. Opal, "The Labors of Liberality: Christian Benevolence and National Prejudice in the American Founding," *Journal of American History*, 94 (Mar. 2008), 1082-1107; John K. Wilson, "Religion Under the State Constitutions, 1776-1800," *Journal of Church and State*, 32 (Autumn 1990), 753-773. Wilson makes quite a few mistakes, however, in citing progression. For example, he states on page 765 that as part of a general shift after the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions began to prohibit religious tests. He cites the Tennessee constitution of 1796 as an example of this. Indeed, the Constitution does promise that it will not require religious tests as a qualification for office in Article 11, Section 4. However, in Article 8, section 2, the constitution states, "No person who denies the being of God or a future State of rewards and punishments shall hold any office in the civil Department of this State." This progression toward freedom was therefore only progressive in a very limited sense. The debate over the spread of religious freedom around the time of the American Revolution is filled with complexity. Even within one volume (Beneke and Grenda), Beneke argues for the American Revolution as part of a time of significant shifts in tolerance, with an increasing spirit of nonsectarianism, while Grenda and Grasso reject a Whiggish story of religious freedoms, arguing instead that "new" laws and constitutions were in fact basically reformulations of old ones, with minor adjustments for freedom of conscience. See their essays in Beneke and Grenda, *The First Prejudice*.

³ For stand-out works on religion and reform, and on the role of religion in voting patterns, see Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*; Ronald Formisano, *The Birth of*

Yet despite all of the literature on religion and social reform, church and state, the First Amendment and the Constitution, and the pros and cons of assuming a “wall of separation,” few have systematically examined an incredibly important question about the early republic: *How, in fact, did the realms of church and state actually interact on a regular basis?* This chapter is aimed precisely at exploring this question. I will do this in two parts. The first half will examine the relationship between church and state, on both the state and national levels, from the American Revolution through the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. This section provides the reader with the legal and constitutional background necessary for understanding how mission societies navigated the overlapping realms of church and state in the early republic, and how they then influenced what Americans thought about how the two should interact. This will include discussions of the role of religion and ecclesiastical establishments in the national and state constitutions, and in the thought of Thomas Jefferson, the early American leader most closely associated with these issues. My primary aim in this section will be to show that while the general and state governments of the early republic separated the

Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861 (Princeton, 1971); William Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York, 1987); Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class* (New Haven, 1990); Paul Goodman, “The Social Basis of New England Politics in Jacksonian America,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 6 (Spring 1986), 23-58; John Hammond, *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behavior* (Norwood, 1979); Daniel Walker Howe, “The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System,” *The Journal of American History*, 77 (Mar. 1991), 1216-1239; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2007); Richard John, “Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, the Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, 10 (Winter 1990), 517-67; and Mark Noll and Luke Harlow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (1990; 2d ed., New York, 2007).

realms of church and state in unprecedented ways, they also created a context in which they regularly privileged, cooperated with, and even subsidized religious groups.⁴

The second half of this chapter will build on his context by showing how missionaries and mission societies both contributed to and used this system of cooperation between church and state. During the early republic, mission societies interacted with governments all the time. Whether raising money, electing leaders, or sending missionaries to Indians and settlers on the frontiers, mission societies often cooperated with various branches of state and national governments, and with their employees. In doing so Protestant mission societies helped shape American political culture and church-state relations.⁵

⁴ The most recent work on religion, law, politics, and civic life – Chris Beneke and Christopher Grenda's edited volume *The First Prejudice* – offers this same criticism: that despite all the work on church-state relations, very little scholarly work has actually addressed how laws regarding this subject shaped the daily life of citizens and governments alike. Over the past few decades, "leading religious historians have largely ceded the study of toleration and church-state relations to legal and constitutional scholars." See Chris Beneke and Christopher Grenda, "Introduction," in *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America*, eds. Beneke and Grenda (Philadelphia, 2011), 2.

⁵ Three works in particular have been helpful in understanding these church-state dichotomies in the early republic. First, William Gribbin refers to this simultaneous disestablishing of and cooperation with church as "social symbiosis," in *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven, 1973), 19. Second, Chris Beneke and Christopher Grenda's introductory essay to *The First Prejudice* (pp. 8-10), argues that both tolerance and intolerance coexisted in early America, and that a framework of "coexistence" provides a useful, albeit imperfect, model for charting the manifold ways in which laws, rhetoric, and practice" actually intersected in everyday lives across early America. Finally, John Pratt argues that in New York, most people thought nothing of simultaneously calling for religious freedom *and* for limiting that freedom to a few specific groups. He writes: "[To] people of the time, there was no special difficulty in this. Separation was directed primarily against state interference with forms of worship or state support of any one sect. The proposition that the state could promote religion...would not have occasioned much disagreement... few among the Protestant majority, regardless of affiliation, would have been able to see any need for greater preciseness" in the laws. See Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity: The Church-State Theme in New York History* (Ithaca, 1967), 113-116.

The Formation of State Constitutions and the Myth of Separation

When the American Continental Congress declared independence from Britain in 1776, it recommended that each of the colonies craft a new state constitution for itself. These constitutions would create new governments and institutions for each of the states as they prepared for life as part of a new country, outside of the British empire. Each state left behind many of the ways of the Old World, rejecting monarchy and doing away with the parliamentary system. In their places, each state established governments which set the tone and framework for government in the United States thereafter: vesting power in the people, making the voting process more representative of the people, and dividing governmental power between some combination of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. Most states even produced declarations of rights, which guaranteed their citizens rights such as life, liberty, assembly, speech, and property.

However, there was one crucial idea which most Americans did not leave in the past: the idea that the church and state should play complementary roles in society. In their new constitutions, each state specifically addressed religion, and promised some measure of religious freedom or "freedom of conscience." But there was no such thing as complete separation – as we might conceive of separation today – in *any* of the new states. Although most states claimed that they supported religious freedom, the freedom which they guaranteed was meant to exist within a specific set of boundaries, namely, broadly-conceived Protestant Christian boundaries.⁶

⁶ David Sehat argues this point about the Protestant-biased nature of religious freedom in the early republic even more forcefully: "We will never understand the source, the development, or the stakes of the [current] debate about religion in public life until we acknowledge that for much of its history the United States was controlled by Protestant Christians who sponsored a moral regime that was both

This is not to say that the Revolution made no difference at all in church-state relations; it did. On the eve of the American Revolution, nine of the thirteen colonies maintained their own religious establishments through direct taxes for particular Christian denominations. *All* of the states inherited a tradition of church-state cooperation from the British Empire and its established Anglican Church. The Revolution ended this religious establishment for the United States, and the Constitution paved the way for disestablishment in every state within the next fifty years. Yet, with all these changes, it is crucial to remember that constitutional disestablishment in the earliest years of the republic applied specifically to the *national* sphere. For the states, disestablishment did not necessarily apply. For many of them, this meant the continuation of state-level, tax-based support for particularly denominations and their religious projects.⁷

coercive and exclusionary. See *Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 8. Similarly, John Pratt argues that in New York, Protestant leaders considered the basic concept of religious toleration a *Protestant* concept, meant for *Protestant* New Yorkers. Protestants seem to have agreed that all people should have freedom to interpret the Bible and worship God according to their consciences, provided their interpretations were rooted in Protestant traditions. See Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity*, 110-111; and Edwin Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826* (1993; 2d ed., Waco, 2004), 4-6.

⁷ On the eve of the Revolution, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Rhode Island were the only colonies which did not direct taxes toward particular churches. However, even they favored Christianity in some way (or would do so in their post-revolutionary constitutions). See John K. Wilson, "Religion Under the State Constitutions," 754. Even with established churches, empires and states still could not get everyone to simply fall in line with their religious plans. In *The First Prejudice*, 4, Beneke and Grenda rightly note that even in states with established churches and religions, "decreeing uniformity was one thing; achieving it was another." Both David Hall and Jon Butler have convincingly argued that even in the relatively strict religious societies of Puritan New England, people found ways to avoid religious requirements and express their own religious beliefs. See Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), especially Chapters 1-3; and David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

State Constitutions and Religion: From Revolution to Constitution

In their constitutions of the 1770s and 1780s, every state in the Union affirmed some measure of religious freedom. This freedom, however, was a specific freedom: freedom to worship God as theists. The thirty-eighth article of South Carolina's 1777 Constitution is instructive regarding the sort of religious "freedom" it offered:

That all persons and religious societies who acknowledge that there is one God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, and that God is publicly to be worshipped, shall be freely tolerated. The Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be, the established religion of this State. That all denominations of Christian Protestants in this State, demeaning themselves peaceably and faithfully, shall enjoy equal religious and civil privileges.⁸

So, presumably, as long as a person believed in one God, heaven and hell, church services, and the Protestant Christian definition of these things (and was not a slave), he would be free! Religious requirements and laws like South Carolina's were common, with echoes in almost every other state. Such laws, according to David Sehat, "pervaded law at all levels...The omission of these stories from the American historical consciousness is a major flaw in our national narrative." Most states, including the otherwise religiously-free state of Pennsylvania, required that citizens believe in God and in some basic Christian tenets, such as the importance of moral living or the existence of a "future state of rewards and punishments." North Carolina's Declaration of Rights promised citizens freedom – freedom "to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences." Most of the other states, like Maryland and

⁸ Ben. Perley Poore, *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws of the United States, volume 2* (Washington, DC, 1878), 1626. For discussions of the states and their early constitutions, see David Sehat, *Myth of American Religious Freedom*; John Fea, *Was American Founded*; Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty*.

Rhode Island, required citizens to be some form of Christian, promising the enjoyment of religious liberty only to "all persons professing the christian religion."⁹

Some states went even further in, promising full citizenship only to Protestants. New Jersey's constitution of 1776 promised freedom to worship, but only for those "professing a belief in the faith of any Protestant sect." The New York Constitution of 1777 promised religious freedom for all, except for those who offered any allegiance to "foreign" leaders. Catholics, who Protestants presumed owed their primary allegiance to the Pope, were the clear target of this language. In fact, during the state constitutional convention, John Jay led the way in an attempt to limit the civil rights of all "professors of the religion of the church of Rome" until they appeared before the supreme court of the state and made an oath of allegiance to the state.¹⁰

All of these religious requirements came from states *without* officially established state churches. In states *with* established churches, the requirements for the enjoyment of religious freedom were even more stringent. Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts established particular Protestant denominations as the

⁹ David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 2. For North Carolina, see Poore, *Federal and State Constitutions*, 1410. For Maryland, see "A Declaration of Rights, Agreed to by the Delegates of Maryland, in free and full Convention Assembled," (Annapolis, 1776), from the Maryland State Archives Online at <http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/003145/html/m3145-0222.html>, accessed on 29 August 2011.

¹⁰ Constitution of New Jersey (1776), in Poore, *Federal and State Constitutions*, 1313; Constitution of the State of New York (1777), in Poore, *Federal and State Constitutions*, 1337-1338. For discussion of John Jay, his view on Catholic civil rights, and the debate over religious freedom in the New York Constitutional Convention, see John Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity*, 81-90; Sehat, *Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 23. Protestant intolerance of Catholics was widespread in early America, even if not enshrined in law. Owen Stanwood argues that even in states where the population of Catholics was relatively low, Protestants maintained a high fear of Catholic domination through their involvement in a transatlantic world of print. This anti-Catholic print constantly emphasized the powers of New Spain and New France, and their threat to the Protestant British colonies. See Stanwood's "Catholics, Protestants, and the Clash of Civilizations in Early America," in *The First Prejudice*, eds. Chris Beneke and Christopher Grenda (Philadelphia, 2011), 218-240.

official churches of their states. These denominations would receive privileges above all other religious groups, including tax dollars to support their work, as well as the open support of government leaders.

Massachusetts set the bar the highest, and would retain its establishment the longest – until 1833. In its state constitution, drafted by John Adams, and ratified in 1780, it called for all members of society to exercise the “right as well as the duty” to “worship the SUPREME BEING.” Like most other state constitutions, it affirmed liberty of conscience for all on one hand, but on the other hand, limited that freedom only to those who worshipped God. In addition, the constitution legally established the Congregational Church as the church of Massachusetts. In order to “secure the good and preservation” of the government, the Constitution privileged the Congregational Church by granting the state legislature the authority to:

authorize and require the several towns, parishes, precincts and other bodies politic and religious societies to make suitable provision...for the institution of public worship of GOD and for the support and maintenance of public Protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality [and]...to enjoin up on all subjects an attendance upon the instructions o the public teachers aforesaid.”¹¹

This provision gave some religious freedom to citizens by allowing towns to designate their tax revenues to an alternate religious group of its choice, provided that it was a Christian denomination recognized and incorporated by the state. However, if the town did not specifically designate its taxes for the support of religion, the money would default to supporting the state church, the Congregational Church. In this way, the

¹¹ The Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, in *The Sacred Rights of Conscience: Selected Readings on Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations in the American Founding*, eds. Daniel Dreisbach and Mark David Hall, (Indianapolis, 2009), 246, emphasis/capitalization is in the original.

government actually made religious liberty *more* difficult, allowing local establishments to exert more power than what the state had previously done.¹²

Throughout the 1770s and 1780s, states throughout the Union solidified their cooperation with Protestant groups by requiring religious tests for holding public office, and sometimes, for the right to vote. Almost every state made it a legal requirement for its government officials to profess a belief in God, and to subscribe to a set of doctrines unique to Christianity. In Massachusetts and Maryland, government employees had to declare their belief in "the Christian religion" while all other elected officials had to at least "believe the Christian religion, and have firm persuasion of its truth." In Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Vermont, government officials had testify to a belief in the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, and New Hampshire went so far as to require that state officials, including members of Congress, judges, and governors, specifically be Protestants. Ironically, most of these constitutions also contained the promise that "no further religious test" would ever be required of anyone who desired to hold office – except, of course, for the religious tests already mentioned.¹³

¹² John K. Wilson argues that these local provisions made religious liberty more difficult for citizens in "Religion Under the State Constitutions." See discussion of church-state relations in Massachusetts in John Fea, *Was America*, 143ff; William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 639; and Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty*.

¹³ Section 35 of Maryland's "A Declaration of Rights (1776)," 13; Fea, *Was America*, 143. For Pennsylvania, see the Constitution of Pennsylvania (1776), in *Constitutions of Pennsylvania, Constitution of the United States*, eds. John Fertic and Frank Hunter (Harrisburg, 1916), 228. Even this much was going too far in the eyes of Benjamin Franklin, and many others. For Delaware, see article 22 of the Constitution of Delaware (1776), in *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies*, ed. Francis Thorpe (Washington, DC, 1909), 566. This article would be amended in 1792 to eliminate the requirement of a religious test for holding office. Constitution of Delaware (1792), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Francis Thorpe, 568; Constitution of Vermont (1777), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1861; Constitution of North Carolina

The religious requirements were sometimes just as strict for average citizens. In Pennsylvania, civil rights (like voting) would be granted only to those who acknowledged “the being of a God.” Again, South Carolina set one of the highest standards, reserving the right to vote solely for free white males who believed in God, and in “the future states of rewards and punishments.” To even be recognized as a legitimate Protestant congregation in South Carolina, a group of fifteen male persons over the age of twenty-one would have to subscribe to a list of five specific articles of faith. If at least fifteen people could not organize themselves, or agree to these articles of faith, they could not even legally form a religious congregation. These varying levels of religious tests all served (either by design or by default) to insure that on a foundational level, state governments would provide a comfortable context in which Protestant churches and religious organizations could thrive.¹⁴

(1776), section XXXII, in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1413. For North Carolina, this provision remained in force until the Constitution of North Carolina of 1835 (see *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1418). For South Carolina, see Article III of the Constitution of South Carolina (1778), in *Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1621. For Georgia, see Article VI of the Constitution of Georgia (1777), in *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies*, ed. Francis Thorpe (Washington, DC, 1909), 779. For New Jersey, see Section XIX of the Constitution of New Jersey (1776), in *Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1313. This religious test in New Jersey remained until the New Jersey Constitution of 1844 (in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1314), when the state barred religious tests, and no longer abrogated any civil rights based on a citizen's religious principles. For New Hampshire, see Constitution of New Hampshire (1784), in *Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1286-1287. New Hampshire's requirement for a religious test would remain in force until 1877.

¹⁴ Constitution of South Carolina (1778), in eds. Dreisbach and Hall, *The Sacred Rights of Conscience*, 243-244 (New Jersey retained the same requirement for belief in this future state of rewards and punishments). According to the Constitution of South Carolina (1778), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1626, to be constituted a church, fifteen men older than twenty-one had to agree to the following statements of faith:

"1st. That there is one eternal God, and a future state of rewards and punishments.

2d. That God is publicly to be worshipped

3d That the Christian religion is the true religion.

4th. That the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are of divine inspiration, and are the rule of faith and practice.

National Disestablishment, not Complete Disestablishment: Religion and Government in the United States Constitution

Unlike on the subject of state constitutions, oceans of ink have been spilled to discuss the role of religion in the United States Constitution. In particular, scholars have trained their sights on the portions of the text most relevant to the issue of religion, Article VI and the First Amendment, which read as follows:

Article VI: "no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States."

Amendment I: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."¹⁵

For the purposes of this project, I intend to make one crucial point: that the religious clauses in Article Six and in the First Amendment did not separate religion and government. Neither did the framers mean for them to do so. Rather, these sections spoke specifically toward one issue: limiting the role which the national government could play in regulating or establishing religion. Otherwise, the national government could participate in religious projects, and the states would be free to endorse and cooperate with particular religious groups, as they saw fit.¹⁶

⁵th. That is lawful and the duty of every man being thereunto called by those that govern, to bear witness to the truth."

Closely related to the logic of maintaining religious tests for voting and office was the logic for maintaining blasphemy laws throughout the nineteenth century. Many states made it a criminal offense to publicly blaspheme Christianity, citing the logic that since Christianity underlay American law and society, public attacks against it would cause not only religious damage, but broadly political and social damage. Throughout the 19th century, Sarah Barringer Gordon argues then that blasphemy laws were seen not as opposed to religious liberty, but as "consistent with or even supportive of religious liberty." See Gordon, "Blasphemy and the Law of Religious Liberty in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly*, 52 (Dec. 2000), 684.

¹⁵ The official text of the Constitution can be found on the website of the National Archives, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html, accessed 30 June 2012.

¹⁶ This view - that the 1st Amendment was written in order to completely separate religion and government is - is the thesis of Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: A*

It is clear that for the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, excising religion from the political world was logically and morally unthinkable. No one could completely separate religion from the various sections of his life. Even if one could, one shouldn't, especially in matters so weighty as creating a new government. Not only did most men at the Convention consider religion essential to government and society, but some actually argued for the national government to take a more active role in promoting it. Oliver Ellsworth was one such man.

As a delegate from Connecticut, Oliver Ellsworth played an equal, and foiling role to James Madison in the debates over the place of religion in the Constitution, particularly in the inclusion of the First Amendment. Many contemporaries considered Ellsworth to have virtually controlled the floor as the de facto majority leader, from the Constitutional convention up through 1796, when he became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In fact, William Casto argues that to read Madisonian interpretations of church and state back into the early republic, without equal reference to Ellsworth, is to do injustice to the writing of the Constitution, including its language regarding religion. And Ellsworth was no supporter of “separation.” In Connecticut, he fully supported the state’s continued establishment of the Congregational Church. So, the First Amendment was, for him, absolutely necessary. It would assure him and the people of the state of Connecticut *not* that governments in the United States should refrain from establishing

Moral Defense of the Secular State (New York, 2005). For example, they argue that "if the First Amendment means anything, it means that government should not sponsor or encourage a particular form of religious expression" (pp. 14-15). In contrast, I argue that if the First Amendment means anything, it means exactly what it says – that government should not *establish* any religion. Being informed by religion, or even encouraging religion, is implicitly allowed in the Constitution, even *encouraged* through use of the "establishment" language.

religion, but that the *national* government should refrain, and leave that power to the states.¹⁷

This interpretation is amply supported by the testimony of other key leaders as well. In 1788, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison about his concerns regarding the power of the *national* government: “I hope therefore a bill of rights will be formed to guard the people against the federal government.” Even more telling are the sentiments expressed by Samuel Adams in a letter to Richard Henry Lee in August of 1789. Both men, although major leaders of the American Revolution, declined invitations to join the Constitutional Convention in 1787, for fear that it would establish a national government with too much power. With the Constitution on its way to full ratification, Adams expressed his concern to Lee:

I mean, my friend to let you know how deeply I am impressed with a sense of the Importance of Amendments [to the Constitution]; that the good People may clearly see the distinction, for there is a distinction – between the *federal* Powers vested in Congress, and the *sovereign* Authority belonging to the several States, which is the Palladium of the private and personal rights of the Citizens.”

¹⁷ For Olive Ellsworth, see William R. Casto, “Oliver Ellsworth’s Calvinist Vision of Church and State in the Early Republic,” in *The Forgotten Founders on Religion and Public Life*, eds. Dreisbach, Hall, and Morrison, 65, 93-94; Michael C. Toth, *Founding Federalist: The Life of Oliver Ellsworth* (Wilmington, 2011). I am not arguing that the Constitution should not in present times pertain to the states. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments were passed following the Civil War with the expressed purpose of extending rights to new citizens with laws that would trump any state laws to the contrary. In the present day, and for at least the last sixty years, the assumption has been that the same applies for religion, i.e., that if the national government cannot establish a particular church, neither can the individual states. But my argument is concerned with the period of American History before the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, along with the ascendancy of the power of the national government. In this period, 1789 to at least 1861, the most government leaders and citizens alike assumed that the Constitution existed primarily to define and limit the power of the national government only, leaving all other powers – like the regulation of religion – to the states. This is the argument of, among many others, John Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity*.

The Bill of Rights was necessary and good, in his mind, for doing two things: first, for keeping the *national* government from squelching the press, speech, or religion; and second, for leaving such power to the states to wield, according to the dictates of their own peoples.¹⁸

Religion and the State Constitutions After the Ratification of the U.S. Constitution

Long after the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, this political culture of government cooperation with Christian churches continued in almost all of the original states. One way states practiced this privileging was by maintaining religious tests for public office, even after the United States Constitution had become the first constitution in America to specifically *prohibit* such tests. Pennsylvania, generally known for its liberal policies regarding religious freedom, was one state which kept religious tests in place. In 1790, Pennsylvanians amended their constitution, declaring in article I, section 12 that all officers of government would take an oath only to "support

¹⁸ Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 31 July 1788; and Samuel Adams to Richard Henry Lee, 24 August 1789, from Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation Between Church and State* (New York, 2002), 188-189. Subsequent judicial history also supports the argument that the Constitution was meant primarily to separate the national government from power to regulate religion, as opposed to separating government and religion in general. In fact, until the famous *Everson* Supreme Court case of 1947, which breathed life into the "wall of separation," the religious clauses of the Bill of Rights were never systematically applied by the Supreme Court, much less applied directly to the States. Until that time, and certainly for the first half-century after the ratification of the Constitution, governmental leaders and the general public alike tended to interpret the clause as concerned primarily with distinguishing between the rights of the federal and state governments. For example, in his 1833 decision in *Barron v. Baltimore*, Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that the Bill of Rights, including its promise to bar religious establishment, did not apply to the states. The national government could do nothing to restrict religious laws in the states, whose state constitutions alone "provided such limitations and restrictions." See John Marshall, *Barron v. Baltimore*, 32 U.S. 243 (1833), quoted in David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 4. David Sehat argues that because the Constitution did not make demands of the states regarding religious freedom, it actually "muddied the clear waters of what had been a godless Constitution" and let an ambiguous framework for the states to use in building their own religious and moral establishments. See Sehat, *Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 50. Also see John F. Wilson, "Religion, Government, and Power in the New American Nation," in *Religion and American Politics*, eds. Noll and Harlow, 80.

the constitution of this commonwealth" and would no longer have to attest to specific religious beliefs. And yet, later in Article IX, Section 4, the same constitution required that "no person, *who acknowledges the being of God and a future state of rewards and punishments*, shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this commonwealth." So, although the constitution had *fewer* religious requirements, the state of Pennsylvania still limited the right to serve in government to theists who believed in an eternal heaven-hell dichotomy. North Carolina and New Jersey did the same, requiring religious professions, even Protestant professions, until 1835 and 1844 respectively.¹⁹

States which entered the union in the two decades *after* the ratification of the Constitution continued this practice as well. The inaugural constitutions of Kentucky (1792) and Indiana (1816) both called for religious freedom, but only for those who worshipped God. The constitutions of Tennessee (1796) and Mississippi (1817) required religious tests for office, declaring that "no person who denies the being of god, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of the state." The vast majority of the delegates at the Tennessee convention supported some form of religious test, leaving most discussion to the *specificity* of the

¹⁹ John Wilson, "Religion Under the State Constitutions," 764; Constitution of Pennsylvania (1790), on the website of Duquesne University School of Law, at <http://www.duq.edu/law/pa-constitution/constitutions/1790.cfm>, accessed 3 May 2011; Constitution of North Carolina (1835), in *Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1418. Even with the changes to the 1835 constitution, North Carolinians simply exchanged the more exclusive term "Protestant" to the less exclusive term of "Christian." For New Jersey, see Section XIX of the Constitution of New Jersey (1844), in *Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1313-1314. Even in this constitution, which declared that the state would no longer abrogate anyone's rights based on religion, contained the following preamble: "We, the people of the State of New Jersey, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors." Of the first fourteen state constitutions, eleven prohibited Jews and agnostics from holding office, seven prohibited Catholics, and nine limited the right *only* to Protestants. See Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 29.

requirements,. All this, despite the fact that the same document also guaranteed that "no religious test [should] ever be required as a qualification to any Office or public trust under this State." As with most of the earlier states, there was little in the way of serious disagreement on the role of Protestant religion in the new states.²⁰

Religious Establishment in the States

In New England, several states not only maintained Christian language and religious tests after the ratification of the United States Constitution, but continued to maintain established Protestant churches. The national Bill of Rights may have barred Congress from establishing a religion for the nation, but it left the states free to do as they wished. In fact, it was the states with established churches which had *led the way* in demanding the First Amendment's non-establishment clause. And they had done so *specifically* so that they could retain local control over religious establishment.

New Hampshire was a prime representative of this trend. Along with several other early New England states, New Hampshire had established a policy of specifically setting aside land in western towns for the benefit of the first Christian minister to settle there. These laws allowed towns to approve the sale of these ministry lands, but ordered

²⁰ Section XI, Article 3 of the Constitution of Kentucky (1792), website of the Kentucky Court of Justice, <http://courts.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/7471028C-8BCC-41A2-BA80-02013D4FA550/0/1stKYConstitution.pdf>, accessed on 9 March 2012; Article I, section 3, of the Constitution of Indiana (1816), website of the State of Indiana, <http://www.in.gov/history/2460.htm>, accessed 9 March 2012; Article VIII, Section 2 of the Constitution of Tennessee (1796), Tennessee State Library Archives Online, http://www.tn.gov/tsla/founding_docs/33633_Transcript.pdf, accessed 31 May 2011; Constitution of Mississippi (1817), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Thorpe, 2044. In his article on the writing and ratification of the Tennessee Constitution of 1796, John Barnhart argues that despite some argument over the specificity of the Christian religious test for office in Tennessee, "there is no evidence that many delegates were opposed to a test of some kind." See John Barnhart, "The Tennessee Constitution of 1796: A Product of the Old West," *The Journal of Southern History*, 9 (Nov. 1943), 545-46. This religious test would not be removed from the constitution until 1834. Even then, freedom remained only for those who worshipped "Almighty God."

that the profits be directed toward to the support of religion in that town. As the first two decades of the 1800s passed, religious denominations other than the favored Congregationalists gained measures of freedom from the establishment. In a string of toleration acts, the state government gave religious groups the right to designate their taxes toward the *general* support of religion, rather than directly to the Congregational church. This relative freedom came for Episcopalians (1792), Baptists (1804), Universalists (1805), and Methodists (1817), finally culminating in an act of toleration for all Christians in 1819, and the disestablishment of the Congregational Church.²¹

Connecticut kept its established church just as long as New Hampshire, until 1818. However, even after the people voted to disestablish the Congregational church, things remained much the same. Granted, their new Constitution and Declaration of Rights guaranteed the free "exercise and enjoyment of religious profession" to all persons in the state. But even while the constitution would do away with the specific establishment of Congregationalism, it retained the general establishment of Protestant "religion." Article Seven of the Constitution of 1818, entitled "Of Religion," is telling:

It being the duty of all men to worship the Supreme Being, the Great Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and their right to render that worship in the mode most consistent with the dictates of their consciences, no person shall by law be compelled to join or support, nor be classed with, or associated to, any congregation, church, or religious association. But every person now belonging to such congregation, church, or religious association, shall remain a member thereof until he shall have separated himself therefrom in the manner hereinafter

²¹ McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 911. New York enacted a similar law beginning in 1781, which set aside state land, particularly in upstate New York, for the support of religion and schools. See John Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity*, 114-115. Connecticut enacted a similar law as well, allowing all money gained by the state from the sale of western lands to be put toward an endowment for the support of religious ministry and schools of education in western towns. Before 1818, the vast majority of these profits went directly to the Congregational Church. See McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 968; and John Wilson, "Religion Under the State Constitutions," 760.

provided. And each and every society or denomination of Christians in this State shall have and enjoy the same and equal powers, rights, and privileges; and shall have power and authority to support and maintain the ministers or teachers of their respective denominations, and to build and repair houses for public worship by a tax on the members of any such society only, to be laid by a major vote of the legal voters assembled at any society meeting, warned and held according to law, or in any other manner... If any person shall choose to separate himself from the society or denomination of Christians to which he may belong, and shall leave a written notice thereof, with the clerk of such society, he shall thereupon be no longer liable for any future expenses which may be incurred by said society.²²

In essence, this section of the new constitution affirmed the disestablishment of Congregationalism, while simultaneously establishing the authority of the state to require tax-based support for the Christian religion. The state could no longer compel anyone to support any *particular* religious group. However, it empowered individual churches to compel its members to pay taxes to them, provided that a majority of voters within that religious assembly approved of the tax. Furthermore, even though the state could not compel public attendance at any particular religious meeting, it maintained its authority to oversee religious attendance by requiring that anyone who wished to "separate" from his present "society or denomination of Christians" formally notify the clerk of that society. If a person desired to change denominations, say, for example, because they did not want to pay to support a Congregational mission to the Iroquois, they could not simply leave. They had to file notice with the Congregational church, and by proxy, with the state. Otherwise, state law required that they continue to pay their tax

²² Connecticut Declaration of Rights and Constitution of 1818, *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Thorpe, 537, 544-545.

to the local Congregational church and its mission, regardless of whether they worshipped there or supported its various religious or missionary projects.²³

Thomas Jefferson and the Relationship between Church and State

Connecticut's early constitutional history in particular bears special weight for this study of home missions in the early republic. Connecticut Congregationalists were some of the most active missionaries in the early republic. As I have detailed in Chapter One, they established in 1798 one of the earliest, most ambitious, and successful mission societies in the entire period: the Missionary Society of Connecticut. Much of this society's early success depended upon interdenominational cooperation within the United States, and transatlantic cooperation with British evangelical mission societies. But a third form of cooperation also contributed to the success of this Connecticut Congregationalist mission: cooperation between church and state.

For scholars of constitutional history, Connecticut's church-state story has long been considered one of the most important. In addition to its importance for understanding the enduring vestiges of religious establishment in America, Connecticut also set the context for the most important phrase in the study of church-state relations in American history: the "wall of separation between church and state." Thomas Jefferson

²³ The state of Massachusetts also maintained an established cooperation with the Congregational church. Article III of its 1780 Constitution guaranteed that the legislature could "authorize and require, the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies-politic, or religious societies, to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the publish worship of GOD, and for the support and maintenance of public protestant teachers of piety, religion and morality." The various towns would determine to whom these taxes would be paid, but in the vast majority of cases, it went to the Congregational Church, the descendants of the original Puritan settlers of the early 1600s. This practice would continue until the people of the state voted in favor of the eleventh article of amendment to the state Constitution, thereafter disestablishing all churches in Massachusetts. This happened in 1833 – more than four decades after the ratification of the Federal Constitution. See Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, at <http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=266>, accessed 26 May 2011.

used this now-famous phrase in 1802 within the context of correspondence with a Baptist association regarding religious requirements in Connecticut. Since then, that phrase has generated more discussion over the relationship between church and state in the early republic (and beyond) than any other.

Scholars have mined the depths of each major term in Jefferson's phrase – "wall," "separation," "church," and "state" – in hopes of defining precisely what Jefferson prescribed as the proper distance between church and state in American government. With this scholarship in mind, I want to propose the following: rather than asking first how separate Jefferson wanted church and state, we should start with the fact that Jefferson demonstrably sought some form of *cooperation* between the two, and then identify what this cooperation looked like. By assuming that the wall between church and state was *neither* "high" nor "impregnable" for Jefferson, but porous, we will gain a better understanding of two things: first, how churches and governments interacted during the period, and second, how religious societies like the Missionary Society of Connecticut were able to legally and successfully make the most of this cooperation.²⁴

Thomas Jefferson's thought serves as an excellent window into understanding the relationship between church and state in the early decades of the republic for several reasons. First, he served in both the Virginian and United States governments from the 1770s through the first decade of the 1800s, which gave him a broad perspective on the

²⁴ Principal among these works are Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation*; John Fea, *Was America Founded*; and Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA, 2002). The phrase "high and impregnable" comes Justice Hugo Black's opinion in the landmark 1947 Supreme Court case, *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947). The full text of this case may be found online at the United States Supreme Court Center, <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/330/1/case.html>, accessed 26 May 2011.

issue, at various levels of government. Second, Jefferson gave this nuanced subject the respect due it, by writing and speaking about it with great complexity. Third, some of Jefferson's particular experiences immediately became prototypical in discussions about church and state, including his famous use of the "wall of separation" metaphor, his drafting of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and his discussions about the meaning of the religious clauses of the Constitution. Finally, Jefferson enthusiastically continued some of the practices of his predecessors, including using government funds to support religious works, such as missions. All of these reasons will function as supporting background for my argument: Jefferson's thoughts and practice indicate that the norm of church-state relations in the early republic was not separation, but cooperation.

Thomas Jefferson: Cheese, Church, and State

On January 1, 1802, President Jefferson received a 1,235-pound Mammoth Cheese as a gift from a group of Baptist admirers in Cheshire, Massachusetts. It was delivered by John Leland, a Baptist pastor who had become an American celebrity over the preceding two decades. In the 1780s, he had been instrumental in turning the Baptist votes in Virginia toward Jefferson and Madison as they successfully fought for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church. In the 1790s, Leland returned to his native New England to lead the charge for the disestablishment of churches in Connecticut and Massachusetts. For Leland, and for many Baptists, Thomas Jefferson represented the pinnacle of hope for all who desired religious disestablishment in the United States. Long a champion of this ideal, Jefferson was happy to have the enthusiastic support of

Protestants for his goal, particularly amidst the vitriol poured upon him by Protestants who allied with the Federalist Party.²⁵

Later on January 1, 1802, the same day that he received the Mammoth Cheese from his Baptist allies, President Jefferson sat down at his desk to pen a letter of reply to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut. After a meeting in October of 1801, the leaders of the congregations in the Danbury Association had written to President Jefferson to congratulate him upon his recent assumption of the Presidency and to establish common cause with him in extending American religious liberty. “Our hopes are strong,” they wrote, “that the sentiments of our beloved president...like the radiant beams of the sun, will shine and prevail” throughout the United States.²⁶

²⁵ For a more complete telling of the story of the “Mammoth Cheese,” see Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Separation*, 9-17. It is essential to remember here the distinction between “disestablishment” and “separation.” Baptists lauded Jefferson for promoting the disestablishment of particular churches. However, this does not mean that they advocated the idea of separation church and state, or religion and politics, altogether. In fact, Philip Hamburger argues that “no Baptist organization or even any individual Baptist has thus far been identified who unmistakably took such a position” as the complete “separation of church and state.” On the contrary, most Baptists held the belief that religion was the fount and source of *all* things, including their governments and personal political participation. William McLoughlin argues similarly by saying that no Baptists “ever utilized Jefferson’s phrase about the wall of separation,” even though Jefferson used the term with them specifically in mind. See Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, 172-77; and William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent*, 1013. Jefferson was so popular among Baptists, especially in Virginia and the New England states, that apocryphal stories about his love of Baptists were common. For example, in 1828, two years after Jefferson’s death, *The Western Religious Magazine* reprinted a story from *The Christian Watchman*, in which Andrew Tribble, a Baptist pastor in Virginia, claimed that Jefferson had attended meetings at his church for several months before the Revolution. When Tribble asked Jefferson “how he was pleased with [Baptist] Church Government...Jefferson replied that...he considered it as the only form of *pure democracy* that then existed in the world, and had concluded that it would be the *best plan of Government for the American Colonies*.” Tribble would not say “to what extent this practical exhibition of Religious Liberty and Equality operated on Mr. Jefferson’s mind” later. See *The Western Religious Magazine*, 2 (Dec. 1828), 109-110.

²⁶ Thomas Jefferson to Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, and Stephen Nelson, a committee of the Danbury Baptist Association in the state of Connecticut, 1 January 1802, online at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:2:/temp/~ammem_IL1Y:](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:2:/temp/~ammem_IL1Y:;), accessed 31 May 2011. For a well-rounded discussion of the letter to the Danbury Baptists, its historical context, and its legacy, see the Forum on the subject published in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 56 (Oct. 1999): 775-824.

The immediate context of their letter was this: Connecticut Baptists in 1802 lived in a state which still maintained an established church, the Congregational Church. As a result, through compulsory taxes, governmental support for Congregational projects (like the Missionary Society of Connecticut) and general social prejudice, Baptists felt that they were being deprived of religious liberty. For this reason, despite the fact that Jefferson clearly did not hold to most orthodox Christian doctrines, Baptists throughout the land had supported Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800. Jefferson continued to represent the cause of religious liberty for all religious groups, regardless of his own religious preferences.²⁷

After taking office in March of 1801, President Jefferson made it known that he would not publicly endorse a particular religion, nor would he in his official presidential capacity call upon the nation to participate in public prayers or fasts. Americans of all stamps, especially Federalists, were shocked. How could the President of a country dominated by Christianity *not* call for the nation to observe Christian prayers and practices? Jefferson's decision was all the more surprising because he made it with perfect knowledge that both of his predecessors – George Washington and John Adams – had regularly led the nation in these religious acts.²⁸

²⁷ For informative and balanced views on Jefferson's religion, see John Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*; David Holmes, *Faiths of the Founding Fathers*. On the election of 1800, see John Ferling, *Adams vs. Jefferson: The Tumultuous Election of 1800* (Oxford, 2004).

²⁸ Later, Jefferson would express respect for his predecessors, acknowledging that every leaders had to “act according to the dictates of his own reason.” Still, he would hold to his belief that by proclaiming such religious observations, the executive would assume unconstitutional power for the general government. See Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Miller, 23 January 1808, online at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(tj110010\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field(DOCID+@lit(tj110010))), accessed 1 June 2011.

So, when Jefferson sat down to reply to the Danbury Baptists on 1 January 1802, questions about the constitutional relationship between church and state were prominent in his thoughts. He thanked the Baptists for their kind sentiments, and assured them that he believed like them: “that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God,” and that the powers of government should not be able to dictate the religious beliefs of citizens. For this reason, he rejoiced in the national Constitution, “that act of the whole American people” which declared that the legislature should not establish any religion, nor prohibit the exercise thereof, “thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”²⁹

For most scholars, and for most people, the discussion over the relationship between church and state in the early republic begins and ends here, after running square into the wall of separation. But Jefferson’s historical context demands that we look further into this metaphor, to determine just how high and impregnable Jefferson meant for it to be. Take, for example, the fact that on 3 January 1802 – just two days after he emphatically declared his belief in the separation of church and state – President Jefferson attended a Christian worship service, hosted by the House of Representatives, led by none other than John Leland, the Baptist minister who had delivered the Cheshire cheese. Jefferson was even reported to have sung Psalm 100 along with the rest of the congregation. If Jefferson could walk into a government building for church service only days after declaring his support for the separation of church and state, and approve

²⁹Thomas Jefferson to Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, and Stephen Nelson, a committee of the Danbury Baptist Association in the state of Connecticut, 1 January 1802, online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:2:./temp/~ammem_IL1Y::, accessed 31 May 2011

the use of federal funds for Christian missions to Indians, then his views *must* be more complicated than a single metaphor. In fact, Jefferson never even used the phrase “wall of separation” again after this letter. For him, and for most American political leaders, the “wall” metaphor was only one helpful tool in explaining church-state relations, and not a definitive or final word on the meaning of the First Amendment.³⁰

A Federal Interpretation of the Constitution and the Early Republic

We can make better sense of the continued cooperation of government with churches in the early republic if we understand that during this era, government and religious leaders embraced what has come to be known as a "federal" or "separate-powers" interpretation of the Constitution. This interpretation argues that the Constitution did not have the role of *separating* religion and the state wholesale, but instead, the role of demarcating the *jurisdictions* of the general and state governments regarding religion. In short, as Daniel Dreisbach argues, Jefferson’s “wall of separation”

³⁰ These anecdotes are often used by writers associated with the religious right as evidence for supporting the idea that Jefferson was a Christian, or that he wanted the United States to be a Christian nation. While I do not subscribe to such arguments, which take a few anecdotal truths and extrapolate entire theories out of them, it is still important to acknowledge that these facts exist, and that they should play a part in our historical interpretation. Jefferson's church-attending event was recorded by startled Federalist congressman Manasseh Cutler, in his diary on January 3, 1802. See discussion of this event in James H. Hutson, "Forum: Thomas Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists: A Controversy Rejoined," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 56 (Oct. 1999): 785-86. Hutson further argues that because Jefferson personally attended church regularly, allowed Executive personnel (like the Marine Band) to participate in church services at the House, made government buildings (including the Treasury, War Office and Supreme Court) available throughout his tenure, "it is accurate to say that on Sundays during Jefferson's administration the state became a church." I will discuss Jefferson's role in supporting missions to Indians in Chapter Three.

did not separate all religion from all governments. It separated the jurisdictions of the federal and state governments in regulating religion.³¹

This means that in trying to understand early-republic church-state relations, we should keep two important distinctions in mind: that the general and state governments had complementary jurisdictions, and that there was a crucial distinction made between national *establishment* of religion and national *cooperation* with religion. Understanding these distinctions will help people understand the complexity of views on church-state relations in the early republic, especially the fact that there was never a single unified understanding of it.³²

Once again, Thomas Jefferson's story is instructive. While involved in Virginia politics, or while discussing the powers of states, Jefferson consistently defended the right of state governments and officials to endorse or support religious causes. He regularly demonstrated a willingness to allow, and even pronounce religious proclamations in colonial and state settings. However, when discussing the national scene, or while holding national office, he refused to endorse the very same practices. So, while he would make reference to God in his public speeches as President, he would not proclaim or endorse national days of prayer, fasting, or thanksgiving as his predecessors had done. He clearly adhered to two separate, yet consistent ideals: that the

³¹ Daniel Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Separation*, 56. For an excellent critique of the "separationist paradigm," see John Wilson, "Religion, Government, and Power in the New American Nation," in *Religion and American Politics*, eds. Noll and Harlow, 79-92. Wilson argues for a perspective on religion and the Framers which is more immediately contextual. Despite the importance of the issue of religion to future generations, he argues that religion was a secondary (although important) issue, subordinated to the immediate goal of producing a viable general government which still protected the rights of the states to govern their own affairs.

³² Fea, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, 146.

Constitution should limit the national government's ability to regulate religion, and that the same Constitution allowed the various states to regulate religion as they pleased.³³

He expressed these ideals in a letter to Reverend Samuel Miller of New York City on 23 January 1808. This was the same Samuel Miller who had spearheaded the formation and leadership of the New York Missionary Society and the Missionary Society of Connecticut in the late-1790s. During his two-decade ministry in New York, Miller never made a secret about his interest in state and national politics, and about the active role he believed religion should play in each. In late-1807 and early-1808, some of Miller's clerical brethren had petitioned him to write President Jefferson regarding such a church-state matter. He and his friends wished to know, hypothetically, how the President would respond if he were asked merely to "recommend" a day of "Fasting, Humiliation, and Prayer." *Recommending* such a day, they believed, would differ from officially *calling for* or *instituting* the observation of such a day. Five days later, President Jefferson replied. He thanked Miller for writing him, expressing personal "satisfaction" in having the opportunity to provide his views "in a private letter." This medium, Jefferson believed, would allow him to explain his views more fully than he typically could in a public address. In addition, Jefferson was glad that the clergymen had allowed him to express his views *before* they demanded action, as it would be "more agreeable to prevent than to refuse" a request which he did not have the authority to grant, namely, the authority to endorse national observances of religion.³⁴

³³ Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Separation*, 58.

³⁴ Ironically, later in his life, Miller looked back on this period of political engagement with "entire disapprobation and deep regret...I was wrong in suffering myself to be so warmly and actively engaged in *Politics*...For though ministers have the rights and duties of citizens...yet when party politics

In his response, Jefferson explained that even by “recommending” such a day, he believed he would “*indirectly* assume...an authority...which the Constitution has directly precluded.” As President of the nation, he had no such constitutional authority. As to why he might have recommended such a day as a state official, but not as a national official, he explained:

I consider the government of the US. As interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises. This results not only from the provision that no law shall be made respecting the establishment, or free exercise, of religion [in the 1st Amendment], but from that also which reserves to the states the powers not delegated to the U.S. Certainly no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the general government [the 10th Amendment]. It should then rest with the states.

This web of church-state relations demands that we reject the idea that a paradigm of complete “separation” ruled the early republic in favor of something more complex, more flexible, and more truly federal in nature. That paradigm is cooperation.³⁵

State Provisions for Religion and Morality – Cooperation

Ironically, hardly anyone, not even the Danbury Baptists, would take up “the wall of separation” as a mantra for their views on church and state. Most Christian groups like them, which opposed religious establishment, *also* opposed the idea of a

run high...I cannot think that their given their votes can have an importance equivalent to the injury it is likely to do." From Samuel Miller, *The Life of Samuel Miller, D.D.LL.D.: Second Professor in the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, at Princeton, New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1869), 129-133; Samuel Miller to Thomas Jefferson, 18 January 1808, online at http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:2:/temp/~ammem_g3je::, accessed on 1 June 2011.

³⁵ Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Miller, 23 January 1808, online at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(tj110010\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mtj:@field(DOCID+@lit(tj110010))), accessed on 1 June 2011 (emphasis is in original). In the next chapter, I will argue that even Jefferson wasn't entirely consistent on this matter. He, his predecessors, and his successors deemed it constitutionally acceptable to appropriate national funds to Christian missionary societies, providing that the funds were used to perform a secular service to the nation, i.e., establish good relations with neighboring Indian tribes.

secular, or neutral nation. In other words, while they supported the separation of the powers of church and state, they also supported the *cooperation* of church and state, and a strong role for Protestant religion in the politics and society. In sum, while many groups like the Danbury Baptists supported the idea of disestablishment, they did not endorse the idea of complete separation. These were very different terms, with very different meanings.³⁶

In their dual support for disestablishment and cooperation, the Baptists of the early-1800s represented the views of the majority of the American population. Low-church Baptists, high-church Episcopalians, deists, and agnostics alike had begun to simultaneously call for *both* disestablishment, *and* government promotion of religion and virtue. Even the great leaders of the “separation” charge – Jefferson and Madison – believed government should play some role in promoting religion and virtue, provided it did so without showing favoritism to one group above others. The only people in the early republic who seem to have argued for a complete separation of religion and government were anti-clerical, often anti-religious dissidents like Thomas Paine. And Thomas Paine, who had once been an American hero in 1776, found himself despised by

³⁶ Similar arguments can be found in Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, 19-20; Dreisbach, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation*. David Sehat argues: "Removing financial support was not, to evangelicals' minds, the same as separating religion from the state...Because the good of the whole required upholding the system of morals religion provided, the separation of church from state should not mean a removal of religious ideals from government. The scope and limits of that connection were at issue, *but not whether there should be a connection at all.*" See Sehat, *Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 32-33, italics added.

most Americans in the early-1800s, because of his sustained attacks on orthodox Christianity and its role in American government and society.³⁷

This dual-thought process goes far in explaining how even as the disestablishment of religious institutions spread throughout the United States in the early nineteenth century, a second kind of establishment took hold: a "moral establishment." David Sehat argues keenly that as evangelicals Protestants like Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians ascended to a majority religious position in the early nineteenth century, they articulated a specific vision of America: a country with no established religious institutions, but which maintained governments and laws based fundamentally on Christian morals. In other words, while they supported the idea that governments should drop all funding of particular churches, they encouraged significant, broad-based connections between religion and the state to remain.³⁸

This support for the government's role in promoting religion and morality can be found throughout the constitutions and laws of the states and the nation in the early republic. In fact, from 1776-on, almost every state made some kind of provisions for the promotion of religion or morality in their state as a necessary component for creating a good society. Some states, like Virginia and Maryland, instituted "general assessment" laws in the revolutionary era. These laws required all citizens to pay taxes toward the

³⁷ From Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, 60, 170-71. Thomas Kidd argues similarly, that even after Virginia's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom was adopted in 1786, "no one seems to have seriously contemplated that separation of church and state meant that the state should stop promoting public virtue or that the state should be hostile to the interests of religion. The need for public virtue remained a largely unquestioned belief of Americans steeped in Christian republicanism." See Kidd, *God of Liberty*, 185, 169. Thomas Paine's most famous work which drew the ire of most Americans was his *The Age of Reason*, published in 1794 and 1795.

³⁸ Sehat, *Myth of American Religious Freedom*, 53-54. Sarah Barringer Gordon makes a very similar argument in her article, "Blasphemy and the Law of Religious Liberty in Nineteenth-Century America," 682-719.

support of religion in the state. The state would then use the taxes to support religion *generally* in the state, rather than supporting only one particular denomination. Many other states, like Vermont, codified laws for the "encouragement of virtue and prevention of vice and immorality." States kept such laws in force for decades, in line with the various Christian denominations they approved. Finally, several states determined that it was the responsibility of the state to use public funds to support religious education. In Ohio, in the tradition of many of the New England states, legislators established constitutional law in 1803 which would provide continual income for "each and every denomination of religious societies" formed in the state.³⁹

Even more telling, as late as 1815, the Supreme Court of the United States argued in favor of the constitutionality of government support for religion. In the case of *Terrett v. Taylor* (1815), the court was charged with deciding whether the Episcopal Church of Alexandria, Virginia, continued to hold exclusive rights to its property. A

³⁹ On Virginia's "General Assessment" tax, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Thomas Kidd, *God of Liberty*; and Paul Razor and Richard Bond, eds., *From Jamestown to Jefferson: The Evolution of Religious Freedom in Virginia* (Charlottesville, 2011). For the general assessments in other states, see the Constitution of Maryland (1776), Maryland State Archives Online, at <http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/003145/html/m3145-0196.html>, accessed 8 March 2012; Section XLI of the Constitution of Vermont (1777), from the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/vt01.asp, accessed 8 March 2012, which reads: "Laws for the encouragement of virtue and prevention of vice and immorality, shall be made and constantly kept in force." This would be done within the context of support for all "religious societies" approved by the state. The New Hampshire constitution of 1784 declared that "morality and piety, rightly founded on evangelical principles, will give the best and greatest security to government," made provision for religious education and encouraged the work of local religious bodies in their benevolent efforts. See Constitution of New Hampshire (1784), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Poore, 1281-1291. For Ohio, see the Bill of Rights, Article 8, Constitution of Ohio (1802), from the online archives of the Ohio Historical Society, at <http://www.ohiohistory.org/resource/database/funddocs.html>, accessed 1 March 2012. The Mississippi Constitution of 1817 had a similar provision for religious education. See Article VI of the Constitution of Mississippi (1817), in *The Federal and State Constitutions*, ed. Thorpe, 2045. Many of the early colonies and states (Connecticut and Vermont, for example) had promoted this same practice, providing public land for religious societies, and using profits from land sales to support them.

voluntary religious society, the overseers of the poor of the Parish of Fairfax, argued that as a condition of the American Revolution and the subsequent disestablishment of the Episcopal Church in Virginia, the church should relinquish its exclusive rights to the property in favor of the public good. In its decision, the court denied the plaintiffs' claim to the land and upheld the rights of the church and its leaders to its property as a private corporation. In its broader argument, however, the court went further, weighing in on the issue of the relationship between church and state in America. First, it affirmed heartily the general principle of religious disestablishment for both Virginia and the nation. Under this principle, no religious society could have "exclusive rights and prerogatives or compel the citizens to worship...or to pay taxes to those whose creed they could not conscientiously believe." However, the court simultaneously affirmed the principle of government cooperation with religious societies:

But the free exercise of religion is not restrained by aiding with equal attention the votaries of every sect to perform their own religious duties, or by establishing funds for the support of ministers, for public charities, for the endowment of churches, or for the sepulture of the dead, nor did either public or constitutional principles require the abolition of all religious corporations.

In Virginia, and throughout the United States, the Supreme Court argued that government could – and implied that it *should* – contribute money toward the support of religion, provided that it contributed "equal attention" to "every sect," without preference. This sort of *general* cooperation with religion, the court argued, was constitutionally acceptable, and good for the nation.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Terrett v. Taylor* (1815), from the US Supreme Court Center online at <http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/13/43/case.html>, accessed on 12 March 2012.

Altogether, two things should be clear about the relationship between church and state in the states during the first four decades of the early republic: First, that most states provided some level of religious toleration and freedom. Second, that at the same time, *most* states continued to privilege and cooperate with Christian churches and organizations. States protected this cooperation with churches by promising *full* religious freedom only to theists, requiring religious tests, passing laws and providing funding to support religion and morality, and even supporting the establishment of particular Protestant denominations. The national government would protect this cooperation by arguing that its support for religious projects was constitutional, if done without exclusivity, and as part of a broader goal (diplomatic relations, a virtuous society, etc.). On the whole, it is abundantly clear that rather than trumpeting the benefits of separation, most Americans, in most states, agreed that *cooperation* with the churches and religious groups was a good and necessary practice. The following section of this chapter will support this argument by surveying the many ways in which governments and government officials promoted and practice cooperation with Protestant mission societies in the first three decades of the early republic.

Home Missions and the Cooperation Between Church and State

As I have already discussed in Chapter One, the home missions movement flourished in the early years of the republic, spreading rapidly to every state and territory, and capitalizing on evangelical ties through both interdenominational and transatlantic systems of cooperation. The home missions movement, however, did not thrive on evangelical sentiments alone. During this same period, as I argue in the first

half of this chapter, governments and government officials consistently gave Protestantism a place of privilege, often explicitly supporting it in both law and practice. Home missions reaped the benefits of this symbiotic relationship by drawing energy, protection, and promotion through sustained cooperation with governments and government officials throughout the early republic.

In the following half of this chapter, I aim to illustrate this cooperative relationship between home missions and the state by telling the story of two missionaries, their 3000-mile trip across America, and their encounter with General Andrew Jackson. While telling the story, I will highlight three forms of church-state cooperation which marked the relationship between home missions and governments in the early republic. First, and most obvious, I will focus on direct government-subsidization of missions, as established by state laws and promoted by government officials. Second, I will focus on government-subsidization of missions through *practice*. This section will argue that when government employees, while in their offices, promoted, provided for, or practiced missions, they were doing so as *de facto* agents of the state, even if tax-based funding was never *officially* set aside for such purposes. Finally, I will discuss what I call a "culture of cooperation" between governments and missions in the early republic. This section will springboard off my argument in the previous half of this chapter – that most Americans and their leaders decried the idea of *complete* separation of church and state and instead encouraged governments to promote religion and morality – in this case, missions.

John Schermerhorn, Samuel Mills, and the Missionary Tour of 1812-1813

With zeal that had been simmering since his boyhood years, Samuel Mills set out from Hartford, Connecticut, in the Fall of 1812 on a missionary tour of the western and southern states and territories. John F. Schermerhorn, a Dutch Reformed minister from New York, joined him on the tour. Under the patronage of the Massachusetts Missionary Society and the Missionary Society of Connecticut, these two men sought to “perform missionary services,” promote the establishment of Bible societies, and inquire into the “religious and moral state of that part of the country.” The entire trip would last about nine months, the two men traversing portions of almost every state and territory east of the Mississippi River. Mills starting in Connecticut, and Schermerhorn in New York, the two men took different routes through New York and Pennsylvania, meeting in Cincinnati in October. From there, they traveled along the Ohio River, visiting communities in Ohio, the Indiana Territory, and Kentucky. Leaving the path of the Ohio River, they passed through Frankfort, Lexington, and Nashville on their way to Franklin, Tennessee. They arrived on December 29, 1812.⁴¹

Mills and Schermerhorn were welcomed in Franklin by Reverend Gideon Blackburn. Blackburn had himself arrived in the area in late-1810, after spending seven years as a missionary to the Cherokee nation (a story I will discuss in detail in Chapter Three). In 1811, after moving to the Franklin area, Blackburn founded a school named Harpeth Academy, and hoped to work as an itinerant missionary-preacher in eastern

⁴¹ All details regarding this missionary tour are taken from two sources: Gardiner Spring, *Memoir of Samuel John Mills* (Boston, 1829), 59-70; and John F. Schermerhorn and Samuel J. Mills, *A Correct View of That Part of the United States Which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains, with Regard to Religion and Morals*, (Hartford, 1814). Another secondary description of this missionary tour can be found in Colin Goodykoontz, *Home Missions*, 139-143.

Tennessee. Schermerhorn and Mills would have been welcome visitors to Blackburn, and to the supporters of missions in eastern half of Tennessee. Charles Coffin, who helped form the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799, and served at the time as president of Green College in eastern Tennessee, reported that only two "missionary bod[ies]" existed in the entire region west of the Alleghany. With the help of local pastors like Blackburn, and influential leaders from the northeast, like Mills and Schermerhorn, Coffin had high hopes that missionary work would soon begin in earnest in his region.⁴²

Church, State, and the Tax-Based Subsidization of Missions

This entire missionary tour was built upon the foundation of the first form of church-state cooperation in missions which I have identified: state-subsidized cooperation through established taxes and law. Religious projects like missions often received this sort of support during the early republic, on both the state and national level, and within the contexts of both religious establishment and disestablishment. The major players in this particular story – John Schermerhorn, Samuel Mills, and Gideon Blackburn – all hailed from backgrounds in which either their state government, or the national government, provided financial subsidization for their cause.

Samuel Mills was born in Connecticut, and John Schermerhorn in New York. By the time of their missionary tour in 1812, each of these states had accumulated decades-worth of tax-based support for religion. As I have already discussed, Connecticut had established the Congregational Church as the official religion of the

⁴² Schermerhorn and Mills, *A Correct View*, 25-26.

state. For decades, it had funneled both tax dollars and profits from land sales to the Church and its various religious projects. In the case of New York, as I will discuss extensively in the next chapter, the state had contributed thousands of dollars to Protestant mission societies and their missions to neighboring Indian nations, especially those of the Iroquois League. The state of New York would continue to donate money directly to the missionary cause, regularly contributing funds to the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York in the 1820s and early 1830s.⁴³

Schermerhorn and Mills embarked on their journey under the patronage of the Massachusetts Missionary Society and the Missionary Society of Connecticut, two of the largest and most influential missionary societies of the early 1800s. Both of these societies represented the Congregational Church, which in 1812, remained the established church in each state. In Connecticut, this chain of partnership between missionary work, the Congregational church, and the state went back over two decades. While the General Assembly of Connecticut had always supported the work of Congregational missionaries, in 1792, it took new steps toward publicizing it. After a request from the "religious societies and Congregations" of the state, the Connecticut legislature sponsored a collection for missions, authorizing the first Sabbath in May as a day set apart for donations. The first of these state-sponsored collections produced \$1,200, the equivalent of four missionaries' annual salaries. In order to supplement member contributions, profits from publications, and general giving, these state-

⁴³ For example, the Annual Reports of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York record \$50 donations from the "General Government" from 1828 to 1831, sometimes in individual donations, sometimes in quarterly installments of \$50. These annual reports may be found at the American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta, GA.

sponsored contributions would continue for two decades, up through the time Schermerhorn and Mills made their missionary trek across the country.⁴⁴

As we will see in the next chapter, Reverend Gideon Blackburn's presence in Tennessee in 1812 had much to do with church-state cooperation as well, except this time, on the *national* level. While a missionary in Cherokee territory in the decade preceding his move to Tennessee, Blackburn received thousands of dollars in monetary aid from the general government. Ostensibly, this money came from the War Department, and was earmarked for promoting diplomatic relations with Indian nations bordering United States territories and states. Regardless of how the money was officially designated, it is undeniable that the general government, supplied by public tax dollars, gave money directly to people like Gideon Blackburn, whose primary vocation was not "diplomat" or "ambassador," but "missionary."

General Jackson Gives the Missionaries a Free Ride

When Gideon Blackburn met Schermerhorn and Mills, he eagerly opened his home to them, and they agreed to stay the night. He was happy to share any information about the area, having lived and traveled through it for the past decade. In particular, Mills and Schermerhorn wanted information on the expediency of pursuing their course down the river to New Orleans. He thought their plan an excellent idea, and volunteered

⁴⁴ "Minutes of the Doings of the Committee of the General Association of the State of Connecticut, relative to the Missionaries to be sent into the New Settlements; begun June 20th 1793," Yale Library MSS., entry for 16 July 1793, in Goodykoontz, *Home Missions*, 113. For more examples of these state-sponsored contributions, see *The Constitution of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1800), 8; and *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1808), 11.

to assist them in making the necessary preparations. Blackburn took the two men to meet a friend who might be able to help them: General Andrew Jackson.⁴⁵

When Mills and Schermerhorn set out on their tour in the Summer of 1812, Andrew Jackson was living just east of Nashville on his plantation, the Hermitage, likely very perturbed. Although he held the rank of major general in the Tennessee militia, he had not yet technically served active duty or led any troops in combat. What he had experienced was his share of political troubles, most notably in the early-1800s when he got mixed up with Aaron Burr during Burr's supposed conspiratorial years. This had undeniably cost him some measure of social, political, and military standing. To add to the difficulties, his finances remained in shambles.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the nation's finances were just as shaky, coming out of years of crippling embargoes, and having just entered into war with Great Britain. When President Madison signed the Congress's declaration of war against Great Britain in June of 1812, Jackson quickly offered the services of the 2,500 men under his command. Not only could he improve his personal situation, but he would be able to prove his salt on the crucial Canadian front of the war. Much to his chagrin, President Madison, wary of Jackson's reputation for rashness and his former friendship with Aaron Burr, sat on the request. He ignored Jackson for months. In October 1812, the general government ordered Tennessee Governor Willie Blount to call up 1,500 volunteers to support

⁴⁵ Spring, *Memoir of Samuel John Mills*, 63-64.

⁴⁶ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York, 1977), 144-164; "Military Man," article from the official website of The Hermitage, online at <http://www.thehermitage.com/jackson-family/andrew-jackson/military-man>, accessed on 21 March 2011. For an excellent, and balanced discussion of Aaron Burr and his role in the alleged conspiracies, see Nancy Isenberg, *Fallen Founder: The Life of Aaron Burr* (New York, 2007).

General Wilkinson in the defense of New Orleans, but specifically noted that they could do without Jackson. Governor Blount, however, thought much better of Jackson, and quickly repudiated the administration's hints at avoiding him. He commissioned Jackson as a major general of the United States, and gave him charge of leading the troops to New Orleans.⁴⁷

When Schermerhorn and Mills arrived in Franklin in late-December of 1812, Jackson was preparing his troops for the arduous winter expedition south. Blackburn knew Jackson personally, along with many other federal and state officials in the area, including Governor Blount. This, coupled with the fact that he and Jackson both espoused Presbyterianism, gave Blackburn confidence to speak openly with the General about the intentions and needs of two traveling missionaries.

Jackson did not disappoint. "Having become acquainted with our design," Schermerhorn wrote, General Jackson "invited us to take passage on board his boat. We accepted his invitation; and after providing some necessary stores for the voyage, and making sale of our horses, we embarked the 10th of January, 1813." In the company of 2,000 Tennessee volunteers, Schermerhorn and Mills set out down the Cumberland River, and toward the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. It would be a long and difficult journey. Physical conditions plagued the expedition the whole way. The Ohio River

⁴⁷ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 165-77; The Hermitage website, <http://www.thehermitage.com/jackson-family/andrew-jackson/military-man>, accessed on 21 March 2011,

constantly clogged with ice as the region experienced one of the coldest winters locals could remember. Three men and a boat were lost during the voyage.⁴⁸

Yet amidst these difficulties, Schermerhorn and Mills also experienced unanticipated successes. General Jackson enjoyed their presence throughout the journey. With his support, they collected subscriptions from the staff and field officers upwards of one hundred dollars to be paid to the Nashville Bible Society. “To see such...regard for the good of society,” Mills reminisced, “made our hearts to leap for joy.”⁴⁹

Government Officials and the De Facto State-Subsidization of Missions

Already under the patronage of the Massachusetts Missionary Society and the Missionary Society of Connecticut, Schermerhorn and Mills had now garnered the de facto state-subsidized support of the general government through the *practice* of General Jackson. Granted, no one sent a bill through Congress naming John Schermerhorn or Samuel Mills as a specific recipient of federal tax dollars. This would have been an example of direct, state-subsidized support of religion. Nevertheless, an employee of the general government (General Andrew Jackson), while performing his official government and military duties (leading troops to New Orleans), provided support to two missionaries who requested passage.

⁴⁸ Schermerhorn and Mills, 49; Samuel Mills and John Schermerhorn, *Communications Relative to the Progress of Bible Societies in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1813), 5-6; Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 173.

⁴⁹ Rachel Jackson to Andrew Jackson, 8 February 1813, from *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, vol. 2, eds. Harold Moser and Sharon MacPherson (Knoxville, 1984), 361-62; Mills and Schermerhorn, *Communications*, 6; Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 173-74.

For Jackson, and for most Americans, there was no contradiction between his responsibility to uphold the First Amendment on one hand, and using his position to promote missionary activity on the other hand. A professing Presbyterian himself, Jackson sympathized with the missionaries' cause, and viewed it his offer of assistance not as an act of religious establishment, but as an act for promoting the general good of society. In the relatively disorganized areas of new states and American territories, trust in religion and morality to stabilize and organize ran just as high as it did in New England.

This sort of state-subsidization of religion through *practice*, rather than through direct monetary procurement pervaded the United States in the early republic. Again, Samuel Mills' home state of Connecticut was a premier example of this second form of church-state cooperation. Today, local and state governments allow public groups, including religious groups, to make use of government buildings, provided they pay the established fees. This provision of accommodations for religious groups was a common practice in the early republic as well. For example, beginning in 1800, the legislature of Connecticut elected to allow the Missionary Society of Connecticut to use the State House in Hartford for its annual meetings, free of charge.⁵⁰

More consequential than providing public meeting spaces for free, many Connecticut governmental leaders actively used their public positions to promote the cause of missions. Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. did so with great zeal. Born into a historically powerful Connecticut family, Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., experienced a governmental career

⁵⁰ See *The Constitution of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1800), 5.

of great success. His government posts included the following: member of the Connecticut State legislature, Paymaster General for the Continental Army, Military Secretary to General George Washington, first Comptroller of the U.S. Treasury, United States Congressman and Speaker of the House, United States Senator, and Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut. When Governor Oliver Wolcott unexpectedly died in December 1797, Trumbull assumed the role. He would go on to be reelected for eleven consecutive terms as governor, serving from 1797 until his death in 1809.⁵¹

Despite acting as such a prominent government official, Governor Trumbull saw no constitutional conflict in using his office to promote the cause of Christianity and Christian missions. In fact, *because* he had such a prominent position, he believed that he *should* use it to spread the Christian Gospel. And in the first decade of nineteenth-century Connecticut, the premier organization for spreading the faith was the Missionary Society of Connecticut. In a series of annual proclamations, Governor Trumbull publicly extolled the Missionary Society of Connecticut for its service to the entire state. In October of 1798, the General Assembly of the state had passed a resolution authorizing the Missionary Society of Connecticut to collect contributions throughout the state for the next three years. Agreeable to this resolution, Trumbull urged the people of the state on multiple occasions that year to remember that “contributions may

⁵¹ Summarized from material found in John Ifkovic, *Connecticut's Nationalist Revolutionary: Jonathan Trumbull, Jr.* (Hartford, 1977); and the website for the Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. Museum in his hometown of Lebanon, CT, at <http://www.lebanontownhall.org/trumbullbiograph.htm>, accessed 10 June 2011. After this, I will refer to him simply as Jonathan Trumbull, although he should be distinguished from his father of the same name.

be made” to support their work, “not doubting, that this our labor of love will be mercifully accepted and prospered by our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵²

In October 1801, the General Assembly extended this resolution of support for three more years. In March 1802, Governor Trumbull issued another proclamation. In it, he called on the people of Connecticut to remember their “Brethren and Friends” on the “Frontiers” and in “remote and scattered situations.” By giving money to the Missionary Society of Connecticut, the people of the state could do good for these people, and by extension, for the state as well. By 1805, Trumbull would not only be using his position as a platform, but as a pulpit. In his 1805 Proclamation, he explicitly linked the goals of Connecticut with the goals of the Kingdom of God:

Reflecting on the great and important benefits which have hitherto resulted from this benevolent institution [the Missionary Society of Connecticut], to our emigrating brethren and friends, in their new and distant settlements...let us persevere...humbly hoping and praying, that the Great Head of the Church, will add HIS blessing more and more to our feeble attempts to advance HIS kingdom and interest in the world, -- and that HE will in HIS own time, bring all men to a knowledge and acceptance of the SAVIOUR, and a full obedience to HIS divine and holy Will.⁵³

In 1808, the support of the Connecticut government became even more important to the success of the missionary society. Until 1808, the MSCT drew a substantial portion of its revenue from sales of the *Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, a periodical dedicated to providing missionary news. Despite earning over \$800 in profit for the Missionary Society of Connecticut in 1807 (enough to pay the annual salaries of two

⁵² Governor Jonathan Trumbull, “A Proclamation [Authorizing Contributions for the Support of the Missionary Society of Connecticut],” (Hartford, 1801).

⁵³ Governor Jonathan Trumbull, “A Proclamation [Authorizing Contributions for the Support of the Missionary Society of Connecticut],” (Hartford, 1802); Governor Jonathan Trumbull, “A Proclamation [Authorizing Contributions for the Support of the Missionary Society of Connecticut],” (Hartford, 1805).

missionaries), its editors decided to discontinue publication. Without this revenue, the support of the legislature would be all the more crucial to their success. For the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut, and for government leaders such as Governor Jonathan Trumbull, the good of the state's people and government hinged upon the spread of the Gospel. The “kingdom” of Connecticut would not succeed unless the Kingdom of God succeeded.⁵⁴

During the early republic, such religious proclamations and endorsements of missionary societies were commonly accepted as constitutional, provided they happened within the confines of the states. On March 4, 1805, while Governor Trumbull was signing his Proclamation advocating the extension of the Kingdom of God in Connecticut, President Thomas Jefferson was delivering his Second Inaugural Address. In that address, Jefferson expressed his support for this very principle:

In matters of religion, I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the constitution independent of the powers of the general government. I have therefore undertaken, on no occasion, to prescribe the religious exercises suited to it; but have left them, as the constitution found them, under the direction and discipline of state or church authorities acknowledged by the several religious societies.

Even Thomas Jefferson, who argued extensively for curbing church-state cooperation on both the state and national level, acknowledged that Governor Trumbull’s desire to promote the cause of Christian missions from his state-subsidized post was well within the limits of Constitutional law.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *A Narrative on the Subject of Missions, for the Year 1807...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1808), 11.

⁵⁵ Thomas Jefferson, “Second Inaugural Address,” from The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau2.asp, accessed 10 June 2011. In addition to proclamations of support for particular organizations (like missionary societies), government leaders on both the state

Schermerhorn and Mills Visit the Mississippi and Louisiana Territories

After almost six weeks of travel with General Jackson and his Tennessee militia, Schermerhorn and Mills' missionary-military expedition arrived in Natchez, a major river-port in the Mississippi Territory. Mills and Schermerhorn wasted no time and immediately began organizing a local Bible society. The first meeting yielded discouraging results; only five people attended. The two missionaries were not deterred. With those five people, they wrote a constitution, and appointed a future date for its official adoption. On that later day, a much larger, more “respectable meeting of the citizens” convened. Along with the crowd, Mills learned that “a number of the officers of the general government for the [Mississippi] territory; and...his excellency governor [David] Holmes” were in attendance. Not only did the federally-appointed Governor Holmes attend the meeting of the Bible society, but he “was placed at the head of the institution.”⁵⁶

State officials' cooperation with the missionary tour for Schermerhorn and Mills did not stop here. Writing later from New Orleans in April 1813, Samuel Mills described in detail their journey and activities in the preceding month. After parting

and national levels regularly issued other religious proclamations. The most popular were public calls for thanksgiving, fasting, and prayer. Governors throughout the states called for such days, particularly during times of distress, such as the American Revolution and the War of 1812. For an analysis of public fast days during the Revolution, see Spencer McBride, "'With United Hearts and Voices': The Courtship of Providence and Patriotism in America's Revolutionary Fast Days" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, 14-17 July 2011, Philadelphia), 15 July 2011. Thomas Jefferson encountered harsh criticism for refusing to call for *national* days of thanksgiving, prayer, or fasting. Jefferson refused, despite the fact that both George Washington and John Adams had regularly made such religious proclamations. For good studies of the role of public officials in promoting special days of religious observation, see William Gribbin, *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven, 1973), especially Chapter 1; and Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York, 2008), Chapter 15.

⁵⁶ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 174; Mills and Schermerhorn, *Communications Relative*, 6-7.

ways with General Jackson, Schermerhorn and Mills had boarded a flat bottomed boat bound for New Orleans. After one week on the river, they arrived at New Orleans on March 19, 1813. Having met with some friends, they immediately sought out the governor of the newly-created state of Louisiana, William Claiborne.⁵⁷

By the time William Claiborne won the gubernatorial election of 1812, he had already passed the bar in Virginia, practiced law in Tennessee, served as a United States Congressman from Tennessee for four years, garnered an appointment as the governor of the Mississippi Territory, worked as a federal commissioner of the newly-acquired Louisiana Territory in 1803, and served as territorial governor of the Territory of Orleans for ten years – and all that by the age of thirty-seven. Like Andrew Jackson, Claiborne also had a history of creating political environments friendly to Christianity. As members of the constitutional convention of Tennessee in 1796, both Claiborne and Jackson helped create the state constitution which allowed only theists who believed in a "future state of rewards and punishments" to hold public office in the state.⁵⁸

Claiborne received the missionaries and listened to their goals: to prepare the way for missionaries to spread the gospel generally, and specifically, to establish local Bible societies which would support the distribution of Bibles in the area. Claiborne enthusiastically approved. Mills reported that a “proposal for a meeting was readily signed by him, and by 12 members of the Legislature who were then in session.” With

⁵⁷ Schermerhorn and Mills, *A Correct View*, 49-50.

⁵⁸ "CLAIBORNE, William Charles Cole, (1775-1817)," in the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000408>, accessed 23 March 2011; Article 8, Section 2 of the Tennessee Constitution of 1796, the Tennessee State Library Archives Online, http://www.tn.gov/tsla/founding_docs/33633_Transcript.pdf, accessed 31 May 2011.

one meeting, the missionaries had gained the explicit support of at least thirteen key members of the Louisiana government.⁵⁹

Schermerhorn and Mills were thrilled to meet a friendly face, and a Protestant one at that. Upon arriving, they had sought out Protestant ministers, in hopes of establishing local chapters of Bible societies and collecting information for mission societies back home. They discovered that only two Protestant ministers resided in the city – one Baptist and one Methodist – and that both men planned to leave the city soon. As far as they knew, the first Protestant minister to ever visit New Orleans had come only one year before. There was not so much as one organized Protestant congregation or building in the entire city. In fact, they found such a general dearth of religion among the people of New Orleans that even the Catholic priests, who the missionaries assumed would be hostile to their cause, enthusiastically supported their work. Father Antonio had to assure them that even if he had some measure of de facto authority over the religious life of a largely-Catholic New Orleans, he would not use it to hinder them. With so few Bibles or other evidences of any sort of Christianity, Father Antonio wondered how the missionaries could doubt his willingness to spread the faith.⁶⁰

Home Missions and a Culture of Cooperation in American Governments

This enthusiastic involvement of Claiborne, Holmes, and the government officials around them exemplifies the third, and most pervasive form of church-state cooperation I want to illuminate: the culture of cooperation in American governments.

⁵⁹ Schermerhorn and Mills, *A Correct View*, 50.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35, 50.

As we have seen, sometimes state entities cooperated with churches and missions directly, by providing them with tax-subsidized money and resources. Other times, as was the case with General Andrew Jackson and Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., governments and government employees cooperated with missions by using their official positions to provide support. In these cases, no money changed hands, and no tax dollars were specifically earmarked for such support. And yet, agents of the state used the positions and resources provided them to aid religious groups. But the most common form of church-state cooperation occurred as part of this "culture of cooperation," in which public officials, as individual citizens, promoted the cause of Protestant religion, from the territorial legislatures, to state houses, to the President's cabinet.

When we recall this story of the missionaries soliciting the support of Governors Holmes and Claiborne, it is important to remember at least two things: First, that neither the missionaries nor the governors of the territories saw any conflict of interest in blending the engines and aims of church and state. In fact, since the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, federal territories had been the site of the cooperation of the church and state, possibly on a higher level than what occurred in the states proper. Second, we should remember that these governors, along with the other government employees around them, perceived no "wall of separation" which would bar them, as

individuals, from publicly endorsing an explicitly religious project – missionaries establishing a Bible society.⁶¹

The mission-supporting activities of the governors of the states and territories provide some of the best examples of this cooperation. As I just discussed, the federally-appointed governors of the Mississippi and Louisiana Territories, without using tax dollars or tax-subsidized government property, cheerfully offered their support to missionaries John Schermerhorn and Samuel Mills. Governors John Sevier and Willie Blount of Tennessee were also well known for their public support of missions in Tennessee. In 1807, Sevier wrote a public letter of support to the Presbyterian Church's national Standing Committee on Missions, expressing his "hearty approbation" for the committee's mission to the Cherokee. When Mills took his second such tour in 1814-15 with Daniel Smith, he reported similar gubernatorial cooperation:

We have mentioned a number of places in which an earnest desire was manifested to have missionaries sent among them. This was not the desire of a few individual Presbyterians merely, but of many of the officers in the civil government of the Territories and some of the most respectable citizens of various denominations. The three Governors and a number of judges in the respective Territories expressed to us their feeling upon the subject. Gov. Edwards, of Illinois, has been for some time endeavoring to obtain a Presbyterian preacher there; - and Gov. Posey, of Indiana, proposed himself to write to some missionary society to obtain one for his neighborhood.

⁶¹ Article Three of the Articles of Compact in the Northwest Ordinance stated that "religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, Schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Text of the Northwest Ordinance available from the Avalon Project of the Yale Law School, at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nworder.asp, accessed on 4 August, 2011. This sort of language went even further than would the Federal Constitution or the Bill of Rights, in that it not only provided for religious freedom (in Article 1), but argued that religion and morality were necessary to government, and that they should be part of the government-supported system of education. For an excellent discussion of the role of religion in the crafting of the Northwest Ordinance, and on its role in influencing the Bill of Rights, see Nathaniel Hamilton Wiewora, "'Pure Religion of the Gospel...Together with Civil Liberty': A Study of the Religion Clauses of the Northwest Ordinance and Church-State in Revolutionary America," (M.A. Thesis, Florida State University, 2007).

Later, in 1826, when the American Home Missionary Society named its first Vice Presidents (through donation or election), the list included four sitting governors of states: Cornelius Van Ness of Vermont, Albion Paris of Maine, David Morrill of New Hampshire, and most prominently, DeWitt Clinton of New York.⁶²

The governors and government of Connecticut had fostered this culture of cooperation all along. When the Missionary Society of Connecticut formed in 1798, *all* of its leaders – the six clergy and six laymen elected as trustees – counted themselves among the most politically and economically influential of the denomination, and of the state. Five of these trustees – Jonathan Brace, Jonathan Davenport, Roger Newberry, Hemen Swift, and Jonathan Treadwell – held offices in the Federalist Connecticut government. Governors like Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. provided constant support. With such a cooperative environment, establishment would have merely been a bonus.⁶³

Many of the missionaries of the MSCT enjoyed similar political connections while on their assignments. On his journey through the Michigan Territory in July 1805, missionary Joseph Badger received a warm welcome from Governor William Hull in Detroit. Badger reported of Governor Hull:

[He] expressed a high degree of approbation that the missionary business had been attempted among the Indians; he thought it a most benevolent design. He told me he would use his influence with them to encourage their attendance,

⁶² Standing Committee, 16 April 1807, 242. Ashbel Green, a principal leader of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. during the early republic, made special mention of Governor Sevier's support in his *A Historical Sketch or Compendious View of Domestic and Foreign Missions in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1838), 50; Samuel J. Mills and Daniel Smith, *Missionary Tour Through that Part of the United States which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains; Performed Under the Direction of the Massachusetts Missionary Society* (Andover, 1815), 19-20; *Constitution of the American Home Missionary Society* (New York, 1826), 14-15.

⁶³ James Rohrer, *Keepers of the Covenant*, 63; DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*, 39.

and...He hoped this missionary society would continue their exertions to diffuse knowledge among them."

In 1805, the federal government barely maintained control over any of the newly-created Michigan territory outside of Detroit. Because various Indian nations controlled the land, one of Governor Hull's primary goals in office was to develop friendly relations with them, and consolidate federal reach into the territory. Without establishing a church, or offering publicly-funded services to Badger, Hull made sure that Badger and other missionaries would find a cooperative atmosphere for Christian missions in the Michigan Territory.⁶⁴

In its 1815, Rev. Timothy Flint had decided to base his mission for the MSCT out of Cincinnati, Ohio, where he believed he could "spread extensive information" and "collect more hearers" than could be brought together by a "continually travelling Missionary." Still, Flint desired to travel well outside of Cincinnati to share the gospel with those spread out through the territories. Such a life could be difficult, leaving a missionary in a different place each night. For missionaries new to the area, with few friends or contacts, it would be even more difficult. After some time, however, Flint could cease worrying about where he might lodge, "having fixed a few stations where he could go at regular intervals, and alternate his labors." With such stations, he could cross the Miami River to reach the western portions of Ohio, and even make trips to Indiana.

One of these stations was located at North Bend, a village on the Ohio River, seventeen miles downriver from Cincinnati. There, he could count on none other than

⁶⁴ Badger, *Memoir*, 103.

General William Henry Harrison, United States Representative from Ohio, former Governor of the Indiana Territory, future President of the United States, and according to Rev. Flint, “a gentleman very friendly to the mission.” Harrison expressed his interest in Flint and his mission, and “politely offered his house as a place of worship.” The Trustees were ecstatic that such an important government official would use his resources to advance the causes of the mission: “How strikingly true it is, that in every part of the world where the gospel is sent, the Lord raises up some to be friendly to the cause, and give it aid and support!” When Reverend Flint first preached from Harrison’s home in November 1815, he had fewer than thirty congregants. But by February 1816, only three months later, Flint reported “200 hearers” at Harrison’s home. “The house was crowded, and so large a congregation was never seen” in that place. Again, by offering his home to a missionary for worship services, Harrison acted as an individual supporter of missions, without using any government funds for his activities. There would be no official blending of the *institutions* of church and state in his home. And yet, through his personal involvement with and support of the missions societies, he helped create a culture of cooperation in the West, in which the realms of church and state became intertwined.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The American Revolution was truly revolutionary for the direction of church-state relations and religious freedom in the United States. Jettisoning the model long-

⁶⁵ *Eighteenth Annual Narrative of Missionary Labors, Performed Under the Direction of the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1817), 10-12.

held by Britain, in which the church and state often functioned as one entity, controlled by a common leader, the United States opted for a system in which the governments of the state and the churches functioned separately. From 1776-on, the country's direction would be toward disestablishment.

And yet, at the same time, both national and state governments actively maintained systems of cooperation between church and state, particularly in the world of home missions. This system assumed that churches and governments needed to work together in order to maintain and improve American society. Separation between church and state, or disestablishment, meant that the state should refrain from providing financial support to one group *exclusively*. But for the government to provide money and support for religious groups *generally*, for the equal benefit of all involved – this church-state cooperation was accepted, and promoted, as a basic tenet of American society.

CHAPTER IV
THE COOPERATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN PROTESTANT
MISSIONS TO AMERICAN INDIANS, 1789-1815

When President George Washington stepped into office in 1789, he promptly turned his attention to Indian affairs. With Indians in every state and territory claimed by the United States, the country could not afford to carry on without a strategic plan for dealing with them. From the earliest days of colonization, up through the days of the Articles of Confederation, individual settlers and states routinely ignored treaties with Indian nations, particularly stipulations which drew boundaries and limited migration. Many Americans had believed that the only effective way to deal with Indians was to simply push them out. Such strikingly different people, in their minds, could never fit within American society. Washington was not so pessimistic.¹

In 1789, when Washington inaugurated the nation's first Indian policy under the Constitution, he set forth a vision of assimilation, in which the United States would eventually draw all Indians east of the Mississippi into American life. His goal was to teach them English, make them farmers, and systematically apportion their land into individual plots. Land not claimed or used would revert to the general or state governments. Once they were self-sustaining, they could be admitted to the Union as

¹ For works on European-Indian and American-Indian relations in early America which have been influential for my thoughts, see Colin Calloway, *New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America* (Baltimore, 1997); James Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill, 1989); Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country* (Cambridge, MA, 2003); Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2007); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991)

full and equal citizens within fifty years. Henry Knox, Washington's Secretary of War, argued that by this process, the United States government could lead Indians to a state of "future life and happiness." This would simultaneously "reflect honor on the new Government" and serve as a step toward righting the many wrongs of the "lawless whites" of the frontier.²

But who would be the teachers of these arts? Who would carry these ideals from the cities of the East to the unsettled Indian lands of the states and territories? Military men and land surveyors often traversed Indian lands, but these were hardly the sorts of people who had both the ability to educate Indians in American ways, and the desire to do so. Knox thought there might be a better way for the United States.

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gave the Congress of the United States the power to regulate commerce with all Indian tribes. From the first days of the Constitution, this power would be interpreted rather broadly, giving the general government leeway to pursue the diplomatic and economic relations with various Indian nations which would be most advantageous to the United States. With a vision for assimilation, and the power to regulate all interaction with Indian tribes, the general government actively pursued cooperation with the only body of Americans who were

² For American conceptions of Indian policy in the earliest years of the republic, and for Washington's assimilation plan, see Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York, 2009), 123-133; Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York, 2006), Chapter 5-9; R. Pierce Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians: Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government* (Saint Louis, 1966), Chapter 2; and William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven, 1984). 1-3. For Henry Knox's statement, see General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, to the President of the United States [George Washington], *American State Papers*, II, 52-53, online at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsp&fileName=007/llsp007.db&recNum=53>, accessed on 11 August 2011.

both able to teach the Indians and desirous of staying with them on a permanent basis: missionary societies.

Knox held chief responsibility for Indian policy, and he suggested to President Washington the idea of sending "presents" to Indians, as well as money for agricultural assistance and "the domestic arts." Gift-giving and exchange had long played an important role in establishing goodwill between parties in European-Indian relations. What was different is that Knox supported the idea of the United States government funding missionaries to accomplish these goals. Knox advocated missionaries who would not only "effect the civilization of Indians" by teaching Christian morality, but who would also act as agents of government policy. Missionaries should be of "excellent moral character" and should be considered "instruments to work on the Indians." To foster these friendly relations, Knox proposed that "presents should commonly pass through [missionaries'] hands or by their recommendations." "Such a plan...might not fully effect the civilization of the Indians," but it would almost certainly bring the "salutary effect of attaching them to the interest of the United States. He presented this course of action in a report to President Washington on July 7, 1789, three months after Washington's inauguration.³

Washington completely agreed. The following month, Congress appropriated \$20,000 "for the expense of negotiations with the Indian tribes." President Washington and Secretary Knox sent joint instructions to the commissioners negotiating with the tribes of the South. These instructions ordered commissioners to negotiate peace treaties

³ Ibid., 54.

with the Southern tribes, particularly with the Creek, who staunchly opposed previous treaties which had tried to abrogate their land claims. As part of this treaty-making process, Knox ordered commissioners “to obtain a stipulation for certain missionaries, to reside in the nation.” The goal of these missionary establishments would be “the happiness of the Indians, teaching them the great duties of religion and morality, and to inculcate a friendship and attachment of the United States.”⁴

Washington would regularly express this sentiment: that he supported the Christian work of the missionaries, especially as it related to serving the country. However, in his role as president, it is clear that while he supported the spread of Christianity to the Indians in general, he was primarily concerned with the spread of *peace* with the Indians. In a 1792 letter to Catholic Bishop John Carroll, Washington congratulated him on “instructing the Indians within, & contiguous to the United States in the principles of Christianity.” Not for religion’s sake alone did he congratulate him, but because such religious and philanthropic work helped establish much-needed peace at a time when “war...between the United States and some tribes of the west” prevents much interaction. Washington undoubtedly referred to the ongoing war between America and a confederation of Indian nations for control of the lands including the Northwest Territory. From 1789 to 1791, things had not gone well for the United States

⁴ "Statement of \$20,000 appropriated by Congress on the 20th August, 1789, for the expense of negotiations with the Indian tribes," American State Papers, II, 64-66, at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsp&fileName=007/llsp007.db&recNum=65>, accessed on 18 August 2011; Angela Hudson, *Creek Paths and Federal Roads: Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in the Making of the American South* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 31-33.

in this region, and many feared an additional broad-sweeping war with the tribes of the South.⁵

Missions, although religious endeavors at heart, had the inherent opportunity to play beneficial roles in strengthening the nation, and goodwill toward it. This applied to missions aimed at both white citizens of the empire and their Indian neighbors.

Washington came from an Episcopalian background, and Knox from a Puritan-New-England background. Both traditions had long histories of religious institutions cooperating with state entities in some measure. For Washington and Knox to then inaugurate a plan which explicitly sought the cooperation of religious groups as integral parts of state matters was nothing new, and nothing controversial.⁶

⁵ George Washington to John Carroll, 10 April 1792, from the George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 2 Letterbooks, online at <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw2&fileName=gwpage023.db&recNum=226>, accessed 20 May 2011. This approbation of Catholic missions is rather striking for the early United States, given that most Americans harbored strong suspicions of Catholicism, and given that Protestantism functioned as the *de facto* religion of all the states in the Union. Still, considering Washington's primary concern for the good of the country, rather than the spread of one particular group of Christians, his comments in a personal letter are not that surprising. For more information on the wars between the United States and Indian nations in the Northwest Territory in the 1780s and 1790s see Gregory E. Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore, 1992), Chapter 5; and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York, 1991), 433-468.

⁶ For a summary of church-state collaboration in Indian missions in the British colonial era, see Beaver, *Church, State, and the American Indians*. Like the state and national governments, most Protestants simply accepted this cooperation as commonplace. According to William McLoughlin, "no denomination ever doubted the propriety of this collaboration" in the early years of the republic. See McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 34. McLoughlin correctly notes that even the Baptists, who were arguably the staunchest advocates of the separation of church and state in the early republic, accepted this collaboration without much protest. However, he also minimizes the level of government cooperation by arguing that "Congress had appropriated no specific funds for missionaries or schools" until 1819. All they had done before this, he argues, was give small grants to the Presbyterian missionaries from 1803-1810 and to the Moravian missionaries from 1809 to 1819, but only on an ad hoc basis out of the contingency funds of the federal agent (see footnote 3, on p. 3 of *Cherokees and Missionaries*). While this is *technically* true – that Congress didn't earmark funds specifically for mission societies until 1819 – it is not accurate in *spirit* or *practice*. In fact, from the first contributions to missionaries like Samuel Kirkland during the American Revolution, the government was funding missionaries, even if on paper, the money was meant for diplomatic purposes. One can separate the two on paper, but not in practice.

For the next four decades, both the national and state governments maintained practices which allowed, and even promoted such cooperation with religious missions to Indian nations. Mission societies would play a consistent role in diplomacy with Indian people, in many cases, functioning as the only Americans in regular, friendly contact with them. The state and general governments recognized this, and so made it a priority to fund and communicate with a multiplicity of mission societies and their missionaries. This commitment to supporting multiple religious groups would allow governments to pursue numerous diplomatic projects, while at the same time ensuring that no religious group could accuse them of establishing a single religion. Through such arrangements, both mission societies and governments benefited: mission societies gained much-needed support for their spiritual goals, and governments gained key support for their diplomatic and civilizing projects.

Missionary Societies Assess Church-State Cooperation in Indian Missions

From their beginnings, most mission societies heartily approved of cooperating with governments in Indian missions. There were several reasons for this. First, and most practically, governments provided mission societies with financial resources. Second, explicit government cooperation lent missionary projects a certain level of "official" or diplomatic credibility. Missionaries would not *just* be visiting Indians for religious or personal reasons; they would be visiting with the official goodwill of the United States. Finally, most Christians in general saw their religious projects as integral to the spiritual health and success of the nation. When governments partnered with religious missions, it helped ensure that they were on the right track.

On November 2, 1796, upon the founding of the New York Missionary Society, Reverend Alexander McWhorter preached a sermon entitled “The Blessedness of the Liberal,” which echoed these ideals. McWhorter urged liberal giving to the society so that missionaries could be successful in making all the the peoples of the western regions “peaceable, comfortable, and happy members of the national community.” To succeed in this way with the Indian nations would prove especially beneficial, for Christianity would “thereby humanize and civilize them; [turning] them into men; from bloody enemies, into friends and brothers.” For early mission societies, cooperation with the government was a win-win situation. As emissaries of the gospel, they would save Indian souls. As emissaries of their home governments, they would pave the way for peace and prosperity.⁷

Such cooperation with civil authorities and *their* goals of nationalization and civilization did not sit well with all Christians, or even with all those involved in mission societies. While secular goals like national peace and civilization were laudable, for many, they were not worth it, especially if it meant that the society's religious goals would be subsumed. In 1797, John Mason preached a sermon before the New York Missionary Society, urging its members to take up the great missionary cause to the Indians for themselves. They should not rely on “politicians” to “civilize” the Indians. If mission societies focused primarily on plans to civilize Indians by teaching them English, farming, and industrial skills – the goals of the general government – they

⁷ Alexander McWhorter, *Blessedness of the Liberal: A Sermon preached...Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1796), 21-22. For a general look at the church-state theme in early New York, see John Pratt, *Religion, Politics, and Diversity: The Church-State Theme in New York History* (Ithaca, 1967).

would fail on two counts. First, they would “neglect the religious principle,” the most important part of their mission. Secondly, seeking the civilization of Indians before promoting Christian faith would fail regardless; two hundred years of Indians’ interactions with whites had proven this.⁸

Baptists of the Warren Association, which included churches in Massachusetts in Rhode Island, expressed similar misgivings. At their 1810 meeting, they recorded the following decision:

We now solicit your attention to some things, which obstruct this unity, and which appear to threaten the purity of the churches. One is, their legal connexion with the men of the world in the support of the kingdom of Christ...By an improper affinity of the church and world, the enemies of Christ may obtain an undue influence over the church of God. The history of the people of God...will testify, that whenever they have formed an unholy connexion with his enemies, in religious concerns, it has weakened their own hands, and strengthened Satan’s kingdom.

Such caution would not be characteristic of the early American missionary venture to the Indians. Although mission societies always distinguished between the Gospel of Christ and the goals of the country, they rarely objected to the two working in concert. In fact, even the hesitant churches of the Warren Association still argued that the state should play some role in partnering with religion, at least by assessing and collecting taxes "by the force of civil law, for the support of Gospel Ministers."⁹

For the general government, this partnership with mission societies would prove very beneficial. The government sought the civilization of Indians and peace with them

⁸ John M. Mason, *Hope for the Heathen: A sermon preached in the Old Presbyterian Church before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1797), 42-43.

⁹ Minutes of the Warren Association [of Massachusetts and Rhode Island] (1810) (Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA), Nashville, TN); Minutes of the Warren Association (1815) (SBHLA, Nashville).

through diplomatic policy. If it took Christian ambassadors and Indian conversions to accomplish this, they were happy to support it. And as long as the primary goal was that of Christianization, mission societies would rarely voice anything but support for vicariously fulfilling the goals of their government.

State Governments, State Missionary Societies, and Indian Missions, 1796-1810

As we saw in Chapter I, the home mission societies of the 1790s were regional or state operations. In accordance with this focus on local matters, these mission societies, if they worked with government authorities, tended to work with them on the state level. Four of the first missionary societies – the New York Missionary Society (1796), Northern Missionary Society (1796), Missionary Society of Connecticut (1798), and Massachusetts Missionary Society (1799) – exemplified this sort of cooperation with their respective state governments from their earliest days.

Unlike Connecticut and Massachusetts, the state of New York did not tax its citizens for the direct support of a particular Christian denomination or religious group. So when the state began assisting both the New York and Northern Missionary Societies in the 1790s, no one could technically claim that the state had *established* religion. Like the general government, the state of New York had its own reasons for investing in domestic missions to Indians, primarily, for the purpose of establishing friendly relations with them, particularly in areas with disputed boundaries. For New York, which was home to the Iroquois Nations and on the border of British Canada, maintaining positive diplomatic relations with Indians was especially important.

New York Missionary Society: Chickasaw and Iroquois, 1799-1804

The first mission established by the New York Missionary Society (NYMS), ironically, wasn't in New York, but on the western borders of Georgia. In February 1799, the Board of the NYMS appointed Joseph Bullen of Vermont as their missionary to the Chickasaw Nation. In a charge to Bullen, delivered in the New Dutch Church of New York City on 21 March 1799, Rev. John Rodgers reminded Bullen that he had "the honour to be the first in entering upon those labours which the liberality of our Christian brethren has enabled us to commence." Hopefully, Rodgers expressed, this first mission would inspire many more in the future. On March 26th, along with his 17-year-old son, Bullen departed. On his way to Chickasaw territory, Bullen made a stop in Philadelphia, where he was greeted by Ashbel Green, a leader in the Presbyterian Church, and Secretary of State Timothy Pickering. While in town, "certain documents from the Government of the United States were cheerfully granted" to him, likely from Pickering himself. These documents were likely of a basic diplomatic nature, notifying the Chickasaw that the general government knew that Bullen wished to minister among them, and that he had their approval. Whatever these documents were, they gave Bullen the official recognition of the United States, something the missionary society coveted. The mission society considered this support vital to their early success, so much so that their reports explicitly credited part of the mission's early success to the "prompt and cheerful assistance...afforded to the mission by the government of the United States."¹⁰

¹⁰ "A Charge to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bullen," in *The New-York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence*, 1 (Jan. 1 1800), 25-31; "Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. Mr. Bullen," printed in *The New York Missionary Magazine*, 1 (Jan. 4 1800), 262-74. For information on Bullen's travels to and from Maryville, TN, see Walter Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old*

The directors of the NYMS coveted such support from the government, because they considered the mission to the Chickasaw as essential to their future missionary plans. Although the Chickasaw were not a numerous or particularly powerful people, William Linn argued at the annual meeting of 1800 that “their peaceable disposition and unvaried friendship for the United States...there being not Missionaries among them, and their neighbourhood to several powerful nations; have induced the society to prefer them as the object of their first efforts.” Should the mission succeed, they would gain access to the Creeks, Cherokees, and Choctaws, all of whom the directors considered more strategic in terms of their projected religious success. "You are entering upon a new and untried scene of labour," they charged him. "Who can tell the consequences of this solemn undertaking!"¹¹

In order to minister to the Chickasaw in practical ways, and so that they could maintain the support of the general government, the NYMS sought to teach the Chickasaw "civilized" activities and lifestyles, in addition to teaching the Protestant religion. After sending Bullen and his son, the NYMS next commissioned Ebenezer Rice as both a catechist (biblical teacher) and a general mechanic. They sent him as part of a group of seventeen settlers, including the ministers' wives and children. In addition to catechizing the Chickasaw in Christian theology, Rice would be expected to help the

Southwest, 1778-1838 (Richmond, 1952), 61. On dates and "certain documents," see "The Report of the Directors," in *Two Sermons Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1799), 98. I have not been able to locate these particular documents related to Joseph Bullen and the New York Missionary Society. However, my conclusion that the documents were likely of a diplomatic nature, introducing the missionary as officially-recognized by the government, comes from seeing a similar pattern in many of the other missions throughout the late-18th and early-19th centuries. "Report of the Directors" in *A Discourse Delivered...in the Brick Presbyterian Church Before the New-York Missionary Society*, (New York, 1800), 39 ("prompt and cheerful").

¹¹ William Linn, "The Christian's Zeal for the Church," in *A Discourse delivered...in the Brick Presbyterian Church*, 28; John Rodgers, "A Charge to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bullen," 25-26.

Indians construct houses, mills, and looms, as well as teach them basic agricultural and domestic arts. Mrs. Bullen, Mrs. Rice, and their daughters would be expected to focus on teaching the Chickasaw women and girls. By teaching broadly, the missionaries hoped not only to convert the Indians' souls, but to transform them into people who could assimilate well into American society.¹²

Soon after Bullen set off toward the Chickasaw mission, the NYMS turned their missionary gaze toward the nations of the Iroquois League. Like most missionary societies of the early republic, the NYMS would begin with a diplomatic deficit in relation to the Indians whom they hoped to convert. The people of New York had a long and difficult history of conflict with the Iroquois. Land ownership had been a source of angst between the Indians and Americans throughout the eighteenth century. During the American Revolution, however, the conflict grew to unprecedented heights. During the 1770s and early-1780s, New Yorkers' longstanding hunger for frontier lands merged with a dread of British power in America. This merging of fears made American settlers even less considerate of Iroquois claims than they had been before. After the United States achieved independence, it retained this insatiable hunger for land, particularly along the borders of the colonies where free settlement had been restricted by the British crown since the Proclamation of 1763. So, while the French and British empires had diplomatically sought "middle ground" with the Indians of the North and middle-East, the United States moved into impose-and-dispossess mode. After Jay's Treaty of 1794,

¹² "Report of the Directors" in *Two Sermons Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society*, 98-99; "A Charge to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bullen," in *The New-York Missionary Magazine*, 25-31; Charles Chaney, *The Birth of Missions in America* (South Pasadena, 1976), 159.

when the United States finally solidified peace with Britain over contested western lands, the pace quickened. As a result, the Iroquois quickly moved from a place of relative power in relation to the British Empire in the 1770s, to a place of constant defense in relation to the United States in the 1790s.¹³

This was especially the case for the state of New York. Since the 1780s, three powers had been vying for control of Iroquoia: the governments of Massachusetts, New York, and the United States. If a government could acquire rights to the land, they would gain one massive advantage: public revenue. By selling the land to settlers, and then taxing the farms of new settlers, governments could make money twice-over, and establish authority of its peoples on the western frontiers. New York pushed ahead in this process in the last decade of the 18th century by simply asserting its will. It ignored the negotiations of the general government with the Iroquois, and due to its geographical proximity, simply beat Massachusetts to the punch. State government officials, squatters, and settlers of all sorts simply took large tracts of land, and forced prices on the Six Nations. By the 1790s, without significant sacrifice, there was little the Iroquois could do.¹⁴

So in 1800, when the New York Missionary Society decided to send Elkanah Holmes as a missionary to the Seneca and Tuscarora (two of the nations of the Iroquois

¹³ Before interacting with missionaries from the new United States, the Iroquois Nations already had already experienced decades of relationships with various European missionaries and their respective empires, including the French and British. For some of this history, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground*; Alan Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 81, 230-234; and Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York, 2002), especially Chapters 5 and 16. For a very helpful collection of both secondary and primary material on the French Jesuit missions to Indians in the colonial era, see *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*, ed. Allan Greer (New York, 2000).

¹⁴ Taylor, *Divided Ground*, Chapters 5 and 6.

League), they had a mountain of goodwill to cultivate. For decades, the Iroquois had suffered loss at the hands of politicians, land speculators, and missionaries alike. The Directors of the NYMS were well aware of this history, and sought to counteract it through the altruistic lives of their missionaries. "An immoral minister of the gospel is everywhere an odious and mischievous character," they claimed, "but an immoral *missionary...is peculiarly odious, and is likely to be an hundred fold more mischievous.*" An ordinary minister in the city might make the faith look bad, but a score of his contemporaries could blot out such a mark on the ministry. But a missionary, as the sole representative of Christianity to a group of people, would carry with him the reputation of all of Protestantism. Clearly referring to the ongoing land controversies between the Iroquois, United States, New York, and other claimants, the directors issued the following exhortation: "We farther instruct you to abstain from all traffic, all buying and selling of lands, all political discussion, and in one word, from every thing which might excite a suspicion that your errand is for any other purpose, or that you have any other object in view, than singly, their spiritual and eternal welfare."¹⁵

And yet, in this very same document, the Directors gave advice on "the subject of obtaining land":

You are to be extremely cautious, as they discover jealous and opposition. We advise that you do not solicit it, but wait for the proposal to come from them; and that you show them that you are not actuated by ambition or avarice, and

¹⁵ "A Charge to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bullen," in *The New-York Missionary Magazine*, 29. The New York Missionary Society would have been well-aware of the controversial actions of Presbyterian missionary Samuel Kirkland over the last couple decades. In *The Divided Ground*, Alan Taylor goes into great detail regarding Kirkland's involvement with missions to the Six Nations, and simultaneous devotion to the United States government and its causes during the Revolutionary and Critical Periods; "Instructions from the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society, to the Missionaries among the Indians," in *The New-York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence*, 1 (Jan. 1 1800), 19.

desire no farther footing or property among them than is necessary in order to your serving them in their most valuable interests...[I]t is our duty to instruct you, that no grant of land is to be accepted by any missionary for his personal emolument; that if any offer be made by the Indians, it shall be sent by you to the Directors of the Society, and accepted by them, if judged proper, for the general benefit of the missions.

It seems as if the mission knew no other model than that which states and churches had been using in America for decades: dispossession (legal, or illegal) of Indian lands. The missionaries were to abstain from even a hint of illegality or mercantile interest. And yet, the Directors made it clear that the mission's goal was to establish schools and churches, preferably on land owned by the society. If that land had to be obtained from Indians, then so be it.¹⁶

Still, it would be unfair to group the missionaries and directors of the New York Missionary Society in with those who simply took Indian land. By 1800, not even the Iroquois saw them in this way. In an address to Reverend Elkanah Holmes of the NYMS on October 20, 1800, Red Jacket the Second Sachem of the Seneca, thanked "the Great Spirit who has put it into the minds of the Great Society of friendship at New-York [the New York Missionary Society]" for sending him to the tribe. "You called on our Brothers the Oneidas, and Muheconnuks, and Tuscaroras," Red Jacket recounted, and "we are convinced that what they say of you is true, that you come purely out of love to do us good...and that there is no deceit in your business." And although "white people" had been "always getting our lands from us," Red Jacket believed that these new missionaries carried no secret designs or snares in their business. As a long-time chief of the Seneca, Red Jacket had experienced a wide spectrum of treaty negotiations with

¹⁶ "Instructions from the Directors," in *The New-York Missionary Magazine*, 23-24.

the United States – from receiving honors from the general government in the decade following the Revolution, to being forced to cede large portions of land to the United States in the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua. When he voiced his approval of and trust in Elkanah Holmes and the NYMS, it confirmed that at least for the time being, this group of Americans was different.¹⁷

From early on, however, this (and other) mission societies cooperated with the state of New York in many of their dealings. In their annual report of 1802, the directors of the NYMS cheerfully reported the support of the Legislature of New York who by a recent act, "extended [their] patronage to the promotion of religion and knowledge among the poor Indians." The Legislature appropriated \$1,500 to the erection of two buildings, "for the purpose of public worship and instruction; the one at the Seneca, the other at the Tuscarora Village." The Directors rejoiced: "when plans so benevolent are supported by such authority, there is every human probability that they will be successful." In 1804, the Northern Missionary Society reported that the Oneida had freely given them lands, and that they hoped to render them "productive so as to meet the expense of the Mission." In 1808, the Legislature of New York officially empowered the Northern Missionary Society to "lease" this land at the mission's discretion. Although the State ordered that the Northern Mission Society "apply the

¹⁷ "Address to the Rev. E. Holmes," printed as an Appendix to John N. Abeel, *A Discourse...Before the New-York Missionary Society, at their Annual Meeting* (New York, 1801), 55-58; On the Treaty of Canandaigua, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Conspiracy of Interests: Iroquois Dispossession and the Rise of New York State* (Syracuse, 2001); and Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground*.

income to the use of the Indians," the Northern Mission Society maintained the power to collect and disperse funds.¹⁸

All of this exchange of land and power meant that the Northern Missionary Society would have a difficult balancing act to maintain. They needed to conduct their mission in such a way that they could achieve their stated religious goals, while still serving the interests of two other groups: the Indians, and the state. On one hand, they stewarded the land in cooperation with the Oneida, for the Oneida's spiritual and temporal benefit. On the other hand, they stewarded land claimed by the State of New York, as part of a broader state goal of maintaining diplomatic peace with the Oneida. Navigating this system of mission and cooperation would mark the work of the NMS and societies like it.

1804: The New York Missionary Society in Review

By 1804, the missions of the NYMS had experienced varying levels of success. The Chickasaw Mission, which received the goodwill of the general government, but no monetary funding from governments, had been "totally suspended." Even though the NYMS had seen increasing receipts for the mission – from \$1,000 in 1800 to nearly \$5,000 in 1803 – the difficulties had outweighed them. Bullen had been ill from the start, and his young daughter had died while there. The mission's holistic approach had led to constant cultural clashes with Chickasaw leaders over subjects as diverse as

¹⁸ "Annual Report of the Directors of the NYMS," attached to Samuel Miller, *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting, April 6th, 1802* (New York, 1802), 69, 67; *Missionary Society: At a Meeting of the Northern Missionary Society of the State of New-York, held in the Town of Troy, 5th Sept. 1804*, (Troy, 1804), 3; *Report of the Directors of the Northern Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting in the City of Schenectady* (Albany, 1818), 3.

marriage, farming, labor. Ebenezer Rice, Bullen's primary missionary partner, had been so abrasive that the Chickasaw had told him to leave after only a year of work. With all of this weighing on him, Bullen communicated to the directors of the NYMS that he found "little prospect of his usefulness" in the future. Accordingly, the directors voted to suspend the mission in November of 1803 and had communicated the unfortunate news to Bullen.¹⁹

In contrast, the NYMS missions to the Seneca and Tuscarora, although experiencing difficulties, continued to thrive. Reverend Samuel Miller rejoiced in his sermon before the annual meeting of the NYMS in 1802, "The heathen on our borders are in a state more tranquil, and more favourable to the reception of the Gospel than ever before." With the \$1500 the New York Legislature had given them, the NYMS reported in the Spring of 1804 that they had completed the building for worship and education among the Tuscarora. Even more encouraging, missionary Elkanah Holmes reported that the congenial nature of his relationship with the people. Leaders in the tribe, such as "Sacharissa, the chief Sachem" and "Longboard, the chief Warrior," had contributed greatly to the cause by supporting his mission. The people as a whole exhibited great interest in his messages. Holmes even expressed confidence in the conversion of several of the Tuscarora to Christianity, something Protestant missionaries were often slow to claim.²⁰

¹⁹ "Annual Report of the Directors," in *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting, April 3, 1804* (New York, 1804), 85; "Annual Report of the Directors," in *Two Sermons Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society*, 98-99; Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 159.

²⁰ *A Sermon Delivered before the New-York Missionary Society, at their Annual Meeting, April 6th, 1802* (New York, 1802), 56, 79-80.

Holmes and the NYMS had a rockier road on the way to settling with the Seneca and establishing strong ties between them and the state of New York. While construction had concluded among the Tuscarora, the "similar house among the *Senecas*, for which the same [\$1500] provision was made by the State," had languished due to opposition within the tribe. They had attempted construction of the building in the Summer of 1803, but the warriors of the nation, "instigated by the Prophet of the Alleghany," temporarily halted progress. The Prophet had plenty of reasons to oppose the intrusion of white men into Seneca life. For years, whites had treated them poorly and commandeered their lands. Many of the Seneca had come to believe that it wasn't even possible for a "good" white man with a "disinterested desire" to exist. However, due to the benevolent perseverance of Elkanah Holmes, the chiefs of the Seneca slowly came around to allowing the NYMS among them. In 1804, Red Jacket held council with Elkanah Holmes and the principal sachems of the Seneca, Onondaga, and Cayuga Nations. He acknowledged to Holmes, "It has been recommended to us by your great Chief General Washington, that we should be united as friends and brothers." After much consideration, he and the other leaders agreed: "We are convinced that the [New York] Missionary Society are friends to the Indians." Holmes, who had reached his early 60s, would remain faithfully among them, missing only one Sabbath in three years. The Seneca Mission lagged behind the Tuscarora mission a while, but with the hard work of long-term missionary Holmes, and the generous contributions of the State of New York, it eventually stabilized.²¹

²¹ Ibid., 80-82; "A Speech Delivered by RED JACKET," in *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-*

The Presbyterian Church in the USA and the Standing Committee on Missions

At the same time that regional missionary agencies had begun to form in the 1790s and 1800s, the seeds of national missionary agencies had begun to germinate. The first such national body would emerge in 1802 from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States in America (PCUSA). Beginning in 1789, the General Assembly had appointed a committee on missions to deal with all matters pertaining to missions during their annual week of meetings. Although this was more regular than the sporadic nature of Presbyterian missions before, it did little more than “establish a regular and permanent fund” to support missions, which did not have an equally regular and permanent body to oversee it.²²

For ten years, the General Assembly used money from this "permanent fund" to support ministers who carried the gospel to areas which lacked Presbyterian churches. For most of the 1790s, however, the General Assembly suffered from a lack of intentionality or detailed planning for the future. Rather than making long-term plans, an annually-appointed subcommittee reviewed current missionary activity, and superintended funds. Rather than seeking out or appointing missionaries, it relied wholly on requests from churches, presbyteries, and synods for missionaries. And they had to complete this work all within the week during which the national General Assembly met each year. After a decade of this, “the duty of sending the gospel, without

York Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting, April 3, 1804, 89-90; "A Macedonian Cry from the Wilderness," extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Holmes, in *The Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 1 (Jan. 1806), 190-91.

²² Standing Committee, 22 March 1804, 105.

solicitation, to regions destitute of it” had become “more sensibly felt, and more easily executed” than ever before. They could not rest on their laurels any longer.²³

In 1800, many of the trustees of the General Assembly began to urge the denomination to organize a new missionary plan. They recommended first an increase of the general missionary fund, which would support more missionaries, produce more Bibles and Christian literature, and would provide better training for catechists who were tasked with systematically teaching the people the theological ins and outs of Presbyterianism. In the Summer of 1802, after two years of recommendations and small steps, the General Assembly took decisive action by establishing the Standing Committee on Missions. This group consisted of seven men (four clergymen and three laymen) who would perennially manage the missionary affairs of the Presbyterian Church, rather than trying to superintend missionary business in one week each year. When the assembly convened each Summer, this Standing Committee would then report the past year’s news.²⁴

In 1802, it was a simple enough proclamation for the Assembly to make – that they would establish a Standing Committee on Missions – but a much more demanding work to complete. The Assembly resolved that the committee would need to collect all information pertaining to missions, “digest” it, and report a summary each year. This involved nominating missionaries for appointment, determining the destinations and lengths of service for those missionaries, reporting on all accounting matters, corresponding with every missionary, procuring a pastor to preach a “missionary

²³ Ibid., 104.

²⁴ Chaney, *The Birth of Missions*, 164.

sermon” at every General Assembly, and making annual statements to the Assembly regarding their assessment of the “diligence, fidelity, and success” of each missionary.²⁵

The Standing Committee held its first meeting on 31 July 1802 at the Philadelphia home of Ebenezer Hazard. Hazard and his fellow committee members brought with them political experience and the clear desire to serve both the causes of Christianity and of the nation. Hazard had served as Postmaster General through the 1780s and had recently published the first collection of official state papers for the national government. His fellow committee member Elias Boudinot had served in the Continental Congress as both a delegate and president-elect, completed three terms in the United States House of Representatives, and as currently serving as Director of the United States Mint, appointed by President Washington.²⁶

As members of the Standing Committee, these politically-involved, nationally-conscious men dove into missionary business. They elected a pastor to preach the missionary sermon at General Assembly of 1803, and wrote a letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) regarding some of their funds which had reportedly been set aside for missions. After being forced to take a break in late-1802 due to “the pestilence” - yet another yellow fever epidemic in the greater-Philadelphia region – the Standing Committee reconvened for business in early 1803. They approved the appointee for preaching a missionary sermon at General Assembly,

²⁵ "Minutes from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," printed as introductory material to the microfilm edition of the minutes of the Standing Committee on Missions of the PCUSA.

²⁶ Fred Shelley, “Ebenezer Hazard: America’s First Historical Editor,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 12 (Jan. 1955), 44-73; George Boyd, *Elias Boudinot: Patriot and Statesman, 1740-1821* (Princeton, 1952).

formed a system for the distribution of books and other missionary materials, and created a plan of correspondence with other missionary societies throughout the world. But one subject in particular troubled them, like a thorn in their flesh: Indian missions. “Missionaries for the Indians,” they reported, “are a great desideratum with the Assembly.” Despite their best efforts, “they had not a single candidate for an Indian mission.”²⁷

Presbyterians were so desperate for missionaries to step up to the task that they were willing to open the door to men without the educational background normally expected in their denomination. “Piety, prudence, patience, [and] perseverance” were the qualifications they sought in a potential missionary to the Indians. “Even [with] the want of an academical education,” a man with “some general knowledge and good understanding” would prove useful in the Indian mission field.²⁸

The Missionary (Mis)Adventures of Gideon Blackburn

The Standing Committee got its first opportunity for a permanent mission to Indians in May 1803 when they entered into conversation with Tennessee-native Reverend Gideon Blackburn upon the subject of a mission to the Cherokees, located along the border of southeastern Tennessee. After conversation, the Committee agreed to employ Blackburn for two months, paying him \$33 1/3 each month, and authorizing

²⁷ Standing Committee, 6 Jan 1803, 5 (“the pestilence”). The epidemic of 1802 claimed hundreds of lives in the greater-Philadelphia region. It was nowhere near as devastating as the 1793 epidemic, but bad enough that it shut down much of the normal business of the city, including religious groups like the Standing Committee on Missions. For statistics on the yellow fever epidemics in Philadelphia in 1793 and 1802, see George Miller Sternberg, United States Public Health Service, United States. Marine Hospital Service, *Report on the Etiology and Prevention of Yellow Fever* (Washington, DC, 1890), 43-47; Standing Committee, 17 February 1803, 12.

²⁸ Standing Committee, 17 February 1803, 12.

him to establish a school and pay a schoolmaster at \$200/year. He would have to report to them each year regarding his progress, but other than that, had freedom to conduct the mission and engage the Indians in whatever way he deemed in the best interests of the mission and the Gospel.²⁹

Blackburn had been considering undertaking a mission to the Cherokee for at least three years. In the Fall of 1800, Joseph Bullen visited him at his home in Maryville, located in northwest Tennessee. As you may recall, Bullen was on his way home for a respite from his missionary work among the Chickasaw. Although he had ample support from the New York Missionary Society, Bullen had remained ill for over a year, ever since he first left for the mission in the Spring of 1799. Encouraged by Bullen's work, despite the illnesses and difficulties, Blackburn expressed his determination to begin a similar mission among the Cherokees on the eastern border of Tennessee. Until 1803, however, he had no support-base for his endeavors.³⁰

But in 1803, with the newfound support from the Standing Committee on Missions, Blackburn had his chance. The Committee encouraged him to seek more funds outside of the church in order to support his year-round venture. Blackburn decided to pay a visit to President Jefferson. Blackburn found some success with him, and the President instructed Colonel Return J. Meigs, a federal agent to the Cherokee, to provide Blackburn between \$200 and \$300 of assistance. This assistance would come as part of the "stipulations" which Henry Knox had ordered set aside out of the general

²⁹ Standing Committee, 27 May 1803, 63-64; 31 May 1803, 84-86; and 1 June 1803, 86-87.

³⁰ Walter Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838* (Richmond, 1952), 61.

government's 1789 plan for diplomatic relations with the Indians. The stipulations detailed on Blackburn's official government certificate were clear:

[As] a missionary to the Cherokee Indians...it is the principal object of the said missionary at present to establish a school for the Indians in which they may be taught to read & become acquainted with some of the principles & arts of civilized life. That as the expense of the contemplated establishment will be considerable & the object of it is of great public importance the said missionary is authorized to receive donations to aid the funds already appropriated thereto from all charitable & public spirited individuals.

As far as the government was concerned, it was contributing to the mission *not* for religious reasons, but for diplomatic reasons. At the same time, the government encouraged the mission society to pursue its own designs and raise funds from wherever it could acquire them. After visiting Washington, D.C., Blackburn traveled during the early summer of 1803 to several eastern cities and raised another \$430 in private donations.³¹

American mission agencies had long considered the Cherokee nation an important target for their work. In 1799, Moravian missionaries had arrived in Cherokee territory along the borders of northeast Georgia and established a school. In April of 1799, on his way to his appointed mission field among the Chickasaw, Joseph Bullen wrote the New York Missionary Society to let them know that "the Cherokees...are desirous of having Missionaries among them." By the Summer of 1803, the NYMS still considered a Cherokee mission strategic, but had yet to capitalize on it like the Moravians, who they admired as "patient, persevering, indefatigable friends to Jesus and the perishing heathen." Only the Moravians had done that, and even they had been

³¹ Certificate provided by Col. Meigs for Gideon Blackburn, 31 May 1803 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA); William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 56.

experiencing difficulties for months. By mid 1803, despite years of their welcomed presence, the missionaries seemed to have accomplished very little: language acquisition was slow (for both Moravians and Cherokees) and converts were few.³²

Thus, when a “Presbyterian minister from eastern Tennessee” arrived in 1803 “with a far better educational offer,” the Cherokees began to seriously consider the option of inviting the Presbyterians in, and forcing the Moravians out. William McLoughlin argues that this event acts as a showcase for understanding that Indians “knew better what they wanted and how to get it than the missionaries did... They wanted education, not Christianity; teacher, not preacher. And they got them.” Significantly, this is also what the general government wanted. They were willing to support missionaries to Indians, provided that the end-result was education and civilization. If Christian conversion acted as the vehicle for that process, then so be it.³³

Because the Presbyterians had no desire to displace the Moravian mission, but only to complement it in another area, the Cherokee ended up cooperating with both missions simultaneously. Blackburn began his work in early-1803 by lobbying for the establishment of a school for the Cherokee along the Tennessee border. After a fundraising tour in the Northeast in the Summer of 1803, Blackburn returned to Tennessee. He visited the Cherokee and “took every opportunity of conversation with the leading characters of the nation” to plug his dream of starting a mission school.

Amidst these visits, Blackburn became better-acquainted with the federal agent to the

³² The letter was written from Knoxville, TN, on April 24, 1799. See the footnote in “The Report of the Directors,” in *Two Sermons Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1799), 99; “Annual Report of the Directors,” in *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society...April 7th, 1802*, 71

³³ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 51-53.

Cherokee, Colonel Meigs. Meigs informed Blackburn that the Cherokee would hold a general meeting of the nation about forty miles from Maryville on 15 October 1803.

Blackburn attended this assembly, which included all of the Cherokee chiefs and nearly 2,000 Cherokee. In a grove south of the Tennessee River, Blackburn made his proposal before the assembly, proclaiming his desire to have the school open by Christmas. The chiefs took the whole of October 20 to consider the proposal, and rendered their answer the following day. A chief named “The Glass” spoke for the nation:

We approve of a school being established in our nation under the superintendence of the Revd. Mr. Blackburn, and hope much good will be done by it to our people: two years are allowed in the first place, that we may have an opportunity to see what progress our children make under the instruction of the teachers, and we will send some of our children to the school.³⁴

Blackburn would not get his Christmas wish, but his first school did open soon after, on 21 February 1804. On the first day of class, he had eleven “scholars” in attendance. By the end of March, twenty students attended regularly. Blackburn was ecstatic: “To see thousands of immortals, capable, by improvement, to vie with a *Boyle*, a *Bacon*, and a *Newton*...would inspire the most stoical mind.” To achieve this end of education and “civilizing,” Blackburn would impose strict rules on the white teachers at the school. The teachers should always show “respectful attention” to each student, so that they might understand that the missionaries viewed them as “equals.” Teachers should work regularly to direct the Indian students to “such exercises and plays, as are practised among the white people,” thereby to change their “diversions” into respectable

³⁴ Gideon Blackburn to Ashbel Green, 2 November 1803, in *Glad Tidings, or An Account of the State of Religion within the Bounds of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; and in Other Parts of the World* (Philadelphia, 1804), 35-36. The October meeting was originally scheduled for 15 September 1803, but was postponed by the Cherokee leadership for reasons unclear to Colonel Meigs.

games. Under every circumstance, the teacher must “avoid entering into the disputes of the nation, or becoming a party in their politics; and thus maintain his influence with the whole.”³⁵

Blackburn immediately notified the Standing Committee of his successes. Although the Committee had recommended that the school remain in United States territory, this plan was unacceptable to the Cherokee, who preferred to not travel long distances to the school, or to leave their children long distances from them. The committee approved Blackburn’s decision to establish the school at Hiwassee, in Cherokee territory, and happily granted Blackburn another year of support in 1804.³⁶

By 1806, Blackburn was experiencing great success. With the funds that Jefferson had granted him, Colonel Meigs had authorized Blackburn to hire a carpenter to build a boys dormitory, a dining hall, and a house for the schoolmaster and his family, which would be large enough to house female students of the school. Within a couple years, and despite the lack of additional funding, Blackburn started a second school at Sale Creek, only twenty miles south of the Hiwassee school. Within a few months, he already had thirty students. The Standing Committee, pleased with his progress, continued to support him financially throughout this period. By 1808, the Committee noted that the general Assembly was Blackburn’s largest supporter, sending him \$500 each year.³⁷

³⁵ Gideon Blackburn to Ashbel Green, 2 November 1803, in *Glad Tidings*, 35-40.

³⁶ Standing Committee, 26 April 1804, 115; 29 May 1804, 140-42.

³⁷ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 56-57; Standing Committee, 20 May 1806, 209.; 23 May 1808, 27.

The General Government Aids Blackburn's Mission to the Cherokee

The Standing Committee of the General Assembly laid claim to the prize for contributing the most money to Blackburn's mission to the Cherokee. But in the same report, they openly acknowledged that they were not the *sole* contributors. In addition to funds from private donors and other mission societies, Blackburn received "some assistance from the government of the United States."³⁸

The Standing Committee regularly acknowledged the cooperation of the general government in their missions, via donations of money and tools for agriculture. In March of 1803, and again in March of 1804, they cheerfully reported that although the general government had never established or "infranchised" the Presbyterian mission, it had nevertheless "afforded some assistance" by "sending a mission to the Indians." More than that, they regularly corresponded with officials of the general government. In a letter to Ashbel Green, the Corresponding Secretary of the Standing Committee, Gideon Blackburn expressed great pleasure in knowing that "The President, the Agent [Colonel Meigs] and all the officers of government are much pleased with the design, and engaged to promote the undertaking by every kind of office in their power. Sure enough, from 1802-1806 alone, the minutes of the Standing Committee note friendly correspondence with Silas Dinsmore (Agent of the United States for Indian Affairs), Return Meigs (Agent of the U.S. among the Cherokee), and even President Jefferson

³⁸Standing Committee, 23 May 1808, 27.

himself. The committee gave thanks that “some officers of the government have decidedly countenanced and encouraged the undertaking” in this manner.³⁹

In 1805, because the Cherokee school was consistently running over budget (despite extra gifts from the Missionary Society of New Jersey), the Committee decided to pursue even more funding from the general government, and on a more permanent basis. Since both mission societies and the general government expressed faith in the benefit of Indian schools for American civilization and government, the Standing Committee hoped to “derive assistance hereafter from the Funds allotted by the United States for that purpose.”⁴⁰

In March 1806, the Standing Committee wrote to President Jefferson and the General Government with a more specific request: a case of smallpox vaccinations. In January 1806, Blackburn had written the Committee with an urgent situation. In late-1805, a Cherokee named Quotaqueskey traveled with one of Blackburn's Cherokee students to Charlestown to acquire "some goods, as he is engaging in the line of merchandising." During their stay, the student contracted smallpox. Unfortunately, although the young man felt sick, no one diagnosed smallpox until he had already returned home, interacted with family and friends, and had likely "spread the infection pretty generally."⁴¹

³⁹ Gideon Blackburn to Ashbel Green, 2 November 1803, in *Glad Tidings*, 36. For the promise to consult the general government, see Standing Committee, 21 May 1803, 44. For correspondence with Silas Dinsmore, see Standing Committee, 7 December 1803, 99; and 21 May 1804, 120. For correspondence with Return Meigs, see 10 May 1805, 163. For correspondence with President Jefferson, see 20 May 1806, 209-10. See also Standing Committee, 31 March 1803; 22 March 1804, 108.

⁴⁰ Standing Committee, 16 May 1805, 172.

⁴¹ To remain consistent, I have followed William McLoughlin in spelling the name "Quotaqueskey." In Blackburn's letter to President Jefferson, the spelling is difficult to decipher, but

Blackburn cut his winter break short, and travelled from his home in Maryville to the school at Hiwassee to assess the situation. Immediately, he asked the state of Tennessee whether any vaccinations were available. The answer: there were some, but none safe for children. Blackburn had a quandry. If he asked the students to accept vaccinations, some might die, which would invite suspicion of him and the mission. If he quickly removed the uninfected children to a new location, without writing to their distant parents first, he might be accused of "kidnapping the children." He resolved to simply stay put, quarantine everyone, and keep a close eye on the students. This seemed the best way to both protect his students, and avoid any suspicion of the mission's intentions and actions. Once again, the Standing Committee believed that it was the responsibility of the general government to aid the Cherokee missions. Not only would a case of smallpox vaccinations possibly save Cherokee lives, but it would save the reputation of Gideon Blackburn and the Presbyterian mission.⁴²

The Presbyterian Mission to the Wyandot

The Cherokee mission was not the only example of this sort of cooperation between mission societies and governments. In 1805, the Synod of Pittsburgh (PCUSA) expressed its desire to send a missionary to the Wyandot tribe, and sought the help of the Committee in obtaining funding, including federal funding. The Committee responded to the synod in three positive ways: First, although the General Assembly did not have

appears to be something closer to "Quotoquiske." The entirety of this event regarding smallpox vaccines for the Cherokee is drawn from a letter from Gideon Blackburn to President Thomas Jefferson, an extract of which is copied in letter from the Standing Committee on Missions to Thomas Jefferson, 13 March 1806. The letter is mentioned in the minutes of the Standing Committee on Missions, 20 May 1806, and but the actual letter is archived at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴² Ibid.

money in the budget for that year, they would consider it for the next year. Second, the Committee notified the synod that a man who wished to remain anonymous had donated \$100 for the Wyandot mission, which the Committee would gladly send along. Third, the Committee promised to work on “obtaining the grant of land from Congress” which the Synod of Pittsburgh was about to petition for. “But,” the Committee regretted, “as we have already had occasion to solicit the General Government on the subject of the [Cherokee] Indian School in the State of Tennessee, we are of opinion that it would rather hinder than help your design.”⁴³

The Committee thus rejected federal funding for the Wyandot mission not because of a moral or constitutional quandary, but because they believed it would prove untimely and inexpedient. In 1805, the Committee believed that the Cherokee mission was the most important mission. It had already invested time, money, and missionaries into the Cherokee mission. Furthermore, the Committee still believed that a successful mission to the Cherokee would prove more strategic than the Wyandot mission, eventually opening up more doors for future missions to Indian nations. With these goals in mind, the Committee did not want to compromise the deal they already had going with the general government by asking for too much. Without requesting funding, the Committee promised the Synod of Pittsburgh that they would “use their influence with individual Members of Congress” on their behalf.⁴⁴

⁴³ Standing Committee, 19 November 1805, 192-94.

⁴⁴ Standing Committee, 19 November 1805, 194.

The Cherokee Removal Crisis of 1807-09

The realms of church and state collided in February 1807 when Chief Doublehead, a chief of the Lower Towns of the Cherokee, was assassinated. Agents of several of the chiefs of the Upper Towns had discovered that unbeknownst to them, and to a vast majority of the Cherokee, Doublehead had been making secret treaties with the general government of the United States, ceding over 10 million acres of land in 1805-06. Although the leaders of the Upper Towns thought their removal of Doublehead would settle the matter, it did just the opposite. Leaders associated with Doublehead proceeded in treaty negotiations with Colonel Meigs, exchanging land in Cherokee territory for land in the western Arkansas Territory. This was all done in secret. Leaders of the Upper Towns found out later that Meigs had led a supposedly-representative delegation of Cherokee to Washington, D.C., on the pretense of honoring President Jefferson upon his impending departure from the presidency. In fact, at least half of the delegation consisted of chiefs of the Lower Towns who were authorized to sign the treaty to relocate some of the Cherokee to the Arkansas Territory.⁴⁵

Blackburn, who had been regularly communicating with federal agents and with the Standing Committee, disapproved of the actions of the Upper Towns. He thought them ungrateful for not cooperating with a general government (and with him, of course) which clearly had their best interest in mind. Chief Doublehead, he argued, had “entered more fully into the real interest of the [Cherokee] Nation than any Indian in it.” But Doublehead was dead, and because Blackburn had sided with him and the chiefs of the

⁴⁵ For a discussion of this event, see Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 161-166; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 72-76.

Lower Towns who had cooperated with the general government (often known as “accommodationists”), Blackburn feared for his life. He requested permission from the general government to move his school northward toward the Tennessee-Cherokee border and into the army fort Tellico Blockhouse. His request was granted.⁴⁶

Throughout this period, the general government functioned with the assumption that missionaries to Indians should act as its agents (in at least an unofficial manner). They revealed this by treating the Presbyterian and Moravian missions to the Cherokee differently during this time.. Throughout the episode, the government communicated openly with Gideon Blackburn and the mission of the Presbyterian Church. Blackburn remained in favor with the government, likely because he tended to side with them in diplomatic relations (specifically, negotiated removal). In the government viewed the Moravian mission to the Cherokee with suspicion.

The Moravian mission had been with the Cherokee a few years longer than the Presbyterians, but in all that time, they had not accepted money from the general government. Their funds for this mission came through private donations. Because of this, they did not have to report to agents of the government regarding the use of their funds. Furthermore, the Moravians maintained a good relationship with Chief James Vann, one of the chiefs of the *Upper* Towns. The Upper Town people were opposed to negotiating relocation of any kind. Even worse for the Moravian reputation - Chief Vann was likely one of a group of Upper Town chiefs responsible for ordering the assassination of Doublehead.

⁴⁶ Gideon Blackburn to Henry Dearborn, Nov. 7, 1807, OSW, M-211, roll 4, #1144, quoted in McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 73.

Because they tended to keep their mission to themselves, and developed friendly relationships among many of the various factions within the Cherokee nation (regardless of whether groups “cooperated” with the general government or not), the Moravians appeared suspicious to a watchful general government. In April 1809, Moravian missionary John Gambold wrote a letter, noting that Secretary of War Henry Dearborn had “complained that we did not give any information to [the] government about what we were doing.” Curiously, in April 1809, Colonel Meigs consulted with Secretary Dearborn and arranged for the disbursement of an annual financial subsidy for the *Moravian* mission school, much like the one given to the Presbyterian mission since 1803. They would receive \$100/year, a sum which was later increased to \$250/year.⁴⁷

This series of events, including the new injection of federal funds into the Moravian mission, evidenced the general government's abiding interest in the role played by mission societies in Indian diplomacy. In the government's view, mission societies had a dual role to play: their stated religious role as Christians, and their expected diplomatic role as Americans. While religious societies viewed this cooperative plan with varying levels of excitement and suspicion, most eventually agreed to participate. If they could receive extra funds for their mission, have an opportunity to serve the broader national interest, and still keep their religious commitment central, the question of whether they were being used by the government seems to have been irrelevant to them.

⁴⁷ John Gambold to Benzien, April 9, 1809 (Moravian Archives, Salem), in McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 74.

Financial Troubles at Blackburn's Cherokee Mission

In January 1808, Gideon Blackburn reported to Ashbel Green, secretary of the Standing Committee, that the mission was running smoothly. He reported progress in his twin goals of sharing the Gospel, and teaching the virtues and practices of Christian civilization. The Indians, he claimed, were “so much in the spirit of agriculture” that they were organizing settled plantations throughout the region. Some had even invited “decent white families to live with them as tenants [to] assist them.” If such cooperation continued, Blackburn was sure that it would “cement the bonds of friendship between the red and white people...and enhance the value of property.” According to his letters, everything was running fine. But in actuality, things were far from fine.⁴⁸

By mid-1809, the mission was not succeeding as well as he let on, and he was experiencing significant financial woes. Due to a curious combination of his mission work, service to the general government, and involvement in private enterprises, *every* group of people he worked with – the Standing Committee on Missions, the Cherokee, the Moravian missionaries, the Creek Indians, and the general government – had come to view him with some level of suspicion.

From 1807 to 1809, Blackburn’s name came up in the minutes of the Standing Committee regularly, and always related to money issues. It seems that despite his widespread support-base, Blackburn was never able to establish a solid economic base to support his grand goals of quickly transforming the Cherokee into educated, agricultural, "civilized" Christians. In May of 1807, short on money, Blackburn requested permission

⁴⁸ Gideon Blackburn to Ashbel Green, 2 January 1808, Maryville, TN, reprinted in the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 5 (Apr. 1808), 434-35.

from his local presbytery and the Standing Committee to sell 120 copies of the Westminster Confession of Faith which had been donated to him for distribution. Because a new edition had been printed, he believed that these would be difficult to sell for a profit. In order to aid Blackburn, the Committee agreed to allow him to exchange the books for “any articles which may be suitable for the [Cherokee] School.”⁴⁹

By November, Blackburn was still in the red. The Committee expressed a desire to send him extra money, but also cautioned Blackburn to be more careful with what they gave him. In a decision unprecedented in their records, the Committee urged a *specific* missionary – Gideon Blackburn – to keep very meticulous records of his expenses and receipts, and to submit copies of these reports to the Committee. Six months later, the Standing Committee prepared their report to the General Assembly, including details regarding Blackburn’s financial woes, and the fact that despite their request, they had not received the financial documentation requested. When his report finally arrived, after the Committee had turned in its report, the Committee found it “satisfactory.”⁵⁰

It could not have been more than “satisfactory,” because by May 1808, Blackburn owed more than \$1300 for expenses at the Hiwassee school. In addition to his general debt difficulties, he was frustrated with the Standing Committee. He had assumed that the \$500/year which the Committee had promised him in 1807 would

⁴⁹ Standing Committee, 23 May 1807, 264-65.

⁵⁰ Standing Committee 3 November 1807, 18-20. Blackburn apparently sent his report soon after the Committee prepared its annual report for General Assembly in May 1808. In their report for 1809, the Committee acknowledged that although they had not received it at the time of the report in 1808, they were happy to report that it had been received since, and that they found it “satisfactory.” See Standing Committee, 22 May 1809, 60-61.

continue indefinitely. In fact, the Committee had only ever promised funds on an annual basis, because they could never be certain just how much money they would have year-to-year. Later that year, Blackburn sent a report to the committee, with a request that the Chairman write Dr. Griffin at the New Jersey Missionary Society on his behalf, requesting additional financial assistance from them as well.⁵¹

By March 1809, the Standing Committee's concern for Blackburn's funds had turned to outright suspicion. From June 1808 to January 1809, Blackburn had written the committee a flurry of letters, urging them to look into his account. He claimed that they had made an error in calculating his funds. At their meeting on March 30, the Committee appointed Ebenezer Hazard to examine their and Blackburn's records. On April 12, Hazard reported that after a thorough examination, "there was no mistake as M. Blackburn supposes." Although the minutes make no further note of Blackburn's finances (except to acknowledge receipt of documentation from him), and never reach the level of outright accusation, the entire episode is conspicuous among missionaries and mission societies of the time.⁵²

Spying and Spirits on The Coosa River

Blackburn's story becomes even more conspicuous – and more pertinent to the issue of the cooperation of church and state – when we consider his mysterious

⁵¹ The total debt on the school was \$1,390.94. See Standing Committee, 23 May 1808, 26-28. The Standing Committee's explained that after their original \$500 of support, "any further extension of the Design it is impossible to carry on the Institution without the aid of greater Funds." See Gideon Blackburn to Standing Committee on Missions, 30 May 1807, included in the Annual Report of the Standing Committee (1808) (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia). The request for funds from New Jersey Missionary Society was reported in the Minutes of the Standing Committee, 30 March 1809, 55.

⁵² Standing Committee, 13 February 1809, 54-55; 30 March 1809, 55; 12 April 1809, 57.

involvement with the Cherokees, Creeks, and the general government from 1807 to 1810. It should come as no surprise that some of the Cherokee would be suspicious of Blackburn. Regardless of his personal character, Blackburn was a white missionary, an outsider, who provoked some measure of suspicion by his mere presence in Cherokee territory. But the Cherokee, especially those of the Lower Towns, had more specific reasons to keep a watchful eye on Blackburn, reasons completely unrelated to his being an outsider.

The Cherokee of the Upper Towns were suspicious of Gideon Blackburn because while he directed schools for Cherokee children, he also seemed to be involved in land speculation, in close concert with both the Cherokee of the Lower Towns and agents of the general government. Knox's original order from 1789 required that Indian commissioners provide basic stipulations of land for missionaries – enough "for the purpose of cultivation" only – but specifically required that the missionaries be "precluded from trade, or attempting to purchase any lands." And yet, John Gambold reported that as early as 1807, James Vann (a chief of the Upper Towns) had told him: "Blackburn is not so disinterested as he wishes to appear; he is a secret Speculator." In truth, by 1809, Blackburn openly supported the secret dealings of Chief Doublehead and the Lower Towns to cede Cherokee land to the general government in exchange for lands in the Arkansas Territory, without the knowledge of the Upper Towns. More than

that, as we saw previously, he noted that one of the best results of Cherokee-American friendship would be an increase in “the value of property” in the area.⁵³

The real collision occurred in April 1809 when, according to Cherokee oral tradition and a wealth of circumstantial evidence, Blackburn’s representatives were caught on the Coosa River in Creek Territory (present-day Alabama) purportedly selling whiskey to Cherokee and Creek Indians. For years, Blackburn had owned and operated a whiskey distillery out of his home in Maryville, Tennessee. There was nothing particularly suspicious about this; Christians, even pastors, did this regularly before temperance began to sweep the nation’s churches in the 1820s. However, the United States Trade and Intercourse Act made it illegal to sell whiskey to any Indian peoples.

Contrary to this law, Blackburn apparently entered into a plan with his brother Samuel and James McIntosh (a former Cherokee student) to purchase some 2,000 gallons of whiskey in Tennessee and carry it by boat downriver to Fort St. Stephen (in

⁵³ For the next few decades, Blackburn would show a propensity for profiting from land-speculation. In the 1830s, he helped found Blackburn College (primarily a theological seminary) almost solely by acquiring funds through land speculation in Illinois, buying government acreage for \$1.25/acre, but charging subscribers \$2.00/acre. All subscribers' money would be invested in lands, but the surplus would be divided: 1/3 as a reward to Blackburn himself, and 2/3 devoted to a fund for the establishment of the college. See Lloyd L. Frutiger, "Records of the Life of Gideon Blackburn, 1772-1838: A Survey of the Records of the Family, Schooling, Business Ventures, Character, and Christian Labors of the Founder of an Illinois Frontier College," (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia), 52. Frutiger borrows heavily from Charles Henry Rammelkamp, *Illinois College: A Centennial History* (New Haven, 1928). For Knox's order, see Knox to Washington, ASP II, 66. For Gambold's role, see John Gambold to Reichel, 23 July 1809, MAS, in McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 79. At the time of this letter, Vann was referring to a specific instance of potential land speculation by Blackburn. Blackburn had tried to obtain some land for his school which he claimed he would use for firewood. However, this land was north of the Tennessee River, while the school was on the south side. Furthermore, the amount of land Blackburn requested was far too expansive to be used solely for firewood. In addition, this land was close to the Cherokee border and land which the general government was currently trying to obtain. William McLoughlin concludes that most likely, Blackburn was helping the general government determine whether there were any water-routes through Cherokee territory which led to the Gulf of Mexico. See Gideon Blackburn to Ashbel Green, 2 January 1808, Maryville, TN, in the *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine*, 5 (Apr. 1808), 434-35.

the Alabama Territory). The journey would require that they pass through both Cherokee and Creek territory to get there. Blackburn (supposedly) sought permission from the Cherokee to pass through their land, but never obtained any such permission from the Creek. Although the U.S. War Department asserted that all trade along navigable rivers should remain open to all parties, the Creek had always argued that they alone maintained sole rights to all waterways within their territory. On 1 March 1809, James McIntosh was stopped on the Coosa River by Chief Big Warrior of the Creek. The Chief confiscated the cargo, and asserted that some of the whiskey had already been sold to Cherokee, and was on its way to be sold to some of his people.⁵⁴

Whether Blackburn actually sold alcohol to Indians, or even intended to, is hard to prove. However, there was an even more important issue at hand: whether Gideon Blackburn had been using the whiskey-raft as a cover for a reconnaissance mission on behalf of the general government. The evidence for this charge is ample.

When his raft of whiskey was captured on the Coosa River, Blackburn was not at his school in southeast Tennessee. Instead, he happened to be in Turkeytown, on the border of Cherokee-Creek Territory. Clearly, Blackburn was concerned enough with the success of this venture to be close to it, but not so close as to put himself in the middle of the fray. A few weeks after the capture of the raft, John Gambold (the Moravian missionary to the Cherokee) wrote a report to his brethren in North Carolina, claiming

⁵⁴ From the 1790s to the 1820s, Fort St. Stephen was the site of a Spanish fort, an American fort and trading post, and the capital of the Alabama Territory. See the St. Stephens Historical Commission at www.oldststephens.com/history_of_old_st_stephens.htm. The assessment of this episode on the river draws upon the work of William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*; and "Parson Blackburn's Whiskey and the Cherokee Indian Schools, 1809-1810," *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 57 (Winter 1979), 427-45; and Angela Hudson, *Creek Paths*, 80-82.

that Blackburn had undertaken this journey “principally to reconnoiter the waterways here as far as the Bay of Mobile, for which a conversation with the Secretary of War with him is supposed to have been the inducement.”⁵⁵

A legal battle ensued over the confiscation of Blackburn’s whiskey and other property which had been on the raft. Extending over several years, the battle would eventually involve officials of both the state and general governments. For starters, Samuel Blackburn admitted after the event that he had forged the name of Colonel Benjamin Hawkins (the federal agent to the Creek) to a document, which supposedly gave Blackburn permission to sail downriver, through Creek territory.

In addition, a letter *in support* of Blackburn actually implied that he was guilty of the charge of cooperating with the general government. Governor William Blount of Tennessee (who succeeded John Sevier, who had also expressed support for Blackburn) wrote the Secretary of War on 1 March 1811, arguing that the material confiscated by the Creek should be returned to Blackburn. According to Blount, Blackburn and his friends had no intention of selling whiskey to the Indians, but instead, planned to take all the material to Mobile, to be sold there for profit. And according to his “way of thinking, the United States have a natural right to claim the navigation of rivers passing thro’ the Territory of the United States,” including those which also passed through Indian or Spanish Territory. Despite the fact that he explicitly mentions that part of this missions’ goal was to “open a trade and communication thro’ a channel so anxiously desired by the general government,” he made no mention of the fact that several people

⁵⁵ John Gambold to Charles G. Reichel, 23 July 1809 (Moravian Archives, Winston-Salem), in McLoughlin, “Parson Blackburn’s Whiskey,” 431.

involved in the affair had written letters specifically stating that their orders to do so had come directly from the President. Colonel Hawkins assured the Creek, who expressed their concern to him amidst the incident, that he had *not* authorized this boat, and that if the President desired to do so, he would certainly have communicated it through his agent: himself. Furthermore, if the trip had been legal and authorized, why would the participants forge papers supposedly approved by the President and himself, rather than obtaining them directly from Colonel Meigs, who would most certainly have provided them with some measure of support down a portion of the river?⁵⁶

The most telling evidence appeared in the deposition of Samuel Blackburn made on 20 January 1810 when he swore that he “had no design of going down the Coosee river with boats when they first made their purchase of whiskey from the Merchants of Maryville but intended to carry it down the Mississippi River.” Instead, after advice and information garnered from Quotaqueskey (John McIntosh, father of James McIntosh) and the Ridge (the prominent Cherokee chief), on their return from Congress, they changed their route from the Mississippi to the Coosee.” They had no intention of selling whiskey at all.⁵⁷

What this implies, McLoughlin fairly concludes, is that Quotaqueskey and other Cherokee leaders had been in Washington, discussing with the Secretary of War the

⁵⁶ According to the Tennessee constitutions of 1796 and 1834, “an equal participation of the free navigation of the Mississippi is one of the inherent rights of the citizens of this State.” So regardless of federal treaties or Indian claims, white Tennesseans like Blackburn would likely have believed that they should have rights to free river-navigation. These documents can be found in the online collections of the Tennessee State Library and Archives at <http://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/landmarkdocs/>. This is important for the frame of mind of white Tennesseans when it comes to river-navigation. For Blount's communication, see William Blount to the Secretary of War, William Eustis, 1 March 11, M-221, roll 34, frame 2097f, in “Parson Blackburn's Whiskey,” 433-40.

⁵⁷ “Coosee” is an alternate spelling for the “Coosa” River.

problem of opening up the Coosa River and others between Tennessee and the Gulf. The only problem was the Creek, who continued to claim sole rights to the waterways in their territory, in present-day Mississippi and Alabama. According to Agent Benjamin Hawkins in an 1810 letter, the Creeks had "long claimed the Jurisdiction of Coosau River," and the United States had recognized that the "authority exercised by them is between them and the Cherokees." The United States had recognized this right to control trade on the river for years, including allowing them to detain smugglers and their illicit items.⁵⁸

Despite this recognition of Creek sovereignty, it is also clear from many sources that at least since 1809, the American general government had been very interested in opening up a trading route from Tennessee to the Gulf. Starting in 1810, federal agents to the Cherokee and Creek were instructed by the general government to begin probing these nations on their willingness to cede some land to the general government, or at least, their willingness to allow for waterway-navigation and turnpikes leading to the Gulf. All of these official state dealings likely began with more clandestine operations, which directly employed people like Gideon Blackburn. That Blackburn would have risked this is also likely. He was clearly a patriotic man and an entrepreneur. He also seems to have known that he would have the support of local and state government officials, including Governors Blount and Sevier of Tennessee, Enoch Parsons, attorney general for Tennessee, and likely national government officials: Jefferson, who had

⁵⁸ Hudson, *Creek Paths*, 81-82, quoting Benjamin Hawkins to Dearborn, December 31, 1810.

approved his presence with the Cherokee in the first place, and Madison, who had succeeded Jefferson in 1809.

The Presbyterian Mission to the Cherokee Ends

When the Standing Committee on Missions met on 26 May, 1810, they included in their report to the General Assembly sudden and sad news: Gideon Blackburn had resigned his mission to the Cherokee. Due to “the want of his health” and his desire to “change his Residence,” he felt compelled to relinquish his missionary station. The Committee was clearly troubled, expressing with “lament, that after so much time had been spent, and such great expence incurred in conducting the Mission to the Cherokees,” the mission would close. By early summer of 1810, both Presbyterian schools to the Cherokee schools had ceased operations, despite the more than \$10,000 which had been spent on them over the past seven years. The Committee declared with vigor their intention to locate and appoint a new missionary to the Cherokee, because they believed that the mission was so important, and so close to a major evangelical breakthrough. Blackburn was reassigned as a missionary to white settlers in the regions of the Duck and Elk Rivers, near Nashville, Tennessee.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Standing Committee, 2nd Report to the GA, 26 May 1810, 108. Blackburn's quotation ("want of his health") comes from a letter from Blackburn to the Standing Committee, part of which the Committee sent to President Thomas Jefferson on 13 March 1806 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA). To be fair, Blackburn had complained of problems with his leg since at least 1806. In a letter to the Standing Committee on 27 January 1806, Blackburn wrote about "the continued affliction in one of my legs." In an 1854 letter, Rev. Isaac Anderson described his acquaintance with Blackburn. He claimed that Blackburn failed in the Cherokee mission because "He was afflicted with the same disease in his leg." See Rev. Isaac Anderson (Maryville, TN) to Rev. W.H. Parks (St. Louis) April 1854 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia). \Because of these testimonies, I do not completely discount Blackburn's health problems. I do, however, find it curious that these health problems seem to have reached their peak at such a conspicuous time. The \$10,000 figure comes from Ashbel Green, *A Historical Sketch* (Philadelphia, 1838), 50. Green writes with a tone of sadness and disbelief that one missionary could spend over \$10,000

In the end, Blackburn was not convicted, or even formally accused of breaking United States law by selling whiskey to the Creek or Cherokee. The records are simply not conclusive on whether he did or not. Even after his resignation from the mission, the Standing Committee continued to express their “hearty approbation” of his service, apparently with no knowledge of the incident. However, these same records point conclusively toward an even more suspicious action, and one important to this story: the complicit cooperation between missionaries and the general government, in this instance, with designs of exploring and possibly acquiring Indian territory.⁶⁰

From 1803 to 1813, Blackburn’s mission, including his participation in the whiskey-incident on the river, would come to involve a plethora of state and national officials. Testimonies, letters, and conversations regarding Blackburn and his actions can be found from federal Indian agents Colonels Meigs and Hawkins, Governors Willie Blount and John Sevier of Tennessee, Congressman Pleasant Miller, Attorney General of Tennessee Enoch Parsons, and Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Blackburn's specific experiences with international intrigue on the river were certainly unique, but his broader experience as a missionary in cooperation with various levels of governments was commonplace. Throughout the early republic, mission societies and missionaries of various denominations cooperated with local, state, and national governments to accomplish state objectives as part of their religious projects.

in a matter of years, and yet, the mission still fail. For news of Blackburn's resignation, see Standing Committee, 2nd Report to the GA, 26 May 1810, 108. Dates of the closing of the schools determined from records of the Moravians and the Standing Committee on Missions, detailed in “Parson Blackburn's Whiskey,” 432. For reassignment of Blackburn to central Tennessee, see Standing Committee, 2nd Report to the GA, 26 May 1810, 108-110, 115.

⁶⁰ Standing Committee, 2nd Report to the GA, 26 May 1810, 110.

While distant mission societies like the Standing Committee of the Presbyterian Church may not have everything about their missionaries' day-to-day application of this (as in the case of Blackburn), they absolutely knew about the general context of cooperation with government; they *courted* that help.

The War of 1812 and the Disruption of Indian Missions

When war broke out between the United States and Great Britain in 1812, missions took a hit on two fronts. On one hand, the action of war disrupted the routes of missionaries, causing many to temporarily abandon their posts. The Directors of the New York Missionary Society lamented that the wars of Europe had "extended themselves to this hitherto favoured land, and threaten the suspension or extinction of missionary efforts...which are every moment exposed to savage depredation." In the Autumn of 1812, Rev. Marshfield Steele, "impelled by the calamities of war," left his pastoral charge in the District of Maine for a less volatile region in southwest Vermont. Even Elkanah Holmes, who had ministered to the Five Nations along the U.S.-Canadian border since 1800, was forced to leave his post. Late in the war, he reported to the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York that from Buffalo village to Fort Niagara, "the dwelling and other buildings have been destroyed; and the inhabitants either slain, made captives or compelled to flee." A space nearly forty miles long and three miles wide had been laid waste.⁶¹

⁶¹ *Report of the Directors of the New-York Missionary Society* (New York, 1813), 2 ("extended themselves"); *Fifteenth Annual Account of the Missionary Labors Directed by the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1814), 5-6 ("impelled by the calamities"); Minutes of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (New York, 1815) (manuscript at the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS), Atlanta, GA), 6 ("the dwelling").

Bullets and fire were not the only things slowing down the missionary cause. A general distrust of all Indians festered among Americans, including those involved in mission societies. During the War of 1812, this suspicion multiplied as Americans tried to determine which Indians were on which side of the conflict, or if they had even joined a side at all.⁶²

In January 1813, the Standing Committee on Missions met to discuss the still-abandoned Cherokee mission. The matter seems to have been of some urgency; the committee had never met together in January in its ten-year history. But with war upon them, they needed to immediately address a letter they had received from the Missionary Society of New Jersey (MSNJ) regarding the Cherokee mission. Since 1804, when they contributed to Gideon Blackburn's mission, the MSNJ had maintained a strong interest in the success of a mission to the Cherokee. When Blackburn left, they partnered with the Standing Committee to find a replacement as soon as possible. With a steady stream of ministerial students flowing through the College at Princeton, the MSNJ hoped to pluck out at least one promising young man out to lead the Cherokee missions.⁶³

But on the 4th of January, the MSNJ was writing with bad news: they had been unable to secure the commitment of any young ministers for the Cherokee mission. One

⁶² Another sort of distrust infected the work of foreign mission societies, particularly the work of the ABCFM in India. British officials were wary of American missionaries like the Judsons and Rices, who in the midst of war, wanted to establish their missions in British India. While the British missionaries generally sought cooperation with their American counterparts even during the war, the British government, both in London and in India, were uncooperative, even hostile at times. For an excellent discussion of the tension between national fidelity and religious fidelity, see Emily Conroy-Kutz, "Anglo-American Connections in the American Missionary Entrance to India, 1790-1815" (Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, 17 July 2011).

⁶³ In the minutes of the Standing Committee from 11 July 1804, the Committee acknowledged that the New Jersey Missionary Society had sent them a letter and included with it \$280 to be appropriated toward Indian missions.

student had expressed interest, but when offered the position, declined it. The directors wondered whether it was even advisable to keep trying to revive the mission at all. They discussed the letter, and determined that "considering the hostile attitude of the Indian Nations, and the probability of the Cherokee being involved in War it appears inexpedient to renew the Mission." The Committee directed the secretary to communicate the bad news to the MSNJ.⁶⁴

The Cherokee mission thus suffered neglect on two levels. On one level, the general chaos of war disrupted it, along with missions everywhere. On a second level, the Cherokee suffered simply because they were one of many untrustworthy "Indian Nations" which many white Americans believed might turn on them at any point. In fact, over the next two years, the Cherokee would do just the opposite. In 1813, a civil war broke out amongst the Creek nation. In March 1814, hundreds of Cherokee warriors would join General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. There, they defeated the Red Sticks, a contingent of the Creek nation inspired by Tecumseh's uprising to oppose the siege of Indian lands by Americans and British. The resulting treaty required the Creeks to allow the United States to annex of all their lands in present-day Alabama and Georgia, including the disputed land through which Parson Blackburn's whiskey had traveled only a few years before.⁶⁵

The conclusion of war with Britain and their Indian allies in 1815 brought with it much rejoicing among mission societies and missionaries on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁶⁴ Standing Committee, 4 January 1813, 220-21.

⁶⁵ Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York, 1977), Chapter 13; Hudson, *Creek Paths*, 109-124; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 181-190.

American foreign missionaries, particularly in places like India, would now have an easier time conducting their missions, even if they had to continue navigating imperial entanglements. The writers of the *Panoplist*, a Massachusetts magazine dedicated to religious and missionary news, rejoiced in the Treaty of Ghent as an opportunity to advance God's kingdom. Peace was a "joyful event," but especially so for the Christian, who should "not fail to acknowledge it to be preeminently desirable as it opens the world to missionaries, and to all benevolent exertions. Home missionaries felt the same. Men like Elkanah Holmes expressed their "ardent wish" to return to their missionary posts as soon as possible.⁶⁶

In the years following the Treaty of Ghent, the nature of the home missionary enterprise would change rapidly. Up through the War of 1812, for both Indians and frontier white settlers, the home missions movement functioned primarily on the local and regional level, with regular assistance from national entities. Even "national" mission groups were often run by a rather narrow group of local leaders, as exemplified in the members of the Standing Committee of the Presbyterian Church, all of whom resided in the greater-Philadelphia area. But after the War of 1812, the entire missionary movement would quickly begin morphing into a *national* enterprise, guided by *national* missionary societies, influenced by *national* sentiments, and cooperating even closer

⁶⁶ For the experience of American missionaries in India, see Emily Conroy-Kutz, "Anglo-American Connections," 8. Conroy-Kutz points out that although the end of war certainly made things easier for American missionaries in British India, it did not solve all their problems. In fact, American missionaries' experiences depended heavily on the character of the appointed Governor. So through the 1820s, although American missionaries maintained the privilege of serving in India, the terms of that service would be rather unstable; *The Panoplist*, 11 (Feb. 1818), 59. For a more complete discussion of the effect of the War of 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent on world missions, see William Gribbin, *The Churches Militant: The War of 1812 and American Religion* (New Haven, 1973). For Elkanah Holmes's "ardent wish," see Minutes of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (1815) (ABHS), 6.

with the *national* government in its endeavors. For most Indian nations, this would mean that their position in relation to United States society would shift: from neighbors who should be assimilated into society, to foreign peoples who should be removed.

CHAPTER V
THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF AMERICAN
HOME MISSIONS

John Mason Peck was a man of considerable influence in the antebellum West. In Illinois and the central Mississippi Valley, everybody would have known his name. As an avid and successful promoter of both general and theological education, he helped found a seminary, established Shurtleff College, served on the Illinois Baptist Education Society, and tirelessly pushed for wider educational opportunities for the children of Illinois. Because of his reputation and influence, he acquired significant political clout in Illinois, gaining the respect and attention of state- and national-level politicians. When Peck published his opinion on the justness of the Mexican War in an 1848-edition of the *Belleville Advocate*, it prompted a response from Illinois' 7th-District representative to the United States Congress, Abraham Lincoln.¹

Although born and raised in Connecticut and New York, Peck lived in the West his entire adult life – over forty years. He devoted himself to the region, and tirelessly studied its history, people, and customs. His published works on the West gained readers and admirers in the East and West alike, and reverberated through American history for decades. When Frederick Jackson Turner proposed his now-famed "Frontier Thesis" at the 1893 World's Columbia Exposition in Chicago, he cited many sources, but

¹ Abraham Lincoln to John M. Peck, 21 May 1848, Abraham Lincoln Papers from the Library of Congress online at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(d0011100\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mal:@field(DOCID+@lit(d0011100))), accessed 9 April 2012.

none more substantially than John Mason Peck's influential 1836 book *A New Guide to the West*. In this book, Peck had argued that the very idea of the frontier played such an important part in Americans' minds that migration to these ever-shifting frontiers had "become almost a habit," something which helped explain the whole of Americans' "life and manners."²

Peck was a pioneer, an educator, a publisher, a writer, and a powerful social and political figure in the West. But if asked what his primary job was, he would likely have replied: "missionary." From the mid-1810s to the 1850s, John Mason Peck was a Baptist missionary and pastor to the Mississippi Valley and the West. As a traveling preacher, agent of various benevolent societies, writer, and publisher, Peck found his calling in spreading the Protestant Gospel. For the majority of his life, he would carry out his call in the region he believed would shape the future of the United States: the Mississippi Valley.

In 1815, when Peck first began considering leaving his pastorate in New York to become a missionary, he had three decades of organized American home missions to build upon. Peck was well-acquainted with this success, and expressed his joy before the Madison Baptist Association in upstate New York: "Here is full scope for the most benevolent and feeling heart to exercise itself...When I reflect...I must exclaim: What hath God wrought." Still, after three decades of American domestic missions, the

² For Frederick Jackson Turner's citation of John Mason Peck, see Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," online at www.us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/pdocs/turner_frontier.pdf, 10-11, accessed on 9 April 2012. John Mason Peck's book was first published in 1836 as *A New Guide for Emigrants to the West* (Boston, 1836). The extensive section quoted by Turner can be found on pages 114-116 of this edition. Turner actually quotes a later edition of Peck's work, published in Cincinnati in 1848, which maintained the same text as the previous version in this case; John Mason Peck, *A New Guide for Emigrants to the West*, 116.

Mississippi Valley was nothing special in the minds of American mission societies. It was still simply one of many places which had received missionary support, and still needed it.³

But by 1845, it might have been the *only* place. During this intervening period, home mission societies had narrowed their focus, identifying the Valley not as one region among many, but as *the most crucial* region for the spiritual, social, and political development of the nation. The *idea* of the Mississippi Valley as the crucible of the American nation would grow rapidly throughout the early republic. Through the work of missionary men and women like John Mason Peck, it would play a key role in transforming the entire home missions movement from a region-focused, federal system, into a nation-focused, centralized system, all the while providing a starkly religious character to western migration and settlement. This story tells us a great deal about the development of Protestant missions in the early republic. However, it goes beyond that to help us better understand the social benevolence and reform, the tensions inherent in a federal system of government, and the enduring importance of religion in the development of regionalism and sectionalism in antebellum America.

Religion, Missions, and the Soul of the Nation

During early 19th-century America, people at all levels of society, from private citizens to presidents, commonly believed that religion and morality played an important role in maintaining and promoting the public good. While non-Christian citizens were

³ Rufus Babcock, ed., *Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck, D.D.*, ed. *Journals and Correspondence* (Carbondale, 1965), 46.

free to participate in American society, most Americans expressed (some explicitly, some implicitly) that these morals would be based primarily on Protestant Christian visions of the world. This belief in the necessity of Protestant morality for the public good undergirded what I have called America's culture of cooperation between church and state in the early republic.

Proponents of Christian missions, however, took this a step further, arguing that religion was *the* bedrock of American democracy and life, not one of many. Samuel Miller emphatically argued this before the annual meeting of the New York Missionary Society in 1802. It is "presumptuous Reason" and "worshippers of political Wisdom," Miller argued, who rely on anything but religion "to regulate society." For Miller and home mission societies, religion was not one facet of a person's life, or a nation's life, but something which should influence *all* of life. A failure to cultivate this religion would result in the nation's downfall.⁴

This is why proponents of missions expressed such broad and holistic aims. They hoped to see not only individual religious conversions, but in the end, the conversion of all of American society to Christian principles. First and foundationally, mission societies hoped for the religious conversion of individuals. But, as the trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut explained in 1801, "The civil and political welfare of societies, no less than the present and future happiness of individuals depends much on religious institutions...Righteousness exalteth a nation." Righteousness had the

⁴ Samuel Miller, *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting* (New York, 1802), 51. Nicholas Guyatt makes a similar contemporary argument about the importance of religion to the soul of the nation in *Providentialism and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge, 2007).

potential to transform communities, education, and politics, and to lead society into the glorious days of the millennium. In the minds of many, missions were the best way to achieve this grand goal, because they represented a constant and active renewal process. People were always migrating, the nation was constantly growing, and mission societies could help Protestant religion keep up with them all.⁵

Not only did societies hope to have a Christianizing effect on the nation, but they hoped to directly target the State and political leadership as conduits for this process. If they could reach individual members of government with their message, all the better; those men would already be in position to act as agents of the Gospel. The Missionary Society of Connecticut communicated this strategy to its followers; it was “not by great political arrangements *only*, but also by moral impressions upon the minds of those

⁵ In his study of John Mason Peck, John McPherson called this a "conversionist methodology." See McPherson, "John Mason Peck: A Conversionist Methodology for a Social Transformation on the American Frontier" (Ph.D. diss. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985). In this work, McPherson traces how Peck's thought, as representative of much of the American Home missions movement, sought not to just pile up conversions, nor to use religious conversion as a cover for other goals (such as political goals). Rather, their methodology was influenced by two interrelated beliefs: first, that all people made their decisions based on some guiding principle (whether consciously or sub-consciously) and second, that true religious conversion to Christianity would cause people to interpret their entire worlds – social, economic, political, etc. – in light of Christianity. For the MSCT, see *A Second Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut...and a Narrative on the Subject of Missions* (Hartford, 1801), 13-14. Those who advocated the graduate transformation of society through religious conversion, and its role in bringing on the millennium generally advocated a theological position called "post-millennialism." According to this doctrine of the end times, the "millennium" mentioned in the biblical book of Revelation symbolized the present age of the church. The age would gradually come under the religious influence of Christianity to such an extent that it would usher in the second coming of Christ. This differed from the eschatological system which would develop later in the nineteenth century called "pre-millennialism," which expressed the belief that Christ would return after a time of worldwide apostasy, and *previous* to a literal millennial reign of Christ. For general readings on millennialism in American History, see Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York, 1986); Nathan Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977); Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2003).

whose authority controls the affairs of nations, that the duty of Christian societies is pointed out and enforced.”⁶

Proponents of missions reached deep into the past to find support for their ideal of church-state cooperation in missions. In a sermon before the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1800, Nathaniel Emmons recalled the ancient glory days of the Old Testament, when there existed “a peculiar and intimate connection between the civil and religious institutions in the Hebrew *republic*.” America could rightly look back to these days for guidance, for he believed that it shared a common faith, *and* a common governmental structure with ancient Israel (never mind the Hebrew monarchy). In those days, Emmons argued, civil institutions and representatives thought nothing of joining forces with religious reformers. “When Jehoshaphat visited his kingdom and discovered the prevalence of vice and irreligion, he exhorted the proper reformers to be *bold* and *zealous* in the discharge of their difficult duty. American missionary societies and civil institutions, he believed, had the same God-given duty. Whether it would succeed or not was not the point, for it would “even [be] glorious to fail in the attempt.” Instead, mission societies should pursue this grand cooperative scheme to their fullest abilities, and trust the results to God.⁷

⁶ *Communications from the London Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1803), 13 (italics added).

⁷ Nathaniel Emmons, *A Sermon, Delivered Before the Massachusetts Missionary Society at Their Annual Meeting in Boston, May 27, 1800* (Charlestown, MA, 1800), 3 (emphasis added), 7, 13. I do not mean to argue that mission societies *depended* on government, or even *wanted* to depend on government to accomplish their goals. Most would have agreed with Rev. John Livingston, who noted in a sermon to the New York Missionary Society in 1804 that missions should get its strength and guidance “not from carnal policy, or by the combination and support of civil rulers, but *by the Spirit of the Lord*.” But if the “Spirit of the Lord” could use the government to help accomplish His will, all the better. See John Livingston, *A Sermon Delivered Before the New-York Missionary Society at their Annual Meeting, April 3, 1804* (New York, 1804), 35.

The problem with these views, of course, was that people could easily interpret them as calls for the melding of missions and politics, the joining of church and state. In the first decade of the 1800s, the London Missionary Society had warned the Missionary Society of Connecticut of as much. In a series of letters between the two mission societies, the two struggled with how their religious work should relate, and shouldn't relate to the political world. In 1803, the secretary of the London Missionary Society reminded the leaders of the Missionary Society of Connecticut that "the kingdom of Christ...is of the most essential service to the peace and prosperity of every country," it "meddles not with its rule or politics."⁸

This sort of "meddling" in politics or state matters is exactly what many would accuse the mission societies and missionaries of during the early republic. When The Missionary Society of Connecticut sent trustee Calvin Chapin to check on the state of their missions in the Western Reserve in 1806, they received troubling reports from the field. Despite the missionaries' gospel efforts, historian Amy DeRogatis concludes that many of the settlers believed that the MSCT was, at heart, a political institution – an "electioneering institution, founded and supported for the purposes of reviving fallen and hated Federalism." John Mason Peck, Baptist leader Jonathan Going, and countless others experienced the same resistance in the West. They would be accused of "political preaching," advancing "the anti-slavery ticket," and seeking to supplant religious freedoms by setting up a church-state conglomeration.⁹

⁸ *Communications from the London Missionary Society to the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1803), 8.

⁹ DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*, 86; Helen Louise Jennings, "John Mason Peck and the Impact of New England on the Old Northwest" (Ph.D. diss. University of Southern California, 1961), 304.

Mission societies would simply have to accept that the appearance of meddling in politics would be part of the deal. However much criticism they might receive, they believed they could not let it prevent them from applying their religious ideals to all of society. Religion needed to spread if the nation was to thrive, or even survive. It needed to take root in every new settlement, and in every group of people. But religion could not spread on its own. For that, churches needed missionaries. Those missionaries needed some form of organized networks of financial support, even if it meant injecting a political element into their work.

Jonathan Going, who would become one of the most important proponents of home missions in the early republic, repeatedly stressed this necessity. In 1831, Going took on the role of Corresponding Secretary for the American Baptist Home Mission Society, a nationwide mission society which he had helped found in that same year. In 1832, he himself participated in a missionary tour of portions of the Mississippi Valley, a decision which American Protestants viewed "with the deepest interests." He urged eastern Christians to undertake the responsibility of alleviating the lack of established churches in the West, not only for westerners' sake, but for *their* sake, arguing that the "prosperity of the churches in the Atlantic States [was] necessary to the success of the Western enterprize." Without easterners' contribution, the West would suffer, and by direct association, the nation. However, by contributing, citizens could be assured that

they would be "doing the work of patriotism" and reinforcing "the basis of our Republican institutions."¹⁰

The Mississippi Valley: The Crucible of the Nation

To reiterate a key point of my timeline: from 1815 until 1845, an undeniable shift occurred in the strategic promotion and practice of home missions in America. The period from the 1790s to the early 1810s were characterized by a strong but generalized interest in the growth of missions throughout America. This movement was led primarily by local and regional missionary societies. But after 1815, along with the opening of the West to a flood of immigration, the missions movement made two parallel transformations. First, the movement became more centralized, placing the government and management of home missions into the hands of fewer, larger mission societies. Second, these societies became more nationalized, focusing their efforts on the broad needs of the nation, rather than on the needs of local regions. Both trends channeled the movement's focus primarily onto one area: the West, and in particular, the Mississippi Valley. This region, mission societies believed, was the crucible of the nation, and according to its character and progress, America would rise or fall.¹¹

¹⁰ A. Judson to Jonathan Going, 21 April 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta, GA). It is not clear in the letter which "A. Judson" wrote this letter. It may have been written by the world-famous American missionary to Burma – Adoniram Judson – who was well-acquainted with the home missions movement and the American West; Jonathan Going to J.G. Hall, 8 January 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); *Constitution of the American Home Missionary Society* (New York, 1826), 47, 67.

¹¹ In this dissertation, I use the term "nationalization" (and its various iterations) in reference to the process of centralized American mission societies progressively focusing on the needs of the nation broadly. This national plan and scope contrasted with the efforts of mission societies in the first three decades of the republic, most of which tended to focus on local and regional issues. Therefore, the term "nationalization" does not necessarily refer to a single national vision for mission societies, so much as it

Massachusetts and New York Protestants were at the forefront of home missions in the early republic and provide a prime example of this shift in focus. Up through the 1810s, they focused primarily on the needs of the Indian and white peoples in the regions in or near Massachusetts. However, by the 1820s, a clear change had taken place. Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, through their participation in new national mission societies, began to seriously consider the broader needs of the nation.

One anecdotal, but telling picture of this shift can be seen in the 1832 minutes of the New York Baptist Association, a group of Baptist churches in New York City. With regret, the association announced at its meeting the death of longtime missionary Elkanah Holmes. Holmes, as you may recall, had served tirelessly as a missionary to the Six Nations of the Iroquois and white settlers in upstate New York. For years, he represented the ideal missionary for American Baptists, and American Christians of all stripes: a pastor and Revolutionary-War veteran, who dedicated his life to New York mission societies, serving as a missionary to New York Indians and to New York white settlers.¹²

But in 1832, as Elkanah Holmes breathed his last, American Baptists were looking to new leaders like John Mason Peck and Jonathan Going. These two men, although from New York and Massachusetts, set their denomination's eyes on wider fields. With the most pressing issue in Indian relations in 1832 being *removal*, not missions or assimilation, American missionaries could focus on the flood of white

refers to the general trend of each of the centralized mission societies toward addressing the needs of the nation.

¹² Minutes of the New York Baptist Association (1832), microfilm records (Southern Baptist Historical Library Archives, Nashville, TN).

settlers to the West. When the Massachusetts Baptist Convention met in 1832, it announced its decision to focus less on their own region. Instead, it would join the national efforts of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, organized by Peck and Going in 1831. This national society would consider every region in America as a mission field, but identified one region as paramount: the West.¹³

The delegates to the Massachusetts Baptist Convention argued that although the entire nation needed the Gospel, "the destitution is greatest...of course, in the Western Country." It was the West, among all regions, which still needed winning. It was the white settlers of the West, among all Americans, who had not become cemented in their age-old ways, and were still open to change. "The character of the mighty West is not yet formed," the leaders of the ABHMS assured its supporters. "The moral elements which are to compose it exist in plastic form." Samuel Mills, who had taken his first missionary tour with John Schermerhorn in early 1813, took another tour of the West in 1814. This time, accompanied by Reverend Daniel Smith, he paid special attention to the Mississippi Valley, particularly the region surrounding St. Louis. He described the people in this way:

The character of the settlers is such as to render it peculiarly important that missionaries should early be sent among them. Indeed, they can hardly be said to have a character, assembled as they are from every state in the Union, and originally from almost every nation in Europe. The majority, although by no

¹³ After attending the annual meeting of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in May 1834, Jonathan Going wrote to his wife Lucy, complaining that the Convention had focused too much on the "political" by discussing "the conduct of Georgia, respecting the Cherokees." Instead of this "unpleasant occurrence," the convention should have been focusing on missions. This statement is telling regarding Baptists' conception of the place of Indian nations in their missionary work. Whereas they had once been the major missionary projects, they were now seen as a *sidebar* to missions. See Jonathan Going to Lucy Going, 14 May 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (Washington State University Archives, Pullman, WA).

means regardless of religion, have not yet embraced any fixed principles respecting it. They are ready to receive any impressions which a public speaker may attempt to make.¹⁴

The Settlement of the Mississippi Valley

In defense of these characterizations of plasticity, it is important to remember that in the post-1815 years, the populations of regions west of the Appalachians, including the Mississippi Valley, were growing too quickly for Americans to keep up with. "Seldom in human history," Daniel Walker Howe asserts, "had so large a territory been settled so rapidly." In the decade following the War of 1812, hundreds of thousands of Americans migrated to the western lands. While trans-Appalachian land sales had totaled a little over one-half million in 1813, they skyrocketed to nearly 4 million by 1818 – an 800% increase. This boom in land sales bore witness to the burgeoning western populations. Between 1816 and 1821 alone, five new western states entered the Union: Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, and Missouri. Between 1810 and 1820, the population of Louisiana and Mississippi doubled, and Ohio became the fourth most populous state in the nation. While the Panic of 1819 would bust banks and temporarily stifle migration, it would not stop it. In 1835, fifteen years after the Panic, the General Convention of Western Baptists estimated that the population of the Valley of the Mississippi doubled again, reaching approximately 5 million.¹⁵

¹⁴ *The Third Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1835), 21; Samuel Mills and Daniel Smith, *Report of a Missionary Tour through that Part of the United States which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains* (Andover, 1815), 19.

¹⁵ Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2007), 126, 136-37; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian American, 1815-1846* (New York, 1991), 131-32; Annual Report of the General Convention of Western Baptists at Cincinnati (1835), manuscript (ABHS, Atlanta).

Mission societies stayed abreast of this population shift as it occurred, and continually reminded their supporters that they needed to keep up. Up through 1815, missionaries were deployed mostly to the frontier regions of the states and territories east of the Appalachians, or, as was the case with the Missionary Society of Connecticut, to early-organized regions like the Western Reserve and Ohio. Organized forays into the Mississippi Valley were few and far between, as if the Valley were a foreign land (which parts of it technically were). Major, nationally-minded missions organizations like the Presbyterian Church's Standing Committee on Missions would not send a single missionary to the Valley before 1815. When missionaries did visit the West and the Valley, like Samuel Mills and John Schermerhorn in 1812-1813, or Mills again with Daniel Smith in 1814, they considered the trips as new, exploratory ventures. From 1812 to 1815, this all began to change.

Shortly after his ordination in June 1813, John Mason Peck began to consider the American West as an "abundant field for missionary labor" and prayed that God would "open a door for [his] usefulness and labors." Inspired by reports of the missions of Luther Rice, Adoniram Judson, and Anne Judson in India and Burma, Peck believed that his denomination should begin to on America's own "foreign" land: the Mississippi Valley.¹⁶

In 1815, Luther Rice had returned to the United States in order to raise money for the South Asian mission. He visited the meeting of the Warwick Association, of which Peck's church was a member. The two struck common cause on the importance of

¹⁶ Babcock, ed., *Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck*, 38.

American home missions, and began what would become a lifelong friendship. In early 1816, Peck, encouraged by Rice, proposed to offer himself to the newly-formed Triennial Convention of the Baptist denominations as a domestic missionary to the West. In mid-1817, Peck and his colleague James Welch set out on a missionary expedition of the Ohio Valley, culminating in a stay in St. Louis. When in 1820, the Triennial Convention voted to discontinue home mission efforts in favor of focusing all of their efforts on foreign missions, Peck did not lose heart. He believed his life's calling was to minister in the Mississippi Valley, and for two years, stayed in Illinois on his own dime. By 1827, with his grand vision for the future of the Mississippi Valley and the nation, he had secured funding from the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, American Bible Union, General Sunday School Union, American Colonization Society, and American Tract Society to support his work in Illinois.¹⁷

John Mason Peck was far from alone in his newfound discovery of the need for Protestant missions in the West. When Samuel Mills returned in 1813 from his first missionary tour to the West with John Schermerhorn, he lamented the religious condition of the Mississippi Valley. He urged the Missionary Society of Connecticut (one of his two sending agencies) to appoint a missionary to the St. Louis region as soon as possible. Along with New Orleans, Mills argued that "No place in the Western country" would be more strategic for American mission societies to invest in. Reverend Salmon Giddings, an itinerant minister in Massachusetts in Connecticut, had read about

¹⁷ "John Mason Peck," article from the website of the Southern Baptist Historical Library Archives, at http://www.sbhla.org/bio_peck.htm, accessed 12 April 2012; Babcock, ed., *Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck*, xiv, 172; Byron Cecil Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Leaders, 1800-1840* (New York, 1980), 270; and "John Mason Peck," at http://www.sbhla.org/bio_peck.htm, accessed 12 April 2012.

the reports of Samuel Mills in *The Panopolist*, and decided to volunteer for the venture. The Missionary Society of Connecticut commissioned him in December 1815, and sent him on his way. Giddings arrived in Saint Louis in April 1816, and began his pioneering work as the first long-term Presbyterian missionary in St. Louis. Over the next 12 years, Giddings would lead in the organization of eleven churches in Illinois and Missouri, including founding and pastoring the first Presbyterian church in St. Louis. When he died in February of 1828, John Mason Peck closed the service in a benediction.¹⁸

Giddings represented the awakening of the American Presbyterian Church to the domestic mission fields that lay before them. From its inception in 1802, until 1815, the Standing Committee on Missions for the Presbyterian Church in the USA had never addressed the subject of missions in the Mississippi Valley. Then suddenly, beginning in 1816, the Valley became a growing part of their overall missionary plan. In 1816, the Committee reported that they had sent Samuel Brown to the Missouri Territory, Indiana, and Illinois, and John Moreland to the Mississippi Territory. In 1817, they reported that of their forty-four missionaries, three had been appointed to the Mississippi Valley: Richard King had been sent to join Moreland in the Mississippi Territory, Sylvester Larned sent to plant a new church in New Orleans, and Daniel Smith (who had toured the Valley with Samuel Mills in 1814) to Natchez. In 1818, the Committee reappointed

¹⁸ *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1905* (Springfield, IL, 1906), 273-274; A.T. Norton, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Illinois* (St. Louis, 1879), 35-38. Reports of Giddings' work can be found in the annual reports and narratives of the Missionary Society of Connecticut. See, for example, *Seventeenth Annual Narrative of Missionary Labors...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1816); and *Eighteenth Annual Narrative of Missionary Labors...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1817). Edwin Pond Parker, *Historical Discourse, In Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1898).

Sylvester Larned in New Orleans, and commissioned three new missionaries to the Valley: in western Tennessee, John Hamilton and John Blackburn (the son of Gideon Blackburn), and the Mississippi River in Louisiana and Mississippi, Jeremiah Chamberlain, who ministered to settlers, sailors, slaves, and prisoners.¹⁹

The correspondence of American home mission societies during this time bear out this growing preoccupation with the Mississippi Valley. The papers of the American Home Missionary Society and American Baptist Home Mission Society, the two largest home mission societies of the early republic, provide a clear example of this. Their collections are *filled* with letters from seminary students, pastors, and prospective missionaries who believed that God had called them not generally to Christian ministry, but specifically to missions in the West.

Some missionaries sought the West for the same reason many of the settlers did: as an escape from some disagreeable aspect of their current life. Although the sentiment was not widespread, it is clear that some ministers felt they had accomplished all they could in their home churches in the East. Jacob Allison of Allen, Connecticut, was especially negative in his request for a missionary appointment: "there is nothing to raise [my] parish above its present standing...I know of no place, which promises less on the

¹⁹ 2nd Report to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1816), 245, Manuscript Minutes of the Standing Committee on Missions (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia); Standing Committee, 21 May 1817, (microfilm edition); and First Report to the General Assembly (1817), 288, Manuscript Minutes of the Standing Committee on Missions (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia); First Report to the General Assembly (1818), 340-345 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

score of improvement." Too many young and enterprising people were leaving the area, and he clearly wanted to go with them.²⁰

In May of 1832, Joel Linsley wrote to Peters with less pessimism, but the same desire to relocate. "My congregation...by building a very expensive church involved them in some pecuniary embarrassments," he explained, "& difficulties growing out of this state have things have produced many unpleasant effects." After deep consideration, he explained, "I have made up my mind that it is best for me to ask a dismissal." This trouble, combined with his satisfaction with having overseen the threefold increase in church membership in his eight years as pastor, caused Linsley to believe that he could serve somewhere else more effectively.²¹

But Joel Linsley did not want to minister just anywhere. He told Peters "I have rec[eived] an indirect invitation" from a church in Massachusetts, "but my thoughts are more turned toward the South & West, especially Virginia or Ohio." He had been "a kind of pioneer" in his current parish, and wanted to continue the pattern. Peters promptly offered Linsley a missionary station, but two months later, Linsley turned it down. The records do not indicate where this station was located, but it was probably not in the Mississippi Valley. We know this, because Linsley's reason for turning the appointment down was clear: he had been asked to work in the Valley as an agent for another religious society – the American Tract Society. This *region's* need was "the most pressing, & at the same time the most difficult to be properly supplied." Linsley

²⁰ Jacob Allison to Absalom Peters, 1 May 1834, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society (microfilm), Reel 9.

²¹ Joel Linsley to Absalom Peters, 26 May 1832, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society (microfilm), Reel 8.

would fill that geographic gap, rather than taking a missionary appointment in what he considered a less-needy place.²²

Men had many reasons for wanting to move to the West as missionaries, but by far, the primary reason was religious. They saw the Mississippi Valley as destitute of the Gospel, and believed that without it, the inhabitants would die in their sins, and the country along with them. The Missionary Society of Connecticut reminded its members that it was precisely this sort of zeal and vision which had saved the Western Reserve (which became Ohio):

Let us consider what would have been the condition of our new settlements, without these efforts of Christian charity, what would have been the effect upon our country had these settlements been neglected and suffered to grow up in heathenism; let us consider their present state, and bless God that he hath put it into the hearts of the people of this State to minister to them in spiritual things.”

The plan had been a sound one for the emigrants out of Connecticut into the Western Reserve, and there was no reason to believe that it would not work well for the Valley as well.²³

This is exactly why Chester Birge chose to become a missionary to the West. Birge was born in Bolton, Connecticut in 1796, and had spent his entire life in the comfortable environment of New England churched-society, including completing a degree in theology at Yale College in 1828. He loved preaching, but had never impressed anyone with his public speaking skills. Nathaniel Taylor, the famed Yale theology professor and proponent of the New Haven Theology, taught Birge in

²² Ibid.; Joel Linsley to Absalom Peters, 13 July 1832, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society (microfilm), Reel 8.

²³ *A Missionary Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut...and a Narrative of Missions* (Hartford, 1813), 15.

seminary. From that experience, Taylor had once believed that Birge's "nuance of speaking" and "indistinct" reading made it unlikely that he would have any success as a preacher. He even went so far as to tell Birge that he simply "could not succeed as a public speaker."²⁴

In August of 1828, Birge was completing his studies in the seminary at Yale College, and wanted nothing more than to finish, and become a missionary. For a long time, he had contemplated undertaking a "Missionary Tour into our great western country." But now, he wanted to do more than dream. He reached out to the American Home Missionary Society for "direction & patronage." "I wish to go West," and not "merely to go out upon a 'Missionary Tour' and return." he confided to Peters. "I hope to spend my life in the Western States in the service of Christ." His zeal had become so infectious, that it had apparently affected his public-speaking abilities. Nathaniel Taylor had learned by report that despite his previous impressions of the young man, Birge's preaching was "more acceptable than I had anticipated." Fearful that he would squelch Birge's missionary career before it even started, he qualified his criticisms by telling Absalom Peters and the American Home Missionary Society that Birge would exhibit "a higher degree for usefulness in your service, than my knowledge of him enables me to report."²⁵

²⁴ Nathaniel Taylor to Absalom Peters, 5 August 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society (microfilm), reel 8. For work on Nathaniel Taylor and the New Haven Theology, see Douglas Sweeney, *Nathaniel Taylor, New Haven Theology, and the Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* (New York, 2003).

²⁵ Chester Birge to Absalom Peters, 13 August 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8 ("direction and patronage"); Chester Birge to Absalom Peters, 5 September 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8 ("I wish to go West"); Nathaniel Taylor to Absalom Peters, 5 August 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8.

The following month, on September 25, 1828, Birge received good news: the American Home Missionary Society had appointed him to a missionary station at New Philadelphia, in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. After his ordination on October 10, he would make his way to New York City, the headquarters of the AHMS, and await specific directions. In previous decades, dozens of men had left Yale College to become missionaries in the old frontiers of Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania. After the establishment of the new seminary at Yale College in 1822, Chester Birge became its first missionary. His destination would be the new frontier: the Mississippi Valley.²⁶

Birge was a mere drop in the flood of missionaries which began expressing their interest in the Mississippi-Valley missionary effort. William Fuller wanted to "preach the gospel to the destitute in the South or West" (but was open to going wherever the AHMS sent him. Everton Judson had begun his college studies with the "intention of making some part of the 'Valley of the Mississippi' his field of labor, and his interest had "been constantly increasing" ever since." After practicing medicine for five years and serving two years as a missionary in western Pennsylvania, William Gildersleeve knew he wanted something more challenging. He wrote to the American Baptist Home Missionary Society (ABHMS) requesting an appointment "some where in the western world," preferably in "Ohio., India[na], or Illinois," even if it meant that he had to leave his family for an extended period of time. John Gridley desired to "preach the Gospel...[in] the 'Great Valley,'" and N.M. Urmston expected that the rest of his days

²⁶ Chester Birge to Absalom Peters, 10 October 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8; *The Home Missionary*, 43 (Oct. 1870), 151.

should be "spent in laboring in the destitute regions of the West," if only he could convince his wife to leave her friends behind and come along with him.²⁷

Urmston's wife and her female friends may have been anxious about a life in the West, but the desire to become a missionary to the Mississippi Valley was certainly not limited to men. In 1834, A.D. Gillett wrote to the American Baptist Home Mission Society on behalf of Elisa Ripley, "a young lady who has been teaching much already in N[ew] E[ngland]." She had written Gillett, explaining that until recently, she had felt a desire "to do good" and had only to decide *where* to do it. But now, she had finally decided: "I have known the people in the Valley by report," she wrote, and had decided to "leave all dear to me here and devote my life for their good." Post-1815, an entire generation of Christian leaders appear to have grown up with a specific desire to minister in one particular area: the Western Mississippi Valley.²⁸

The financial records of the societies indicate that many of those who would not, or could not go to the Valley themselves, still wanted to make a specific, lasting impact. Some did this through purchasing the annual reports of state and national meetings, subscribing to magazines published by various societies, or paying for their pastors to

²⁷ William Fuller to Absalom Peters, 8 November 1827, , Corresponding Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, 10 October 1828, papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8; Everton Judson to Absalom Peters, 6 July 1829, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8; William Gildersleeve to Jonathan Going, 1832 (no specific date recorded, but it was certainly written before 25 August 1832, when Jonathan Going recorded his reply to Gildersleeve); and William Gildersleeve to Jonathan Going, 14 and 24 April 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta); John Gridley to the Secretary of the American Home Mission Society, 7 July 1833, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8; N.M. Urmston to Absalom Peters, 23 July, 1832. Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8.

²⁸ A.D. Gillett to Jonathan Going (Corresponding Secretary of the ABHMS), 10 and 22 March, 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). The woman's name appears to be "Elisa Ripley" in the manuscript, but there are characters written after "Ripley," which make it unclear whether her surname is longer, or whether Gillett added extra notes after her name.

become lifetime members of the mission societies. Some, like Herman Baldwin of Washington, Connecticut, sent money to missionary societies with specific instructions: \$100 for a missionary "to be in the far West." Others made sure that even in death, they would make a difference. In 1833, Benjamin Ely wrote to the AHMS on behalf of the recently-deceased Thomas Wilcox, of Bristol, Connecticut. Wilcox had already given \$1,650 to the AHMS in his life. As part of his bequest, he had directed that \$700 more go to the AHMS, specifically "for the spread of the gospel in the Mississippi Valley."²⁹

The Call of Jonathan Going to the Mississippi Valley

The number of men expressing interest in the West and the Mississippi Valley would skyrocket in the 1830s, and would include one of the most important people to join the entire Mississippi-Valley missionary cause: Jonathan Going. Going was born in Reading, Vermont, in 1786. While attending Brown University from 1805-09, he converted to the Baptist faith and decided to enter the ministry. He was ordained in May 1811, and married to Lucy Thorndike in September later that year. For the next twenty years, Going would dedicate himself to the cause of building the Gospel kingdom in New England, pastoring churches in Vermont and Massachusetts, helping found the

²⁹ Herman Baldwin (Secretary of the Home Missionary Association in Washington, CT) to the Corresponding Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, 22 June 1835, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 9; Benjamin Ely to Corresponding Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, 6 June 1833 and 26 July 1833, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 8.

Worcester Academy and Newton Theological Institution, and serving as a trustee at Brown University and Amherst College.³⁰

Going would really begin to hit his stride in 1824 when along with Revs. Thomas Baldwin and Francis Wayland, he organized the Massachusetts Baptist State Convention and was elected as its first Recording Secretary. This body would function like the smaller Baptist associations which many churches were already accustomed to – meeting annually, sharing information, and voluntarily pooling resources – but on the state level. At their first meeting, the group made it clear that although they understood the pressing need for all sorts of Christian charity in the world, their "principal efforts as a Convention [would] be directed to the support of Domestic Missions within our own bounds."³¹

For the next eight years, the Convention would report and reinforce this same mantra – that they wanted to focus on Massachusetts and its neighboring areas, especially Rhode Island and New Hampshire. However, in 1832, things began to change rapidly. In the minutes of the 1832 meeting, the Convention acknowledged that even though all areas of the country needed Gospel charity, "the destitution is greatest...of course, in the Western Country." What had changed? The answer is that Jonathan Going had changed.³²

In 1831, along with pioneer missionary John Mason Peck, Jonathan Going had helped form the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS), the first national

³⁰ Biographical information on Jonathan Going can be found as part of the online description of the Jonathan Going Papers in the Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections Division at Washington State University, <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg586.htm>, accessed 17 April 2012.

³¹ Records of the Massachusetts Convention of Baptists (1824), 5-6 (ABHS, Atlanta).

³² Records of the Massachusetts Convention of Baptists (1832), 12-13 (ABHS, Atlanta).

mission society for Baptists which focused exclusively on domestic missions. The ABHMS, with its Mississippi-minded founders, would direct as much attention to the Valley as possible. Going had personally caught a vision for the Mississippi Valley, and wanted to spread it throughout the nation in any way he could. He appealed to Baptists' sense of denominational pride to gain support, noting that the PCUSA and the AHMS had already sent out over 500 missionaries to the West – should the Baptists just sit back and let them win the whole region?³³

Within a year of founding the ABHMS, Going realized that he could not stand by as pastor in Worcester, Massachusetts, and merely advocate for missions in the Valley at occasional conventions and meetings. In August of 1832, he wrote to Joseph Graves, a friend and fellow pastor in Vermont: "I know from perplexing experience," he lamented, "that a man who is a pastor can do little as an occasional agent in the cause." He was tired of feeling like a lukewarm supporter, and felt that he "must do either less, or more." His decision: "I am no longer a pastor but a missionary man." Anxious about beginning the venture alone, he asked Graves whether he might consider doing the same – relinquishing his pastorate and devote his life to full-time missions, as either a missionary himself or as an agent of the society who would raise money and awareness in the East. Perhaps, Going hoped, Graves would accompany him on his first tour of the West, which he hoped to undertake soon.³⁴

³³ The General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America – otherwise known as the Triennial Convention – had formed in 1814. It began as an organization to explore missions everywhere, but by 1820 (after only two meetings), decided to focus exclusively on foreign missions; Records of the Massachusetts Convention of Baptists (1832), 12-13 (ABHS, Atlanta).

³⁴ Jonathan Going to Rev. Joseph M. Graves, 5 August 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

The West

Understanding this trend of mission societies toward focusing on the Mississippi Valley is important for at least two reasons. First, this new religious focus on the West was part of a nationwide fascination with the region. From the War of 1812, arguably until the Civil War, the West functioned as a driving force in almost every area of American life: land-sales, migration, banking, politics, and most prominently, slavery. Understanding how religion and missions fit into this general trend is important.

I want to take this a step further by arguing that religiously-fueled missions societies are far too important to be understood merely as one more part of the system, subservient to traditionally valued sectors like politics and economics. Instead, religion generally, and the prominence of Protestant missions specifically, should impact how we conceive of the West and western movement in the early republic overall. Religious publishers and mission societies, in both the East and West, promoted the importance of the Mississippi Valley to America's social, economic, and political future. Citizens picked up on this promotion and acted: subscribing to missionary magazines, sending money to the West, and aligning their political loyalties accordingly. On top of this, many people, along with the missionaries, moved to the West for explicitly religious reasons. With such far-reaching influence, the story of mission societies can tell us a great deal about the West in the early republic that cannot be accessed in any other way.

The most important factor in the rise of the West, as I alluded to earlier in this chapter, was migration. In 1810, the vast majority of the American population remained on the east side of the Appalachians. Only about one-seventh had crossed the

mountains. By 1840, *one-third* had crossed the Appalachians, the majority of them moving into the Mississippi Valley or into the river-regions which emptied into it.³⁵

For most people, there was one catalytic factor for migrating to the West: land. Decisions to move to new lands involved all sorts of considerations and motivations, including explicitly religious motivations. In the years following the War of 1812, Americans poured into the trans-Appalachian West, supplanting former British and French strongholds, and forcing out (by force, or by treaty) dozens of Native American nations. This land held great potential for families who sought new land to settle on and farm.³⁶

The development of land in the West held remarkable potential not only for aspiring families, but for the nation as a whole. With the vast, fertile lands of the West cleared of potential Indian and European rivals, the United States could reduce its dependence on British markets, and establish its own dominance in staple crops like wheat and cotton. With the invention of the cotton gin, the flood of farmers into the West, and the expansion of slave labor, this is exactly what would happen. By the 1820s, and continuing throughout the antebellum period, cotton and wheat would

³⁵ Robert Divine, T.H. Breen, George Frederickson, and R. Hal Williams, *The American Story, Volume 1: To 1877* (New York, 2002).

³⁶ See S. Scot Rohrer, *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630-1865* (Chapel Hill, 2010), especially Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. In this work, Rohrer provides an important corrective to the literature on internal migration within North America. He argues that while scholars have always identified religious motivations for migration *to* North America (among groups like the Pilgrims, Moravians, Catholic priests, etc.), they have virtually ignored religion as a motivation for migration *within* North America. See also Frederick Jackson Turner, Frederick Jackson. *Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York, 1962).

become driving forces in expanding the economy, not only of the West and South, but of the United States as a whole.³⁷

The West became central to the American economy during this period as well, especially in regard to the world of banking. Most of the land in the West passed through the hands of speculators before settlers bought it. Most settlers came with the will to succeed, but not enough money to purchase outright the acreage necessary for that success. For this money, they looked to the banking industry, which had ballooned in the post-1815 years along with the sale and settlement of western lands. Unfortunately for the settlers, and for the country as a whole, American banks, including both the First and Second Banks of the United States, overextended themselves. In efforts to maximize profit, the banks lent far more credit to farmers than they had hard money to back it up. When international markets shifted and required major responses from the American economy, the banks could not handle the pressure. In both 1819 and 1837, with the First and Second Banks of the United States and their western speculations leading the way, America nosedived into economic depressions.³⁸

The banking industry was far from alone in its western interests. The general government, state governments, and enterprising businessmen saw the potential for profit and development from the beginning. They began to capitalize on that potential in earnest after 1815. In his annual message to the nation, President Madison called in 1815 for "advancing the public interest" by "establishing throughout our country the

³⁷ Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 125-132

³⁸ For good treatments of the Panics of 1819 and 1837, see Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 136-147, 501-508; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 103-36, 353-59; and Jessica M. Lepler, "1837: Anatomy of a Panic" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 2007).

roads and canals which can be executed under the national authority." If it had not been clear before, the War of 1812 left no doubt that the undeveloped West represented a serious shortcoming in America's aspirations to become a dominant economic power.³⁹

The West lacked sufficient roads and waterways to handle the level of trade, military movement, or urban development which American leaders wanted. President Madison, along with Henry Clay and his proposed American System, sought to remedy this problem through government support for public projects known as internal improvements. These improvements – highways, turnpikes, canals, and other means of public transport – would help connect the internal regions of the country with the commercial centers of the United States, and by extension, the world.⁴⁰

It is also imperative to remember that western development came at a steep human cost: by the removal of Indian peoples and on the backs of slaves. From 1815 through the early 1830s, American settlement of the West precipitated the removal of Indian peoples, culminating in the removal of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and other tribes of the Southeast. Through treaty, violence, or both, white Americans took possession of the Old Northwest, South, and Mississippi Valley by way of removing the natives.

Slaves factored into the story of the West just as prominently, and fared just as poorly. Oftentimes more than the subject of slavery alone, it was the *expansion* of

³⁹ James Madison, Seventh Annual Message, 5 December 1815, website of the Miller Center of the University of Virginia, <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3628>, accessed on 19 April 2012.

⁴⁰ For information on James Madison, Henry Clay, the American System, and internal improvements, see Maurice Baxter, *Henry Clay and the American System* (Lexington, 2004); Stephen Aron, *How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, 1999); Douglas North, *The Economic Growth of the United States* (New York, 1961); Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 270-71; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 70-102; and George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Sixth Edition, volume 1 (New York, 2004), 450-55.

slavery *into the West* which sparked the greatest debates in antebellum America.

Through the confluence of migration, national politics, and slavery, the first post-1815 example of western prominence would come with the Missouri Crisis of 1819-1820.

The former western frontier of the Missouri Territory had experienced such intense immigration in the late-1810s that it had become eligible for statehood. The debate over the fate of slaves and the lives of black citizens in Missouri – and the surrounding Mississippi Valley – would preoccupy the country for months, and set a precedent for discussions about the West for decades to come.⁴¹

In the years after 1815, the combined force of all of these elements – land for the taking, money, agriculture, and internal improvements – made the West and the Mississippi Valley remarkably appealing to potential settlers. Hundreds of thousands of people, heartened by all of the bright opportunities that potentially lay before them, began pouring into the Valley in unprecedented floods. For easterners and westerners alike, it quickly became clear that the region could soon capture the national consciousness, and influence the direction of the national economy and government.

⁴¹ For the role of slavery in the formation of national institutions and consciousness in the early republic, including the Missouri controversy of 1819-1820, see John Craig Hammond, "Slavery, Settlement and Empire: The Expansion and Growth of Slavery in the Interior of the North American Continent, 1770-1820," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 32 (Summer 2012), 175-206; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 147-163; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 219-222; Adam Rowe, "The Republican Rhetoric of a Frontier Controversy: Newspapers in the Illinois Slavery Debate, 1823-1824," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 31 (Winter 2011), 671-699; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 139-145; and Manisha Sinha, *The Counter-Revolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2000). Sinha states on page 12: "Slavery, more than any other issue, determined [South Carolina's] geopolitics." While Sinha argues for the exceptional extent to which South Carolina went to govern their affairs according to slavery, I believe that the principle can be applied in a similar way to national politics, especially from the time of the Missouri Controversy.

This is exactly what the members of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention were afraid of: not so much that the region would become important for the nation, but that the people's minds would be consumed by "the Bank, with its millions of capital, the canal, and the railway, with the facilities for transportation" and all the other things which "betoken the rising prosperity of the State." "*What of all these,*" they questioned, "*without a redeeming virtue?*" The Convention, founded in 1826 as the Philadelphia Baptist Mission Society, was concerned that the people of the West might act against Jesus's warning in the Gospel of Matthew: they might gain the whole world, but lose their souls.⁴²

The Religious Implications of the Settlement of the Mississippi Valley

By the 1830s, it had become abundantly clear why home mission societies had begun to focus on the West, especially the Mississippi Valley. It wasn't all the money, political power, or social influence, *per se*, which had shifted to the region. It was the fact that all of these sectors of society, they believed, would develop *according to* the religious beliefs and morality of its people. And the mass majority of these people, mission societies believed, were either non-Christians, or were quickly devolving due to the prevalence of sinful influence. The Mississippi Valley, for mission societies, was no mere geographical region. It had become a key battleground in a cosmic, religious war, and America was fighting for its eternal soul.

⁴² Minutes of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention (1836), 16 (ABHS, Atlanta).

The Reverend D. Whitney of Spring Creek, Illinois, expressed these sentiments in a letter to the publishers of *The Home Missionary*, the official publication of the American Home Missionary Society:

“Oh! This Valley – what will become of its teeming thousands of immortal beings, grasping after these beautiful prairies, and inviting groves, regarding not God, drinking in the error and delusions which are rolling over us like a mighty wave? The missionaries of darkness are many, and are rapidly increasing; while, comparatively, there is but here and there a faithful sentinel upon Zion’s watch-towers to herald the truth. Oh, that the American church felt more deeply the importance of making haste to take possession of this fertile West, in the name of Jesus Christ, the King of the whole earth! The conflict is coming on – already has it commenced, and upon the issue hang the destinies of unborn millions. This Valley is destined ere long to give character to this whole nation, and shall it not be redeemed? Shall it not be saved? Our strong hope, under God, is in [the American] Home Missionary Society.”

The leaders of the American Baptist Home Mission Society argued similarly in their annual report of 1835, claiming that the character of the Valley would "determine the national character, and the fate of the American republic." This report, like every annual report of the ABHMS, was reprinted and approved by Baptist missionary conventions and societies throughout the nation.⁴³

Supporters of home missions expressed many motivations for directing their energy and resources to the Mississippi Valley. Foundationally, they hoped for religious conversion and practice among the people. In 1814, Samuel Mills had reported after his

⁴³ *The Home Missionary*, 17 (May 1844), 16, printed in one bound volume (New York, 1844). This sort of language, which connected the religious state of the Mississippi Valley to the moral progress of the entire nation, was not new to the 1840s. It had been pervasive in the 1830s as well, and seems to have begun in earnest in the 1820s. For example, in the 1836 Annual Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society (which was quoted and reprinted by state groups like the Massachusetts Baptist Convention, the group argued: "The Valley of the Mississippi...The character of its population for intelligence, morality, and religion, will determine the national character, and the fate of the American Republic. The influence of this country will materially affect, for evil or for good, the moral condition of the world; and it remains to be seen, whether the nation and the Church of God..shall be fitted to sustain." See Minutes of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1836), 14 (ABHS, Atlanta); *The Third Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1835), 21.

tour of the West that "the whole country, from Lake Erie to the gulf of Mexico, is as the valley of the shadow of death...their number...every year increased, by a mighty flood of emigration" And yet, the region languished, with a paucity of ministers, and the resulting lack of organized religion.⁴⁴

Mission societies and their missionaries believed deeply in their call to spread their religion, and began taking up the challenge of saving the region in the decades following. In an address before the Massachusetts Baptist Convention in 1837, Jonathan Going exhorted the attendants to "pray most devoutly and constantly, to labor unremittingly, and to contribute bountifully, for Home Missions till every church is provided with a pastor, every family brought under religious influence, every child sufficiently taught in the word of God; every town, village and settlement, provided with gospel ministrations." The West and the Valley undeniably lacked organized churches, and the primary goal of Christian missionary efforts should be to establish stable, self-sustaining churches with permanent pastors.⁴⁵

This desire for the Valley is exactly what burned within Jonathan Going, and led him to dedicate his life to it, amidst many troubles. As an agent for a missionary society, or as a missionary himself in the 1830s, Going criss-crossed the country on horseback for thousands of miles, often away from his family for months at a time. The entire time, he suffered from multiple physical ailments. He experienced regular bouts of paralysis and palsy with his left hand, which he believed was a sign of more serious problems of apoplexy (associated with strokes and other internal bleeding). Like many

⁴⁴ Mills and Smith, *Missionary Tour*, 47.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1837), 6 (ABHS, Atlanta).

others, he struggled with "bilious" and liver problems associated with his digestive system, for which he had no relief.⁴⁶

All of these health problems left him in a quandry. He knew that much of his trouble could be alleviated by slowing down, and traveling less. It was clear, he acknowledged, that he had "been preparing for this illness by a regular...overdoing [of] the amount of my labors." But he also knew that a mission needed to be accomplished, and that he had been called to do it. Through all of his sufferings, he resolved, "I [intend] to work while my clay lasts whether longer, or shorter, for the poor sheep, and destitute multitudes in the Valley."⁴⁷

Worse than his own difficulties were those of Jonathan's wife, Lucy. Sometime between their marriage in 1811 and the commencement of his missionary travels in the 1830s, Lucy had begun to experience varying levels of mental troubles. By 1834, her health had devolved rapidly. In March, Going related his sorrows to a friend:

Myself and children are well; – but poor Mrs. G. is once the tenant of an Insane Hospital – that at Bloomingdale, or Manhattan Island, 7 miles from this office. She was carried there 6th inst. and is as quiet and comfortable as could be expected under the circumstances. So you see the hand of the Lord is again heavy upon me; but it is God's doing, and, therefore, all right. I hope you and my old friends will pray for me, and mine.

In the midst of his and his wife's sufferings, Going's commitment to the Mississippi Valley and the nation remained vibrant, and grounded in the same Calvinistic dependence on God's providence. One year later, in 1835, Jonathan wrote to his friend

⁴⁶ Jonathan Going to Rev. H. Maclay, 15 June 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Jonathan Going to Rev. Jos. M. Graves, 5 August 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); John Mason Peck to Jonathan Going, 22 September 1837, Jonathan Going Papers (Washington State University, Pullman)

⁴⁷ Jonathan Going to William Colgate, 11 May 1835, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Jonathan Going to Rev. H. Maclay, 15 June 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

William Colgate: "living or dying, in sickness or in health...[I prefer] the Home Mission...above my chief personal joy." Like his own sickness, like his wife's health, the Mississippi Valley "cause is God's, and he will I hope sustain it."⁴⁸

Anti-Catholicism and the Motivation for Protestant Missions to the Mississippi Valley

In the early republic, this religious motivation for Protestant domestic missions had a second side to it. In his 1837-speech before the Massachusetts Baptist Convention, Jonathan Going identified this motive: to thwart "the efforts now making by *foreign influence* to subvert our most sacred principles, and control our future destinies." This "foreign influence" was the Catholic Church, specifically European Catholic leaders, who many Protestants believed were seeking to establish a Catholic stronghold in the Mississippi Valley.⁴⁹

Protestants in the United States had been warning the nation about the dangers of Catholicism for decades. Amidst the American Revolution, some states even wove anti-Catholic laws and rhetoric into their original constitutions. Protestant missionaries had been expressing similar concerns ever since they made their way into the Mississippi Valley early in the 19th century. On the face of things, it made sense. Every time

⁴⁸ Jonathan Going to Rev. F.A. Willard, 6 Mach 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). Also, in a letter written three days later, Jonathan's brother Ezra wrote to express his condolences, lamenting: "How shall I express the pain I felt in the intelligence of the recurrence of Mrs. Goings derangement. I had hoped it shd not be so. But God will do right." See Ezra Going to Jonathan Going, 13 March 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Jonathan Going to William Colgate, 11 May 1835, Jonathan Going Papers, (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁴⁹ Minutes of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1837), 6 (emphasis added) (ABHS, Atlanta). For scholarly discussion of anti-Catholicism and the context of the Home missions movement, see Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, 1985); Michael Pasquier, *Fathers on the Frontier: French Missionaries and the Roman Catholic Priesthood in the United States, 1789-1870* (New York, 2010); and Ray Billington, "Anti-Catholic Propaganda and the Home Missionary Movement, 1800-1860," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 22 (Dec. 1935), 361-84.

Protestant missionaries made inroads into a major settlement in the Valley in the early years of the republic, they found few Protestant pastors (or none at all), but often encountered Catholics. This was especially the case in Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, and Louisiana. For example, in 1819, Samuel Royce accepted a missionary appointment to Louisiana by the Missionary Society of Connecticut. Traveling for hundreds of miles throughout the Mississippi and Red River valleys, Royce remarked that he covered "ground never before trodden by a Protestant minister." But that ground *had* been trodden – by Catholics, who for years had provided the only sermons some settlers had ever heard.⁵⁰

As many historians have documented, anti-Catholicism reached new levels in the antebellum era, surging in the 1830s and reaching its national heights with the success of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s. This nationwide sentiment was characterized by all sorts of beliefs, from stark racism and nativism, to genuine belief in a worldwide Catholic conspiracy to undermine America. As ridiculous as some present-day observers may find this notion, it was a major part of the American context in the antebellum era, and the Home missions movement hit its stride within that context, imbibing and promoting many of the same ideas.⁵¹

⁵⁰ The Preamble of the Constitution of South Carolina (1776) and Article XXXVIII of the Constitution of New York (1777) both contained clear references to Catholicism and its supposed dangers. For South Carolina, see *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and other Organic Laws of the United States* (Washington, DC, 1878), 1615-1616; for New York, text online with the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/ny01.asp, accessed 3 May 2012; *Twentieth Annual Narrative of Missionary Labours...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1819), 16.

⁵¹ Perhaps the best known example of such sentiments within Protestantism and the broader culture of the 1830s is Lyman Beecher, *A Plea For the West* (Cincinnati, 1835). Beecher published this work after delivering as a public discourse in multiple cities along the Atlantic. In it, Beecher hones in on

For proponents of Protestant missions, there was no question whether the Catholic Church was trying, in some way, to rule the Valley, the West, and eventually, the United States; these were givens. The question was whether Protestants were going to allow the unspoiled, moldable, crucible of the nation – the Mississippi Valley – to be won without a fight.

This is why Jonathan Going wrote John Mason Peck in late-1833 with such urgency. Peck had recently accepted a six-month missionary term as an agent of the newly-formed American Baptist Home Mission Society. His job would be to travel the country to raise money and awareness for home missions, *especially* in the Valley. "One thing I hope you will not fail to do," Going urged Peck, "is impress upon the people the astonishing efforts of Papists to rule the West, and if we do not give a turn...they will."⁵²

Going and Peck were far from alone in their ominous predictions for American Christendom. This fear of the religious threat of Catholicism, especially as it appeared in the West, ran through every Protestant denomination, in every state in the Union. In New York, churches of the Cayuga and Black River Associations dreaded "the efforts of the Papal power" and "the infamous attempts of Popery...and her inroads among the new settlements of the west." In Kentucky, the Little River Baptist Association produced a circular letter in which they warned each congregation to watch out for Catholics in the region, where until recently, the "Pope has had uncontrolled dominion." The American Baptist Home Mission Society produced similar material, but on a national scale. They

the importance of the West for the national character, and the twin threats of Catholicism and lack of education in the West.

⁵² Jonathan Going to John Mason Peck, 13 December 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

were so concerned with Catholicism's extending reach in the West that in their annual report of 1835, they argued that the *entire practice* of missions in America should "be viewed in relation to the *remarkable prevalence of popery*" and the danger it posed to American religion and society.⁵³

Going certainly had his suspicions of Catholicism, and clearly believed that even well-meaning Catholics posed a threat to pure Christianity. Still, he was alarmed by the severity of the rhetoric. The Minutes of the 1835 Annual Meeting of the ABHMS include the following:

"On motion of Rev. J. Going / RESOLVED, That in all our operations in which Roman Catholics are concerned, it is our duty to remember that they as men and citizens are entitled to all the rights and privileges held by others; and that in all our efforts to prevent the baleful influence of Romanism, our only weapons should be those of moral influence, and the chief thing to be attempted is, by prayer and the preaching of the gospel and kind offices, to seek, with the blessing of God, the conversion of the souls of Catholics to Jesus Christ."⁵⁴

Even with such calls for moderation, Protestants like Jonathan Going and John Mason Peck continually expressed deep concern about Catholicism (and other religions they considered false). Their worries grew out of more than simple prejudice or xenophobia (although these may certainly have been factors). They came from the belief that a person's religion – *any* religion – would influence every other facet of their life. What might have seemed like theological and ecclesiastical trifles to some, seemed to them like an invasive bacteria – a living thing which although small, could multiply rapidly, and infect its entire host.

⁵³ Minutes of the Black River Association of New York (1844), 6 (SBHLA, Nashville); Minutes of the Cayuga Association of New York (1844), 6 (SBHLA, Nashville); Minutes of the Little River Baptist Association of Kentucky (1837), page number obscured (SBHLA, Nashville); *The Third Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1835), 27.

⁵⁴ *The Third Report of the...American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 12.

For example, Protestants consistently expressed fear about Catholicism's supposed potential to destroy the American system of government. This belief, like anti-Catholicism among Protestants in general, had centuries of background. Beginning in the sixteenth-century reformation, Protestants had identified Catholicism as the source of all sorts of political troubles, conspiracies, and wars. Most recently, Catholicism had appeared as the specter which haunted the revolutions that swept across both Europe and America in the late-18th century.⁵⁵

American Baptists of the mid-nineteenth century believed that Catholic conspiracies for power continued in their communities. In a circular meant to be sent to every Baptist congregation in the nation, the ABHMS warned, "Popery is rapidly on the increase," and it "seeks to retrieve in America what it has lost in Europe." A "cameleon" with "Jesuitical cunning and adroitness," Catholicism was not a religion, but at heart "a system of despotism" which could "never be made to agree with republicanism." If it were to rise in America, it would undoubtedly "produce a change in the form of our government, effecting the demolition of our free institutions." And this great power, which already owned "the provinces and states on our Northern and Southern borders, and all South America," and had "immense" resources throughout the world, had its aim set: "the Valley of the West is the chosen field of its operations." There in the Valley,

⁵⁵ For books on anti-Catholicism in the early American and British traditions, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992); John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660-1688* (Cambridge, UK, 1973); Maura Farrelly, *Papist Patriots: The Making of an American Catholic Identity* (New York, 2012); Jon Gjerde, *Catholicism and the Shaping of Nineteenth-Century America*, edited by S. Deborah Kang (Cambridge, UK, 2012); Christopher Beneke and Christopher Grenda, eds., *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2011), especially Owen Stanwood's chapter, "Catholics, Protestants, and the Clash of Civilizations in Early America," 218-240.

which lacked "literary & religious instruction," Ezra Going warned the people that they would be constantly exposed to the "baneful influence of Roman Catholic superstition, Idolatry & Tyranny which fearfully threaten the subversion of all our...Political and Religious Institutions."⁵⁶

In tying Catholicism to political conspiracies in the West, the ABHMS and its sister mission societies were in the mainstream of American Protestantism. In 1835, the famed pastor Lyman Beecher would publish a book based on speeches he had been delivering to like-minded and exuberant crowds for years. In his book *A Plea for the West*, Beecher focused pointedly on the rise of Catholicism in the West as the chief threat to American political institutions. Like all good Americans, he prefaced his critiques of Catholics with nods to American democracy and civil liberties: "I not only admit their equal rights, but insist upon them...The Catholics have a perfect right to proselyte the nation to their faith," he conceded. But he had a right too, the right to show that Catholic "political doctrines" and "practice" had always been "hostile to civil and religious liberty" in the world. Beecher's words had fallen on fertile ground for decades, and had already begun to yield fruit – John Mason Peck, in 1809, before he set out on his mission to the West, had sat under Beecher's preaching and care.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *The Second Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1834), 31. Earlier in the same report, on page 19, the ABHMS reported that one of their missionaries in Louisiana had written to tell them that "the conspirator of Rome determined to subvert the government." Ezra Going to Jonathan Going, 3 March 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta)

⁵⁷ Beecher, *A Plea for the West*, 87-88. For a fuller treatment of Beecher's life, see Stuart Henry, *Unvanquished Puritan: a Portrait of Lyman Beecher* (Westport, 1986); John McPherson, "John Mason Peck: A Conversionist Methodology," 4.

American missionaries rabid for winning the Valley were not alone in setting the stakes so high. In a statement before the Ohio Baptist Convention, Rev. Jenkyn, and English clergyman, placed the battle on the world stage:

The collision of conflicting principles is rapidly approaching. The two great battles of truth and error will...be fought on the plains of India, and in the valley of the Mississippi. In India, the encounter has commenced between Christianity and the united forces of idolatry and Mohamedanism. In the valley of the Mississippi, the lines are now drawing for a deadly conflict between true Christianity and anti-christian Popery.

As the clash between Islam and Christianity in the Indus Valley would set the stage for India's future, so many believed the clash between Catholicism and Protestantism in the Mississippi Valley would set the stage for America's future.⁵⁸

Home Missions and the Political Implications of the West

Anti-Catholicism alone, although powerful, would not have been enough to propel the Home missions movement to the forefront of religious reform in antebellum America. Beyond the mere ecclesiastical or theological importance of missions, eastern Protestants believed that Valley held the *social* and *political* potential to shape the nation. The editors of *The Home Missionary* pleaded with their readers to consider the critical political importance of the Valley. They warned that "Catholic influences would co-operate with infidelity and native depravity" not only to convert, but "to make *voters and legislators*." To emphasize the gravity of the situation, they created a chart for the

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Ohio Baptist Convention (1848), 21 (ABHS, Atlanta).

front page of the April 1842 issue, which detailed the influence of the East and West in the national Congress in 1830, and in 1840 (pictured below).⁵⁹

First of all, you can note on the map (Figure ,1 below) that the publishers of *The Home Missionary* considered "the West" as all U.S. states and territories west of the

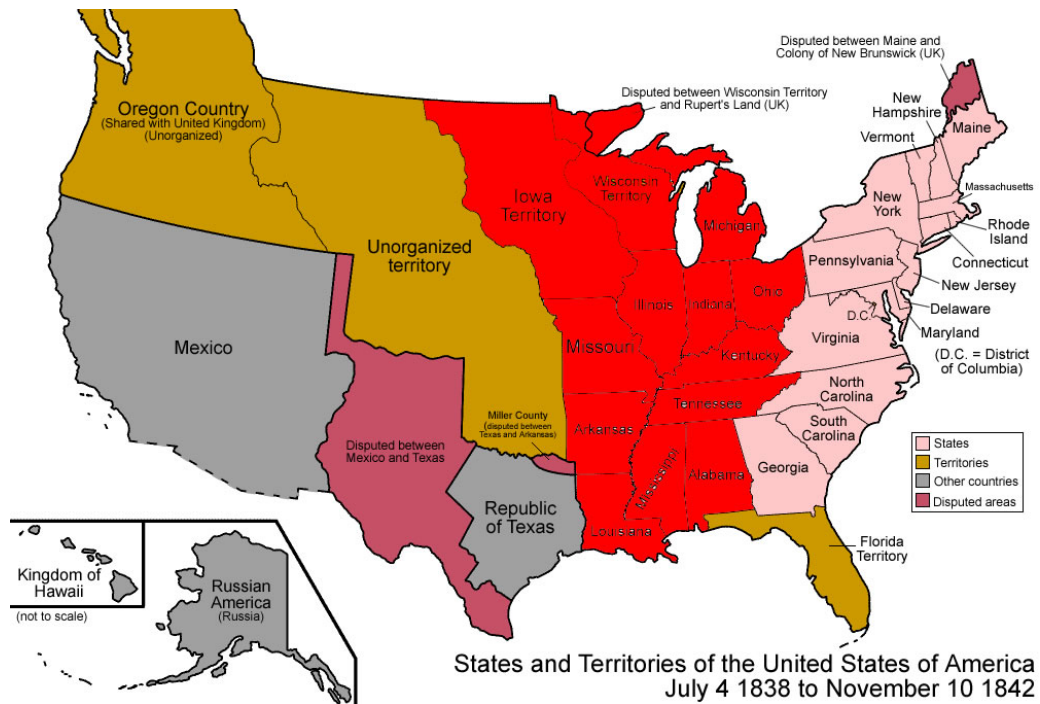


Figure 1. States and Territories of the United States of America

⁵⁹ *The Home Missionary and Pastor's Journal*, 14 (Apr. 1842), 277-78 (emphasis added). In a discourse ten years earlier, Sylvester Graham expressed almost exactly the same sort of language regarding the connection between religious reform and future voters. Graham, a Presbyterian minister who came to be known primarily for his emphasis on temperance and dietary reform, said of the rising general of the West who lacked Sunday Schools: "These are soon to constitute a large portion of that people, who are to exercise their suffrage in the election of Legislators and Representatives and Rulers; and become, themselves eligible to the highest civil offices in our Republic...and from whom religion must expect its future friends, or opposers." If Americans did not properly teach these "millions of children, which are now unseen and unfelt in our country," they would, like the Mississippi River "soon unite in one dark and mighty confluence of ignorance and immorality and crime, which will overflow the wholesome restraints of society...and sap the foundations of our Republican Institutions." See Sylvester Graham, *The Kingdom Come: A Discourse on the Importance of Sunday Schools* (Philadelphia, 1831), 21-22, Special Collections (Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton).

Appalachians, along waterways which emptied into the Mississippi River (this was synonymous with what many deemed "The Mississippi Valley").

THE HOME MISSIONARY.

Go, PREACH the GOSPEL *Mark* xvi. 15.
How shall they preach except they be SENT? *Rom.* x. 15.

Vol. XIV. APRIL, 1842. No. 19.

POLITICAL POWER MOVING WESTWARD.

It has been urged as an argument for Christian effort in behalf of the new states, that "if the philanthropy of the eastern churches do not speedily mould the West, the West will mould them." The evidence of this is found in the rapid increase of the political and social importance of the western states.

The table given below has been prepared with a view to exhibit the relative influence of the eastern and western states in our national legislature; and also to show how rapidly that influence is passing from the hands of the former to those of the latter.

REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS.

NOTE 1.—The portion of the country whose waters empty into the Gulf of Mexico, is in this table considered as belonging to the Mississippi valley, except western Pennsylvania and the N. W. part of Georgia, the relations of which render it proper to class those districts with the states east of the Alleghany mountains.

2. From 1830 to 1840 the ratio of representation in Congress was 1 member for every 47,700 persons, *free* slaves being computed equivalent to *three* free persons. Since the census of 1840, a select Committee of Congress on the apportionment of representation, has reported recommending 68,000 as the number to be entitled to send a member. Should this recommendation be adopted, as it probably will, the representation of the East and the West, under each census, will compare as follows:—

THE EAST.			THE WEST.		
Members under census of	1830.	1840.	Members under census of	1830.	1840.
Maine,	8	7	Alabama,	5	7
New-Hampshire,	5	4	Mississippi,	2	4
Massachusetts,	12	10	Louisiana,	3	4
Rhode Island,	2	1	Tennessee,	13	11
Connecticut,	6	4	Kentucky,	13	10
Vermont,	5	4	Ohio,	19	22
New-York,	40	35	Indiana,	7	10
New-Jersey,	6	5	Illinois,	3	7
Pennsylvania,	28	25	Missouri,	2	5
Delaware,	1	1	Arkansas,	1	1
Maryland,	8	6	Michigan,	1	3
Virginia, (Eastern,)	12	9	Virginia, (Western,)	9	6
North Carolina,	13	9	Wisconsin,	1	1
South Carolina,	9	6	Iowa,	1	1
Georgia,	9	8	Florida,	1	1
	164	134		81	93

VOL. XIV. 24

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Figure 2. The Home Missionary

As you can note on the chart above (Figure 2), between 1830 and 1840, while this western area had *gained* twelve representative in Congress, increasing from 81 to 93, eastern states had *lost* thirty, declining from 164 to 134. This had shifted national congressional representation by a total of forty-two votes. Such numbers would be "a matter of trifling importance," they lamented, if "western men...and the constituents by whom they [were] elected [were] intelligent and virtuous," i.e., not Catholics, duelers, or simply faithless. Unfortunately, the writers believed, westerners were *exactly* these things. And if they gained power, *The Home Missionary* warned, America would see a "wave of ruin...roll over all that is fair in the land of the Pilgrims, quenching the fire on their altars, and sweeping away the monuments reared by their fathers' piety and toil." Jonathan Going had expressed the same concerns ten years earlier when he predicted to his brother Ezra that soon:

[The Valley will] constitute a majority of the American people, so that the West will become the nation, give us rules & laws. Hence the question of the perpetuity of the Republic, and of free institutions, and religious freedom, will depend on the moral character of the West. That must be improved or all is lost. Efforts to improve it must be made in the E[astern] States...and done immediately, as the period of another generation will consolidate the moral elements, and constitute the character of the West.

The population of the Valley was growing, and its influence in national affairs along with it. The burning question for the proponents of missions – *What sort of influence do we want the West to have?*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ *The Home Missionary and Pastor's Journal*, 14 (Apr. 1842), 277-78; *The Home Missionary*, 20 (Sept. 1847); *The Home Missionary*, 21 (May 1848); Jonathan Going to Ezra Going, 23 November 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

For decades, mission societies had argued that they were the solution to the problem, the vaccination to prevent national disease. James Logan expressed this sentiment from his post in Kentucky: "The influence which the character of so extensive of our country is destined to have both on the welfare of these United States and especially on the *church* in this country renders it very important that this character should be formed under the influence of the Gospel," through missions. By the 1830s, this view of home missions' necessity for American political institutions lived, and thrived in American mission societies. "Every view taken of Home Missions," wrote A.B. Freeman, a missionary in Chicago, "goes to sustain the position that they are preeminently important – as in relation to the permanency of our civil institutions."⁶¹

The mission societies and missionaries remained remarkably consistent in describing what sort of character they hoped to create in the West: one shaped by the Gospel. The ABHMS stated their goal clearly: "The Grand purpose of our organization should be steadily regarded, - *the preaching of the gospel to every creature in our country.*" The people of the "Great Valley of the Mississippi" already had the raw materials for a great society, "possessing in remarkable degree the elements of ardent and energetic character, claiming and gaining, each day." But, these *characteristics* would prove fruitless if the people's *characters* remained "lamentably destitute of the frequent and faithful preaching of that Gospel which can alone bestow on the energy of individuals or communities a wise direction and a happy issue." This was the view of

⁶¹ James Logan to Absalom Peters, 14 September 1826, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 104; Rev. A.B. Freeman is quoted in *The Second Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1834), 14-15.

every missionary who wrote back to the ABHMS, including those who originally came from the West.⁶²

Inherent in the missionaries' messages was the call for people to fundamentally change their lives, and this did not stop with mere spiritual conversion. True conversion, missionaries believed, should lead to righteous living. John Mason Peck commented extensively on the character and behavior of westerners, and what he hoped Baptist missionaries could accomplish among them. As for work habits, he hoped that his preaching would help transform the "primitive squatters" of the early waves of western immigration into industrious citizens, like the "pioneer settlers" which had followed them in later waves of immigration. Peck was even more concerned with the connection between missions and education. He hoped that the "advancement, very generally, of religion" would lead to equal advancements in "education, colleges and schools" as well. Many missionaries, including Peck, expressed deep concern about "family government" among many rural westerners as well. Near Franklin, Iowa, Peck reported:

Many of the families we called on...were not only wretchedly ignorant and filthy, but wholly destitute of skill in family government... Some parents do not train their children, from early boyhood to the period of manhood, to habits of self-government. What helpless wretches, and how unfit for social life, are those young men who have no government over themselves.

⁶² *First Anniversary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1832), 6, 13. For an example of these pastors' concern for settlers' characters above all, Rev. G. Waller of Shelby County, Kentucky, wrote to the ABHMS on 28 May 1833. All he wrote about were his spiritual goals for the people, and the specifically religious gains made, including professions of salvation, baptisms, church membership, and winning people over toward supporting the missionary enterprise. See *The First Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1833), 32.

From his post in Missouri, Rev. Kemp Scott reported similar concerns about family government, claiming that "too many neglect to pray in their families, or give necessary instruction to their children."⁶³

From work habits, to education, to family government and general social decorum, mission societies aimed at shaping the entire character of western society. And for the most part, they seem to have done so with the view that this would not work through the simple imposition of external values; it would require a long process of religious ideals working their way out in the characters of converted individuals, families, and communities. After all, argued missionary William Kinner, if the mission societies wanted people to exhibit righteous character, they "must think right before they will do right." And if these mission societies wanted to maintain what they believed was a Protestant Christian nation, with Protestant Christian political ideals, then the Mississippi Valley must thus be won by Protestant Christian missionaries. Otherwise, the enemy (Catholics, atheists, and others like them) would direct the flow of western influence in America in a direction Christians did not want it to go.⁶⁴

⁶³ Babcock, ed., *Forty Years*, 144, 149. Another missionary, Jacob Bower of Morgan County, Illinois, reported to the ABHMS on 11 June 1833 that the early settlers in the region had been "saucy and violent" until recently. See *The Second Report of the...ABHMS* (1834), 13-14; Babcock, ed., *Forty Years*, 306-307 ("advancement"), 145-46 ("Many of the families"); *Second Report of the...ABHMS*(1834), 27.

⁶⁴ Rev. William Kinner to Jonathan Going, Corresponding Secretary of the A.B.H.M.S., in *The Second Report of the...ABHMS* (1834), 25. This characterization of the missionaries to the West is in keeping with my general view that for the most part, missionaries were concerned more with spreading a religious message than a political, economic, or social message. This characterization of missionaries in the early republic counters the ideas promoted in works which tend to characterize missionaries and traveling pastors as wanting to be true to their religion, but acting primarily out of concern for maintaining social acceptance, even if it meant sacrificing their message on the altar of local ideals, such as patriarch or slavery. For two examples of this broad interpretation, see *Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South* (Baton Rouge, 2011); and Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York, 1997).

Centralization and Nationalization in the Early Republic

In 1835, looking back on the success of American home missions thus far, Theron Baldwin rejoiced that the effort had been "like electricity to the churches of the East." These churches' strength had been "*increased by sending* their hundreds of thousands to build up the redeemer's cause at the West." In the previous two decades, Baldwin had witnessed the metamorphosis of the Home missions movement from a loosely-connected, regionally-based movement, into an organized, centralized, nationalized movement. In his view, the churches of the east had gained much of their energy and success not merely through revivals or the influx of new church members, but specifically through *sending* missionaries out to the West.⁶⁵

In the latter part of this chapter, I aim to take Baldwin's estimation one step further. The East's perception of the Mississippi Valley's need for missions, and their subsequent desire to organize an effort to save the West, led not only to the growth of Christianity in the West, or churches and reform societies in the East, but to the *centralization* and *nationalization* of the Home missions movement. In fact, this decisive shift in home mission societies reflected a broader shift toward centralization and nationalization in every American religious reform society, collectively known as the Benevolent Empire. Protestant efforts to reform society through avenues like abolition, antislavery, Sunday Schools, Bibles, poverty-relief, prison-reform, and missions all steadily moved away from decentralized and local models to centralized and national models in the three decades after 1815. We should consider this religious

⁶⁵ Theron Baldwin to Charles Butler, 1835, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 9 (emphasis added).

impetus toward the centralization and nationalization of American Christianity equally, alongside the more common interpretation of this period as one characterized primarily by the *democratization* of American Christianity.⁶⁶

The nationalization and centralization of the Home missions movement from the 1810s to the 1830s occurred along with three other parallel processes: the rise of the West in the national consciousness, the disestablishment of Protestant churches in every state in the Union, and the general trend toward centralization and nationalization in every sector of American society. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the rising importance of the West in the American mind. Land, migration, banking, Henry Clay's American System, internal improvements, slavery, and shifts in political representation and power: each of these issues, and many more, became items of *national* discussion during this period, and became so primarily in relation to the West. The rise of home missions was no different. As people settled and developed the West at a rapid pace, eastern Christians began to proclaim an early, more explicitly-religious form of "manifest destiny" – that it was the destiny of America to dominate the West, and

⁶⁶ The preeminent interpretation of Protestantism in the early republic is Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, 1989). Hatch argues rightly that in contrast to some of the denominations and ecclesiastical structures of the American and European past, American Protestantism in the early republic emphasized and contributed to the democratization of American Christianity, and American society as a whole. He shows that Baptists, Methodists, and African-Americans in general emphasized and experienced far more democracy than had ever been seen before in American Christianity. My goal is not to combat interpretations like those of Hatch: these interpretations are correct in many ways. My goal is to show that even as democratization was increasing in some sectors of American Christianity, so was the centralization and nationalization of power in those Christian denominations. Two other historians who are also focusing on this tension between the forces of democratization and centralization are Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago, 2012); and Barton Price, "American Home Missions and the Federalization of American Evangelicalism, 1789-1850," (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early Republic, 14-17 July 2011, Philadelphia); and a fuller treatment in Price's "Evangelical Periodicals and the Making of America's Heartland, 1789-1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Florida State University, 2011).

therefore the responsibility of the church to make sure that this was done in a godly way.⁶⁷

A second parallel trend to the centralization of American home missions was the decided move toward religious disestablishment in America. As I discussed in Chapter Two, while the Constitution of the United States guaranteed that the general government could not establish any particular religion for the nation, it also left the states with the freedom to exercise that power, if they so chose. In the 1780s and 1790s, while most states moved to disestablish specific churches (if they had not already), some states in the New England region maintained religious establishments.

In the early nineteenth century, the momentum lay on the side of those advocating disestablishment, even in old Puritan strongholds like Massachusetts. Non-believers and dissenting believers alike experienced underrepresentation, persecution, and oppression in states with established churches, and in states which continued to buttress Christianity as an unofficial state religion. By the late 1810s, the tide of disestablishment was rising at a quickening pace. In 1833, the final holdout, Massachusetts, amended its constitution to call for religious toleration and disestablishment.

⁶⁷ The entire concept of "Manifest Destiny," while used for social, political, economic, and military reasons, was based in *religious* beliefs, especially the belief that God had destined the United States to spread its political and moral values throughout the North American continent, and beyond. For example, John O'Sullivan (the man considered responsible for first publicly promoting the concept of Manifest Destiny) wrote: "In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High – the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere – its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens." See John O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review*, 6 (Nov. 1839), 426-430, from the Cornell University Library "Making of America Collection" at <http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=usde;cc=usde;rgn=full%20text;idno=usde0006-4;didno=usde0006-4;view=image;seq=0350;node=usde0006-4%3A6>, accessed on 3 May 2012.

Disestablishment had complex webs of effects, but it led to two specific outcomes for mission societies. First, in states with established churches, it cut off official government support which had long been coming their way. Tax dollars could no longer go directly to particular denominations, or their mission societies. It also dampened the official proclamations of governors like Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut who called the people of the state to contribute to denominational religious projects.

While disestablishment was not a necessary way station on the path toward the centralization of mission societies – many other factors were at work – it certainly contributed to it. When states disestablished churches, it meant that the churches' religious projects, including missions, would no longer receive designated monetary support, and would have to acquire that money elsewhere. While Protestants continued to call for governments to promote Christian morality, they now had to do so in a way which took into account the financial realities of disestablishment *and* their vision for an evangelized nation. One way they would accomplish this would be through directing their money and energy into centralized mission agencies with mission-plans national in scope. These national societies, with their centralized systems of fundraising and government, could fill the void left by disestablishment, and also provide a focused vision for all American Protestants interested in the spread of missions.

The third backdrop-element to the nationalization and centralization of the Home missions movement was the general trend in American politics and society in this same direction. Like the elements of society already mentioned – land, banking, the American

System, etc. – affairs which had once primarily drawn regional interest were progressively drawing the attention of all Americans as a national community. The annexation of new states, like Missouri and Maine, became *national* matters. People throughout the nation, especially those invested in trade, lobbied for *national* transportation networks. Economic booms and busts became increasingly national in scale. The most important subject of the early republic – the growing presence of slavery – became an undeniably *national* affair, which northern and New-England citizens could no longer relegate to the southern and western fringes.⁶⁸

In addition to taking part in this nationalizing trend in their religious affairs, proponents of mission societies joined in the overall nationalizing project. Missionaries in the West, including John Mason Peck, consistently supported the cause of internal improvements, believing that the work of the general government in frontier areas could raise up the people in ways that local and state governments could not. It should come as no surprise that most of those who avidly supported mission societies and other reform movements voted Whig: the party known precisely for this sort of focus on organization and reform. Historian William McLoughlin noted that missionaries in the early republic increasingly tended to identify with the nation before they identified with their home state. In accordance with this, they also tended to "exalt the federal constitution over state's rights because of the new nation's peculiar covenant with God."

⁶⁸ The term "imagined community" comes from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983). The term has been applied to America at almost every stage of its development, arguing that in each case (during the American Revolution, in the early Republic, in the Age of Imperialism, etc.), Americans came to believe, in a new way, that they were indeed a single people. I do not intend to argue that this term *cannot* be applied to other time periods, but I do argue that in the antebellum era, coupled with the clear indications of every sector of society rapidly nationalizing, this process was especially clear.

Finally, mission societies' newfound nationalistic tendencies simply walked in line with most major religious reform movements of the period. By the 1830s, temperance, women's rights, abolition, prison reform, and sabbatarianism had all begun to take local problems and address them on the nation level, with national concerns.⁶⁹

The Home missions movement was not, however, just another social reform movement. Of all American religious reform movements, it was arguably the oldest, and certainly the most widespread. It also functioned as a foundational or "carrier" reform society; missionaries on assignment would often advocate for Bible, temperance, and sabbatarian societies, as part of their overall religious objective. With this wide reach, and even wider aims, home mission societies thus had the potential to drastically effect the religious, social, and political direction of much of society. But rather than emphasizing their roots in localism and regionalism, or going along with the concurrent trend of democratization within many Protestant denominations, the Home missions movement took a different path: it nationalized, and it centralized.

The Centralization and Nationalization of American Christianity

As I detailed in Chapters One and Three, when mission societies began forming in the first two decades of the republic, they did so on an exclusively local and regional

⁶⁹ Babcock, ed., *Forty Years of Pioneer Life*; Jennings, "John Mason Peck and the Impact of New England on the Old Northwest," 177-78. For the connection between religion, particular denominations, and political parties, see Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 580-84; William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven, 1984), 4. McLoughlin acknowledges that he inherited this idea from Ernest Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago, 1968). One important way to gauge the role of the nation in American evangelicalism in the antebellum period is through politics, including voting. The most thorough overview of this is Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (Knoxville, 1993). See also Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System," *Journal of American History*, 77 (Mar. 1991), 1216-1239; and Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, Chapter 15.

basis. Baptists and Congregationalists, influenced by their deep commitment to congregational governance, were perhaps the most committed to local leadership in missions. The broadest level at which they participated with mission societies would be on the state level, as was the case with groups like the New York Missionary Society (formed in 1796) and the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society (formed in 1802). And even these statewide societies drew the vast majority of their membership and funds from limited locales: New York City and Boston. As late as 1816, the Congregational-led New Hampshire Missionary Society argued that just as "the twelve apostles...divided the pagan world among them," so the "different missionary associations now have their respective fields of labor" where they could build walls and foundations. Their "house," their "lot," was in New Hampshire.⁷⁰

Although Presbyterians had a system of church government which included a national governing body – the General Assembly – they remained firmly committed to local governance and representative government. The manner in which Presbyterians conducted missions affirms this commitment. As detailed in Chapter One, in 1802, the General Assembly established a Standing Committee on Missions for the Presbyterian Church in the United States. On the face of it, it might seem that such a national body would run counter to local governance. In fact, while the committee certainly cared about the national interest of the church, its original goal was to *facilitate* the missionary work of the various synods and presbyteries.

⁷⁰ *The Fifteenth Report of the Board of Trustees of the New-Hampshire Missionary Society* (Concord, 1816), 28-29.

Some synods, like the Synod of New York and New Jersey, eagerly submitted their needs to the Standing Committee, and cooperated with them in missionary service from the beginning. But some synods – like the Synods of Virginia, Pittsburgh, Kentucky, and the Carolinas – wished to govern their own missionary affairs, separate from the Committee. The Committee met in 1804 after these synods expressed their wishes, and reported that "it has been judged expedient that they should manage the missionary business separately." In 1805, some presbyteries in New York and New Brunswick requested the same privilege. The committee knew that the continued abridgement of its duties might lead to them having little national influence, but still erred on the side of granting control over missions to presbyteries and synods, rather than assuming it themselves.⁷¹

Even Methodists, who maintained one of the most top-down governing structures in American Protestantism, believed that missions were best accomplished under local leadership. For the first two decades of the republic, Methodists organized missions to settlers, cities, and Indians through their local churches and conferences, via local pastors and circuit preachers. Beyond keeping records, raising funds, and appointing pastors, the national leadership in the church actually did very little regarding the organization of missionary projects.⁷²

⁷¹ Standing Committee, 22 March 1804, 108. For more discussion of local control over missions, and of the precarious position of the Standing Committee amidst the discussion of national and local missions, see the microfilm Minutes of the Standing Committee, 27 May 1805, 26 May 1808, 22 May 1809; and the 2nd Report of the Committee to the General Assembly, 24 May 1811.

⁷² William Barclay, *Early American Methodism, 1769-1844* (New York, 1949-1950), vol. 1, 205, and vol. 2, 112. Some other helpful works on Methodism in the early republic include Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton,

After 1815, and rapidly picking up steam in the 1820s, this old way of conducting missions through local and regional collaboration gave way to systems characterized by *national* aims and *centralized* governing bodies. The Methodists were the first to establish an official national society with their Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819. This society would function like the Standing Committee did for the Presbyterian church: as the central, national hub for Methodist missions, with the object of enabling "the several annual Conferences more effectually extend their missionary labours." They would act as a hub for records, fundraising, and all things related to the missionary aims of the denomination.⁷³

In the 1810s, Presbyterians were moving in the same direction. In fact, they had been moving in that direction ever since they began. When the Standing Committee formed in 1802, it claimed no authority over presbyteries or synods in the appointment or assignment of missionaries. In theory, it existed in order to work in conjunction with these local groups by using funds and powers which they had received from the national General Assembly.

It became clear to the Committee very quickly, however, that if presbyteries and synods continued to maintain full control over their own missionary affairs, the Committee would play only a very limited part in promoting the interests of the *nationwide* denomination: the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. In 1805, the Committee argued that such a practice would render them "of little other use

2000); David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, 2005); and John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (New York, 2009).

⁷³ *Address and Constitution of the Missionary & Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (New-York: Abraham Paul, 1819), 4, 10.

than to apportion the Sums." If their duties should be so abridged, they would accept it, but believed it would be "ruinous to the Missionary Cause" in America.⁷⁴

In 1808, the Committee reported what was only the latest in a series of troubles with the synods of the South and West. While the Committee acknowledged that these synods were not obligated to follow the Committee's recommendations or plans, they also simply requested that the Synods of the Carolinas, Virginia, and Pittsburgh would at least send them reports of what they were doing. Even this level of cooperation was hard to come by. In 1809, the Committee was growing very frustrated. They had appointed Rev. Macurdy as a missionary to western Pennsylvania, with the expressed cooperation and support of the Western Missionary Society, the local mission society of the Synod of Pittsburgh. However, once Macurdy arrived in western Pennsylvania, he abandoned the directions and mission-route given to him by the Committee. Instead, he followed the route prescribed for him by the Western Missionary Society.⁷⁵

Although there was no single point-of-no-return for the Presbyterians, it was clear that in the 1810s and 1820s, the leaders of the denomination (especially in the North) made a decided push toward the centralization of power over missionary efforts. In 1809, the Standing Committee requested (and received) the power to appoint as many missionaries as their funds would allow, rather than having to get prior approval of each missionary from the General Assembly. In 1816, the Committee proposed to the General Assembly:

⁷⁴ Standing Committee, 27 May 1805, 182-83.

⁷⁵ Standing Committee, 26 May 1808, 49; Standing Committee, Draft of the Report to the General Assembly, 22 May 1809, 67.

[I]nstead of continuing... bound in all cases to act according to the instructions of the general assembly, and under the necessity of receiving its sanctions to give validity to all the measures which it may propose, the Committee of Missions were erected into a Board, with full powers to transact all the business of the missionary cause, only requiring the Board to report annually to the General Assembly.

The General Assembly granted this proposition, and created the "Board of Missions acting under the Authorization of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A." While the General Assembly maintained authority to appoint the members of the Board, they handed all power over the conduct of missionary affairs to the Committee. In 1828, the Board voted to give itself even more power by establishing a new rule which allowed for two members, at any time, to call an "extraordinary" meeting, at which they could make all missionary decisions. Technically, the two who called the meeting had to notify every member in and around Philadelphia, the "City of Libertie." But once this was done, the Board could conduct any Presbyterian missionary business they desired, whether more than two members attended the meeting or not.⁷⁶

The American Home Missionary Society

At the same Meeting in June 1828, the Board of Missions for the PCUSA voted to "enter into a friendly correspondence" with two other national mission societies: the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the American Home Missionary Society." The American Board (ABCFM) had formed in 1812 as an interdenominational mission society dedicated to *foreign* missions, inspired by the work

⁷⁶ Standing Committee, 25 May 1809, 82-83; Standing Committee, 30 May 1816, 255 ("Instead of continuing"); Arthur Judson Brown, *One Hundred Years: A History of the Foreign Missionary Work of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., With Some Accounts of Countries, Peoples and the Policies and Problems of Modern Missions* (New York, 1936), 14, 6 ("Board of Missions"); Standing Committee, 12 June 1828, 431-32.

of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice in south Asia. The American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) formed in 1826 when leaders from Congregational, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed denominations came together for the sake of domestic missions. In 1826, with nationalism running high, they desired an informal "union of all denominations" for the purpose of exerting "a powerful agency in the improvement of our *national* character." This multi-denominational, multi-regional effort, they believed, would be more than a work of "mercy"; it would be a "work of patriotism."⁷⁷

The leaders of the AHMS hoped that by nationalizing and centralizing the efforts of various Presbyterian, Congregational, and Dutch Reformed mission societies, they could extend their reach. In order to be successful as a national society, however, they had to centralize power as well. Articles Seven and Eight of the Constitution of the AHMS laid out rules for how other missionary societies could join the AHMS, and how they would relate to them:

ART. 7. Any Missionary Society may become auxiliary by agreeing to pay into the Treasury of this Society the whole of its surplus funds, and sending to the Corresponding Secretary a copy of its Constitution and Annual Reports, mentioning the names of their Missionaries, and the fields of their operations.

⁷⁷ Standing Committee, 12 June 1828, 433. Foreign mission societies actually centralized and nationalized earlier than the domestic missions societies, the ABCFM in 1812, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America (Triennial Convention) in 1814, and the United Foreign Missionary Society in 1817. On the life and legacy of Adoniram Judson, see Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (New York, 1956). Members of these three denominations had already joined forces on a national level, but only in *foreign* missionary societies such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1812) and the United Foreign Missionary Society (1817). These organizations were *not* official branches of these denominations, but drew support from people in these denominations, and sometimes, from their official bodies. For example, Presbyterians still recognized only the missionary committees appointed by the General Assembly, local presbyteries and synods as *official* Presbyterian efforts. Presbyterians were free (and encouraged) to join other religious efforts on an individual basis; *Constitution of the American Home Missionary Society* (New York, 1826), 7-8, 47, 75 (emphasis added).

ART. 8. Every Auxiliary Society which shall agree to pay the whole of its funds to this Society, shall be entitled to a Missionary, or Missionaries, to labour in such field as it may designate; at least to the amount of its contributions; provided such designation be made at the time of payment.

Much of this arrangement would have seemed appealing to local missionary societies, especially those struggling to raise funds. To be able to participate in missions on a national scale, a society simply had to turn over their undesignated, surplus funds, a small fee to pay for the patriotic work of the kingdom. If a society was struggling with finding money or men for missions, they could turn all of their money over, and receive missionaries from the central society, equal to *at least* as much as time as their contribution merited.⁷⁸

With all these benefits, missionary societies who were considering joining the AHMS still had plenty to be concerned about. The correspondence between the secretaries of the Missionary Society of Connecticut (MSCT) and the American Home Missionary Society from 1826 to 1830 reveals the intricacies of such a decision. On 5 October 1826, Absalom Peters, Secretary of the AHMS, wrote to Horace Hooker, Secretary of the MSCT. He hoped to convince Hooker to join the newly-formed national society. "Yours is one of the oldest & most efficient of the Societies for Home Missions in our country," Peters wrote. "Whatever we may be able to do to increase & extend the usefulness of the Con. M.S...[I hope] they will regard as helping forward the cause for which the national Society has been instituted...supplying all the destitute in our land with...the gospel." After intermittent correspondence over the next eighteen months, Hooker replied to Peters, letting him know that the General Association of

⁷⁸ *Constitution of the AHMS*, 4.

Connecticut (the governing body of the Congregational Church in Connecticut) had appointed a committee to consider the expediency of a union between the Dom. Mis. Soc. of Connecticut, & the A.H.M.S." Hooker, a member of that special committee, and a trustee of the mission society, had one major concern in mind – whether such a union would *help* the Missionary Society of Connecticut. If it would not, he had a hard time believing the union would be a good idea.⁷⁹

The next two years were full of uncertainty and negotiation as the local mission society and the national mission society tried to come to common terms. Hooker complained to Peters in 1829 about an agent of the AHMS, Rev. Wheelock, who had been soliciting funds in Windham County, Connecticut, without communicating at all with the MSCT. "You will readily see," Hooker made clear, "that the funds which he may solicit in that County will diminish the resources of the Missionary Society of Connecticut...which rel[ies] on the contributions from Windham County, in part." He added a not-so-thinly-veiled challenge at the end of the letter: "I do not believe the Executive Committee of your Society would, knowingly, take any measures which would tend to produce that result."⁸⁰

Finally, in mid-1830, after four years of correspondence and negotiation, the two groups came to an agreement: the MSCT voted to become an auxiliary to the AHMS. They agreed to pay over to the AHMS "the whole" of their funds, but added one extra-

⁷⁹ Absalom Peters (Secretary of the AHMS) to Horace Hooker (Secretary of the MSCT), 5 October 1826; and Horace Hooker to Absalom Peters, 26 June 1828, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, reel 8.

⁸⁰ Horace Hooker to Absalom Peters, 28 September 1829, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, reel 8. More correspondence is included in the records, including letters on 12 April 1830, and 31 May 1830.

constitutional caveat: that the AHMS provide "a sufficient number of *blank* commissions...signed by the Chairman & Corresponding Secretary." If the Missionary Society of Connecticut was going to join the American Home Missionary Society, they wanted it to be clear that it would still, at least in part, be on their own terms. By 1832, only two years later, the transition to the national society seems to have been completed, possibly more than the proponents of locally-based missions had hoped: Connecticut citizens like Zebulun Crocker and Phoebe Starr no longer even communicated directly with the MSCT. They simply bypassed the Connecticut society and sent their money directly to the American Home Missionary Society.⁸¹

The American Baptist Home Mission Society

In 1831, Baptists leaders came together in Boston to form their own national society: the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS). The ABHMS would hold its first nationwide convention the following year, in April 1832. Like the leaders of the AHMS, the organizers of the ABHMS (including Jonathan Going) believed that the Baptist denomination in America needed a *centralized* society, a group which could "arouse the Baptist community throughout the United States, to systematic and vigorous efforts in the cause of Domestic Missions."⁸² In fact, the writers of the Constitution of

⁸¹ Horace Hooker to Absalom Peters, 19 June 1830; Zebulun Crocker to Absalom Peters, 10 September 1832; and Secretary of the MSCT to Absalom Peters, 10 February 1832, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, reel 8. The Young Men's Domestic Missionary Society of Greenwich decided to do the same by sending their money directly to the AHMS. Instead of submitting their funds raised to the MSCT as groups like theirs had done in the past, they declared in Article 5 of their constitution that "the annual receipts of the society, after deducting incidental expenses, shall be paid over to the parent society." See Young Men's Domestic Missionary Society of Greenwich to the Secretary of the AHMS, 22 October 1832, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, reel 8.

⁸² *Proceedings of the Convention Held in the City of New-York on the 27th of April, 1832, for the Formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1832), 3;

the ABHMS so valued the recent example and work of the AHMS that they used the Constitution of the AHMS as the pattern for their own constitution. They copied its eleven constitutional articles virtually verbatim, changing only minor points of phrasing, and emphasizing their *Baptist* distinctives, rather than the ecumenical nature of the AHMS. Their stated mission would be to bring the Gospel to the "whole of the United States," with their sights were set "especially [on] the Valley of the Mississippi."⁸³

Leaders in the Baptist missionary movement had been calling for this step for years. In 1827, Elon Galusha, the President of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York addressed his fellow New Yorkers on the importance of a centralized, cooperative system:

When everyone works together, from general agent down to local church members, "Then will every Association become a Missionary body, auxiliary to the Convention; every church, a primary Missionary society, . . . and every church member, a constituent of the primary. How delightful would it be to every pious soul, to see every spring regularly feeding the rivulets, the rivulets mingling in larger streams, the streams swelling into the broad river, and bearing Zion's ship to distant ports, deeply freighted with the treasures of eternal truth."⁸⁴

Many Baptists remained skeptical. When the leaders of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention discovered that Jonathan Going and other leaders had met in Boston in 1831, explicitly for the purpose of forming such a national society, they used the opportunity to reassure their members of their rights. This national society, they argued, would never "interfere in any respect with the internal concerns of any church or Association, or in any question which may arise between different churches or

⁸³ Compare the Constitution of the ABHMS, found in *Proceedings of the Convention...for the Formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1832), 2-4; and the Constitution of the AHMS, found in *Constitution of the American Home Missionary Society* (New York, 1826), 3-4.

⁸⁴ Proceedings of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (1828), 32 (American Baptist Historical Society, Atlanta).

Associations." This national society, "being a voluntary compact" would hold no power over local bodies who did not wish to grant it. If it took too much power, the Convention assured them, "any Association has liberty to withdraw from it at pleasure."⁸⁵

Convincing many Baptists of the benevolent nature of such a centralized organization would take a savvy marketing effort. John Mason Peck, who knew of the move toward this national organization, wrote twelve articles in support of it in 1831 as part of a series called "A Voice from the West." Fearful that he would not be able to drum up enough support on his own, he wrote to Jonathan Going in January 1832 asking for help. "I have not strength to present my views on a general system of operations at this time," he admitted. The idea of a "Home Mission Society," he believed, was "very necessary," but it would take ample means in order to "inform the people & arouse the Baptists." He hoped that Going would join his western effort by agreeing to write a series of articles on the subject for his periodical, *The Watchman*.⁸⁶

Although they certainly had not convinced all American Baptists in 1832, the American Baptist Home Mission Society had culled enough support to hold its first meeting in April 1832, and to begin sending missionaries out in the same year. They hoped that the organization would function similarly to what Rev. Galusha of New York had imagined: as a central river of missionary efforts, which smaller streams and tributaries could join at will. While smaller churches, associations, and societies might not be able to collect enough resources to engage in missions on their own, they could

⁸⁵ Proceedings of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1831), 3 (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁸⁶ Jennings, "John Mason Peck and the Impact of New England," 137-38. These articles appeared in Peck's periodical *Pioneer*, and according to Peck, also appeared in "every Baptist paper in the Atlantic States," including the widely circulated *Christian Watchman*; John Mason Peck to Jonathan Going, 10 January 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

join the ABHMS as auxiliary societies. Thereby, they could contribute not only to missionary efforts in their own regions, and in the most important region in the nation, the Mississippi Valley.

The Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (the voluntary state body which organized Baptist missions in New York) chose early-on to join the ABHMS as an auxiliary. At its annual meeting in Rome, NY, in October 1832, the people voted:

Resolved, that the Secretary inform the Board of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, that by a Resolution of the Convention it became auxiliary to that Society according to the condition specified in the seventh article of the Constitution, and that we will pay into their Treasury the amount of funds collected for aiding the cause of Missions in the Valley of the Mississippi.

The seventh article of the Constitution of the ABHMS stated that any "Baptist Missionary Society" could become an auxiliary, by paying into the ABHMS treasury "the whole of its surplus funds" and sending a copy of its own records, including constitutions, annual reports, and lists of missionaries and their fields of operation.⁸⁷

New York Baptists were eager to join the national effort. By the time of their annual meeting in October 1834, all residue of localism among New York Baptist churches seemed to have disappeared. On the motion of William Colgate (a close friend of Jonathan Going and the founder of the Colgate company), the Convention acknowledged the "just and pressing claims of which the great valley of the west" held on them. The success of all "Home Missionary exertions" and all "foreign operations" depended upon their present efforts, and they agreed that "the claims of the American Baptist Home Mission Society as second in importance to those of *no other benevolent*

⁸⁷ *Proceedings of the Convention...for the Formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 11, 2.

institution" in the land. With their massive population, New York Baptists believed themselves responsible for at least one-third of the burden of fundraising, and pledged to raise ten thousand dollars for the ABHMS by 1835, most of which would be for the West and the Mississippi Valley.⁸⁸

This arrangement worked great for New York, but it would take a consistent campaign to convince many other Baptists of the good intentions of the ABHMS. Jonathan Going spent much of his time during his travels, and as Corresponding Secretary, trying to convince skeptics that the ABHMS wanted to function *not* as a monarchical system, but as a *federal* system, which distributed government and power according to constitutional roles. In a letter to M.B. Chambers, the Secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Going tried to assuage fears that the ABHMS would simply use the auxiliary system to take over the entire missionary system. "Where there are auxiliary societies acting with us," Going assured him, "it is our desire that missionaries should be recommended, or nominated *by the auxiliary*, and *appointed* by the Parent Society [ABHMS]." After their appointment, missionaries would be "commissioned jointly by the two bodies," but "specially instructed *by the auxiliary*, and act under its direction." In essence, the national society would appoint business, but local societies would manage it.⁸⁹

This is not to say that national organizations like the ABHMS somehow forced themselves onto local and regional societies. The voluntary nature of these societies

⁸⁸ Proceedings of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (1834), 6-7, 17-21 (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁸⁹ Jonathan Going to M.B. Chambers (Secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention), 16 December 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

made such force impossible. While most churches and associations throughout the nation questioned these centralizing and nationalizing tendencies, they still eagerly supported them. First and foremost, national societies brought much-needed organization and efficiency to local societies which had the will to do missions, but knew not the way. In 1827, the Sturbridge Association (a group of Baptist churches in Massachusetts), acknowledged in its minutes "the importance of having an efficient system" in order to accomplish anything in missions. Their association was anything but efficient. Even after they organized an association-level mission society in 1827, they hardly accomplished anything. In 1833, for example, the mission society met to conduct business, and accomplished the following: chose a chairman, appointed a board, adjourned. Other local associations, like the Miami Association of Regular Baptists in Ohio, couldn't even locate a missionary to minister among them, much less organize a widespread effort. For groups like these, it would be a leap forward to join their fellow Baptists in supporting the "fixed and systematic principles" of the ABHMS.⁹⁰

Other Baptist groups had experienced great success on the local and regional level, but lacked the organization for a *national* effort. For this, they joyfully turned to the ABHMS. In 1828, the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York employed seventeen missionaries; only two of them ministered outside of New York. In 1830, the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (which Jonathan Going helped found in 1824) focused almost exclusively on "meliorating the condition of the Baptist Churches of this

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Sturbridge Association of Massachusetts (1827), 6-7 (Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville); Minutes of the Miami Association of Regular Baptists (OH) (1841) (SBHLA, Nashville); Minutes of the Sturbridge Association of Massachusetts (1844) ("systematic principles"). For the same sentiment, but earlier, see Minutes of the Sturbridge Association of Massachusetts (1834), 6 (SBHLA, Nashville).

Commonwealth." In Pennsylvania, in 1827, several local mission societies based out of individual congregations came together to meet the needs of Pennsylvanians, but had no plans to expand further.⁹¹

For groups like these, the formation of the ABHMS was a godsend. They could now expand beyond their local and regional efforts without having to change their basic operations at all. In 1832, the Massachusetts Baptist Convention gladly jettisoned its former myopic focus on the Commonwealth, hailing "as an auspicious event the formation of the A.B.H.M.Society." The Pennsylvania Baptist Convention voted in 1833 to join the ABHMS as an auxiliary, viewing "with lively interest...its laudable efforts." Rev. Tucker of Philadelphia wrote to Jonathan Going in the same year, eager for his church to become an auxiliary, and hopeful that they could help plant more Baptist churches in the West.⁹²

Even as local and regional societies flooded in as auxiliaries, the officers and members of the ABHMS remained clear about their priorities: "the wants of the *nation* are more extensive than those of a single state." However, they were equally clear about the way in which they wanted to interact with local interests: not to "narrow or embarrass" them, but to "envelope and unite them, giving greater harmony of effort" among all American Baptists.⁹³

⁹¹ Annual Report of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (1828) (ABHS, Atlanta); Proceedings of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1830), 6 (ABHS, Atlanta); *Origin, Constitution, and Proceedings of the Bapt. Gen. Assoc. of PA for Missionary Purposes*, (1827), 4-5 (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁹² Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1832), 8; (ABHS, Atlanta); Pennsylvania Baptist Convention (1833), 8 (ABHS, Atlanta); Rev. Tucker to Jonathan Going, 8 July 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁹³ *Proceedings of the Convention...for the Formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 12, 8 (emphasis added).

Every year, members of the ABHMS would look for creative ways to balance the various local and national interests involved. For example, two pastors from Virginia and South Carolina successfully proposed in 1835 that the ABHMS allow individual churches to designate their funds to support one particular missionary, rather than their funds disappearing into the overall treasury. This way, churches (especially skeptical ones) could maintain direct correspondence with one missionary, and feel as if they had a personal stake in the matter. The key here, especially for Baptists, would be to nationalize and centralize the effort in such a way that it would *both* strengthen the missionary effort, *and* protect one of the most important Baptist doctrines of all: the authority of the individual, local congregation.⁹⁴

Westerners Support Centralization and Nationalization

This desire for national, centralized missionary efforts extended beyond the states of the North and East. Protestants throughout the South and West supported these efforts as well, including some of the earliest and most successful regional mission societies in the Mississippi Valley. Most mission societies and church missionary projects in the West began small, and focused on nearby areas, just as their counterparts in the East had done. When the Cincinnati Baptist Missionary Society began in 1824, it looked primarily to serve the city, and the nearby settlements along the Ohio River. Even when it merged with the Ohio Baptist Convention a few years later, its interests expanded only to the regional level, covering more ground in the Ohio and Mississippi

⁹⁴ *The Third Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1835), 8-9.

River valleys nearby. The Western Missionary Society, based in the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburgh, had a similar history. In harmony with the Standing Committee's more national aims, the Western Missionary Society devoted itself to missions in western Pennsylvania, and settlements in Ohio and Indiana.⁹⁵

In the late-1820s and early-1830s, these western mission societies began moving in the same direction as their eastern counterparts: toward nationalization and centralization. In October 1833, Baptists from Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois came together in Cincinnati for the first annual meeting of the General Convention of Western Baptists, an organization dedicated to the extension of the gospel in the Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys. John Mason Peck had taken a break from his missionary and educational efforts in Illinois to support this convention, which he believed showed great promise of uniting Baptist efforts and resources in the region. To open the meeting, Peck made a motion to seat representatives from other Baptist groups who had made the trek to Cincinnati, including Jonathan Going, of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Based on a second motion of Peck's, the convention declared its adamant support for Going's society:

The Meeting fully believe that in view of the state of the denomination in the United States, the formation of the American Baptist Home Mission Society was necessary; . . . and that it is the duty of the churches throughout the country, and especially in the valley of the Mississippi, to sustain the society by their prayers and co-operation.

⁹⁵ Report of the Ohio Baptist Convention (1826) (ABHS, Atlanta); "175 Years of Presbyterian Mission," from website of the Presbyterian Historical Society, at <http://history.pcusa.org/history/175.cfm>, accessed 30 April 2012.

As a founder of the ABHMS, and its Corresponding Secretary, Going came away from the meeting elated. By November, Going had even more reason to hope for the Valley when he learned that his friend John Mason Peck had been nominated as a western agent for both the ABHMS *and* the American Sunday School Union. Whichever Peck accepted, Going was confident that it portended more missionary success in the Mississippi Valley.⁹⁶

The next year, in 1834, the Ohio Baptist Convention followed in the footsteps of the state conventions of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and many others when it voted to join the efforts of the ABHMS. Along with the visiting delegates from the ABHMS, the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, and the New York Baptist State Convention, the leaders of the Ohio convention regarded the national society "as engaged in the same great work" as they, and exhorted the "cooperation of our brethren in their individual and collective capacity." Uniting around such an important, common, and national cause, they hoped, would be "instrumental in producing harmony between the different sections of the west."⁹⁷

Many western supporters of missions happily acknowledged their debt to their eastern brethren, both for bringing the gospel to the West in the first place, and for leading the way in streamlining the entire missions system. George Sedwick, a prominent publisher in Ohio and a Baptist, readily wrote of this multi-regional relationship: "We deem it no disparagement to ourselves in these works of love to

⁹⁶ Report of the General Convention of Western Baptists (1834), 4-6 (ABHS, Atlanta); Jonathan Going to Ezra Going, 10 October 1833; Jonathan Going to Thomas Warner, 5 November 1833; and Jonathan Going to Rev. Crosby, 10 November 1833, Jonathan Going Papers, (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁹⁷ Minutes of the Ohio Baptist Convention (1834), 33-34 (ABHS, Atlanta).

acknowledge, we desire to imitate the conduct of our Eastern brethren – "Go thou and do likewise" said the Saviour of men."⁹⁸

John Mason Peck represented in himself a sort of marriage between eastern and western interests. Born in Connecticut and raised in New York, Peck then spent the majority of his life in service to the West, as a citizen of Illinois. It thrilled him then when the leaders of eastern and western groups came together for common Christian cause. If more western groups like the General Convention of Western Baptists would continue seeing the missionary work of their eastern brethren not as a usurping, but as an "expression of good-will...[and] cordial co-operation," the prospects looked bright.⁹⁹

Conclusion: The Legacy of Centralization and Nationalization in the 1830s and 1840s

By the 1830s, the direction of Protestant mission societies – and of the entire American Christian reform movement – had become clear – toward centralization, toward nationalization. By all accounts of the people involved in mission societies, the move had been an astounding success. People throughout the land had begun to submit local and regional goals to the greater good of the nation. At the Massachusetts Baptist Convention of 1837, Milton Badger of New York lifted up the "Home Mission enterprize" as the most important movement in America, and urged all who had not come to terms with the "change of operations" in nationalizing the effort to do so quickly.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Western Religious Magazine*, 2 (Feb. 1829), 143.

⁹⁹ Resolution offered by John Mason Peck, see Report of the General Convention of Western Baptists (1834), 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Annual Report of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention...at the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary in Boston* (Boston, 1837), 5 (ABHS, Atlanta).

New Yorkers looked to the Mississippi Valley and the long-term good of the nation as well. After raising only hundreds of dollars for missions in general in 1830, and only \$300 for the Valley in 1833, New York Baptists' zeal for the Valley caught fire. They pledged in 1834 to raise \$10,000 for missions the following year, and met this goal with ease, raising over \$17,000 – over \$10,000 of it went to the Valley. In 1835, they raised over \$12,000 for the Valley alone. By 1844, the Cayuga Association of New York was so enamored with the success of the national society and its focus on the Valley that it recommended the disbanding of New York state convention entirely. This, they hoped, would streamline the missionizing process.¹⁰¹

Western missionary societies followed the same pattern. In 1835, the Ohio Baptist Convention printed a history of their convention, acknowledging that as late as 1825, they had retained "narrow and selfish views of Christian duty" in regard to missions. But now, they rejoiced "that a delusion so hostile to the Redeemer's kingdom is passing away," and that throughout the United States, people were waking up to the national need for the Gospel. From 1816 to 1833, Ohio Baptists had only raised \$130 per year for missions. From 1834 to 1843, they would raise more than *seven times* that amount, about \$962 per year.¹⁰²

By the late-1830s and 1840s, Jonathan Going and John Mason Peck could look back with pride on the work they had done. After retiring from his duties as Corresponding Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, Going

¹⁰¹ Minutes of the Baptist Missionary Convention of New York (1834), 6-7, 17-21; and (1835), 35-40 (ABHS, Atlanta); Minutes of the Cayuga Association of New York (1844), 4 (SBHLA, Nashville).

¹⁰² Report of the Ohio Baptist Convention (1835), 9, and (1848) (ABHS, Atlanta).

accepted an invitation in 1837 to become the president of the Literary and Theological Institute at Granville. This new institution in Ohio had been founded for the explicit purpose of training young men of the West to be pastors in their region. Going had been the first choice for the job, and had declined a second call to lead Shurtleff College in Illinois in order to take it. While serving as President, Going also continued to preach, regularly supplying pulpits in need of pastors throughout Ohio.¹⁰³

When Going preached later in 1840 before the Ohio Baptist Convention, his zeal for national missionary efforts and the role of the Mississippi Valley in shaping the nation destiny had not waned in the least. He preached from Psalm 37:3 – "Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness." "Home Missions," he argued, "like other departments of Christian effort are not only truly benevolent, and Christian" applications of this passage, "but they are also truly patriotic." While the earliest American churches had been essentially planted by missionaries, and while the mission societies "in different sections" of the country had done incalculable good, the simple truth was that only a central, organized, national effort could save the nation. The American Baptist Home Mission Society, he argued, would be this "centre of union – a balance wheel" for all missionary operations.¹⁰⁴

John Mason Peck had proven his conversion to the national missionary effort as well. While Jonathan Going had moved from the East to the West in order to spread the

¹⁰³ For deciphering the timing of Going's acceptance of the presidency of Granville College, declining of Shurtleff College's offer, and his move to Ohio, see *The Fifth Report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1837); Jonathan Going to Stephen Griggs, 30 September 1837; and John Mason Peck to Jonathan Going, 22 September 1837, Jonathan Going Papers (Washington State University Archives, Pullman); Minutes of the Columbus Baptist Association (Ohio) (1839) and (1843) (SBHLA, Nashville).

¹⁰⁴ Proceedings of the Ohio Baptist Convention (1840), (ABHS, Atlanta).

Gospel, Peck had temporarily moved from the West to the East, to become an agent of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. In 1840, Going touted the benefits of the ABHMS in Ohio; Peck did the same, but in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and throughout the East. Peck moved around so much, and so tirelessly, that Ebenezer Rodgers of Howard County, Missouri worried about his effectiveness. "Brother Peck is an excellent man," Rodgers wrote to Jonathan Going, "but he sails a little to fast. If he had a few more pounds of ballast he would suit our slow progress in the west a little better."¹⁰⁵

As we will see in Chapter Five, the speed of missionaries like John Mason Peck and Jonathan Going would not please everyone. In fact, it would alarm many Protestants, especially in the South and West, who like Rodgers, preferred a "slow progress," if any so-called "progress" at all. While Going would continue to promote groups like the ABHMS, arguing that "Union is strength," thousands of observers would rise up against such unions. Most of them desired union, to be sure, but union among themselves, their local congregations, and their neighbors, not with national societies, and certainly not with non-Christian participants in them. These American Protestants were part of the Antimission Movement of the early Republic.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ebenezer Rodgers to Jonathan Going, 16 August 1833, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Going to Stephen Griggs, 30 September 1837, Jonathan Going Papers (Washington State University Archives, Pullman).

CHAPTER VI

THE ANTIMISSION MOVEMENT

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Abraham Lincoln may have spoken these words to an Illinois audience in 1858, but before him, in 1835 R.B.C. Lowell wrote them in an Tennessee periodical entitled *The Baptist*. Lincoln would later use the phrase in reference to the country’s sectional division over the question of slavery, but Lowell had other issues in mind. In 1835, Lowell found the lack of unity among Baptists in Tennessee lamentable. Churches and associations of churches throughout the state, and throughout the country, were dividing at remarkable speeds. In Lowell’s mind, one controversy bore more responsibility than any other for this discords, and it wasn’t slavery; it was missions.¹

This missions controversy occurred within an antebellum America that overflowed with voluntary reform societies. In fact, historians over the last couple decades have reinvigorated the study of antebellum politics precisely through studying the rise of public voluntarism, or what historian Seth Rockman calls "the politics of the public." Echoing Alexis de Tocqueville's observations in the 1830s, historians like Rockman and Daniel Walker Howe have argued that to fully understand the political world of antebellum America, we need give more "attention to the American proclivity for joining voluntary associations, publishing newspapers, and declaiming political opinions" outside of the traditional political sphere. This proclivity to participate, even

¹ R.B.C. Powell, ed., *The Baptist*, 1 (Mar. 1835), 35, 33.

if not in official political activities (like elections) led unprecedented numbers of Americans to organize on behalf of every cause under the sun.²

With a public spirit of voluntarism on the rise in the antebellum era, Christian converts of any age or gender, regardless of voting rights, could put their faith into action by joining any one of these groups, including tract, Sunday School, temperance, poverty-relief, antislavery, Bible, and as this dissertation has detailed, missionary societies. These societies brought great help and relief to people throughout the United States. The spiritual, social, and political impact they had on the United States set the standard for all future attempts at voluntarism and reform in American History. Yet, in 1831, in the midst of their outstanding growth and success, Daniel Parker, a pastor in Illinois, characterized the professed Christians involved in such benevolent societies as “a set of wicked rebels against the government of Heaven.”³

² Seth Rockman, "Jacksonian America," in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr, eds., *American History Now* (Philadelphia, 2011), 52-74. For an earlier recognition of this shift in the study of politics in America, see Ronald Formisano, "The 'Party Period' Revisited," *The Journal of American History*, 86 (June 1999), 93-120. Formisano gives much of the credit for this turn not to scholars of American religion per-se, but to historians of women and gender, including especially Paul Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984), 620-47; and Mary Ryan, "Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA, 1991). Also helpful for understanding the role of traditionally apolitical information in the political sphere is Paul Goodman, "The Social Basis of New England Politics in Jacksonian America," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 6 (Spring 1986), 23-58. For Howe's quotation, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford, 2007), 307; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, 2003). The classic statement on this new proclivity to organize in the antebellum era is Donald Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly*, 21 (Spring 1969), 23-43. Other works which emphasize the importance of churches in leading the way in voluntary organization include T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago, 1964); and the works of William Warren Sweet, especially his four-volume series *Religion on the American Frontier*, 4 vols. (New York, 1931-36; Chicago, 1939-46).

³ Daniel Parker, *Church Advocate*, 2 (Aug. 1831), 247. Some of the best studies which discuss the role of revivals and social reform in antebellum America include Whitney Cross, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, 1950); Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New

Claiming that benevolent reformers, particularly missionaries, had no business calling themselves true Christians seems a bold statement for a Baptist minister to have made. Nevertheless, by the 1840s, tens of thousands of professing Christians in America claimed just that. They and their cause have come to be known as the Antimission Movement. While most of the country gloried in the success of the Home Missions Movement, the antimissionists stood stalwart against it. For them, mission societies violated biblical teachings which they held dear. To join such a society would be "to play the whore" with the enemies of God, like the Israel of old who had chased after other gods instead of listening to the prophets.⁴

Theology and ecclesiology formed the foundation of the Antimission Movement, but they were by no means the only materials used in its construction. Just as the missionary system was incompatible with antimissionists' religious beliefs, it also came into conflict and contradiction with their social, economic, and political beliefs. Missionary societies seemed to cater to the sort of people who had extraneous cash to donate, something most common folk and yeoman of the Antimission Movement rarely

York, 1957); Paul Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (1978; rev. ed., New York, 2004); Mary Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge, UK, 1981); and Keith J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer* (Syracuse, 1987).

⁴ William Warren Sweet used what he considered "the best Baptist authority" to calculate a total of 68,068 Antimission Baptists in 1846. See *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830*, ed. Sweet (New York, 1931), 66. Bertram Wyatt-Brown claimed that this number was significantly underestimated, citing the fact that the numbers were compiled "by promission chroniclers," in "The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture," *The Journal of Southern History*, 36 (Nov. 1970), 527. Another reason for believing that the number of Antimissionists had been much larger was that by 1845, the movement had been in decline for a decade. At its height, it's safe to assume that Antimissionists numbered thousands more. As a frame of reference for the number 68,000, in the presidential election of 1844, approximately 3.2 million people voted. This means that at least two percent of the voting population was actively involved in *opposition* to the home missions movement in America. For a seemingly sidebar issue like antimissions, this is a significant number. *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Jan. 23, 1836), 21 ("to play the whore").

had. As detailed in the previous chapter, mission societies consistently progressed toward nationalizing and centralizing their entire operation. Antimissionists, on the other hand, tended to prize the local and decentralized in virtually every facet of their lives. For them, the missions controversy had become more than a religious quarrel. It was, as historian Byron Lambert claims, an "expression of the American doctrine of freedom" against an alternate, encroaching way of life.⁵

From the 1790s up through the 1840s, the loosely-organized Antimission Movement drew support from a dizzying array of unique individual leaders, from multiple denominations, and from throughout the United States and its surrounding territories. Wherever these supporters lived, they were bound together not by geographic location, but by identifying a common enemy in the mission-society system. However, as it matured later in the 1830s and 1840s, the movement clearly took on a distinctly sectional character, drawing its most avid and sustained support from the southern and western states, with only pockets of support in the state of the Northeast. Despite the pronounced sectional breakdown of this religious controversy, I will argue in this chapter that the rise of the Antimission Movement was not *caused* by sectionalism. Instead, I argue that it took on a sectional character because of its *correlation* with a host of other ideals generally espoused by southerners and westerners, especially those in the Ohio River Valley. This seemingly idiosyncratic trend of resistance *against* social reform in early America can thus provide powerful insight not only into early American

⁵ Byron Cecil Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Leaders, 1800-1840* (New York, 1980), v.

religion, but into the broader social, economic, political, and sectional conflicts which abounded during the early republic.⁶

The Early Years of Protests, 1796-1811

In 1902, Baptist leader B.H. Carroll wrote the first organized study of the Antimission Movement. In this book, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism*, he claimed that as late as 1811, not a single antimissionist church existed in the entire nation. Technically, Carroll was correct; no congregation existed in the nation which self-identified as "antimissionary" (at least none that have been found). But, Carroll was trying to make a broader point about the appeal of antimission sentiment in the nation. He argued that it hardly existed at all before missionaries began infiltrating the West and South en masse in the mid-1810s. This depiction may have boosted Carroll's argument for the preeminence of missions in Baptist history, but it sold the antimission record short.⁷

Because the Antimission Movement was always fueled by a diverse array of theological, social, economic, and political beliefs, its roots can be traced back further than the "official" organization of antimissionary societies. In the late-18th and early 19th centuries, John Leland shocked and embarrassed New England Baptist leaders who otherwise respected him, because he vehemently opposed missionaries societies and theological seminaries. As early as 1801, the Missionary Society of Connecticut reported general opposition to their efforts from Vermont frontiersmen. From its

⁶ My references to the Ohio River Valley in this chapter are meant to include all the states which border the Ohio River, especially those near its intersection with the Mississippi River. This includes Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, and Tennessee.

⁷ B.H. Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism* (Louisville, 1902), 185.

beginning in 1802, the Standing Committee on Missions for the Presbyterian Church reported resistance to their missionary efforts in their southern and western Synods who wanted to control their own missionary affairs. In 1835, when Reverend Joshua Lawrence looked back on his thirty-year pastoral ministry in North Carolina, he reported that he and some of his friends had been suspicious of the "moneyed spirit of missions" ever since it had first entered their Association in 1803. Clearly, from the time mission societies began organizing in the 1790s, antimission sentiment had grown along with them, in every corner of the nation.⁸

Early on, the antimission spirit gained traction nationwide, because it appealed to a common denominator among people everywhere: religious belief. Most historians who have examined the Antimission Movement have claimed the opposite – that the movement was about money, sectionalism, power, and almost anything else *except* theological or intellectual differences. The controversy certainly contained elements of each of these issues, and more. But at its center, the controversy was about *belief*. Daniel Parker warned his readers not to take these beliefs lightly: "Let each one duly consider the danger of living upon a religion that will desert them in death, and never inculcate a doctrine, support a religion, nor defend a principle which they would fear to risk eternity on. Are we willing to risk it on our system of religion?" For antimissionists like Parker, *doctrine* was the food for their souls, and the fuel for their fight.⁹

⁸ William McLoughlin, *New England Dissent, 1630-1833: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 932; *A Second Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1801), 6; "Letter to the Editor," in *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Jan. 9, 1836), 2.

⁹ In the most well-known work on antimissionism, Bertram Wyatt-Brown argued that the entire movement was foolish, a reaction of "crabbed and backward character" to otherwise forward-thinking

These doctrinal beliefs, however insulated from the broader world of letters, were long-held, deeply-ingrained, and most importantly, biblically-based. In a letter to the editor of an antimission-friendly periodical, *The Millennial Harbinger*, one man expressed this common commitment to the Bible: "The laws of our king are all written in the New Testament: it is at our peril to add to or take from them. They are, like their author, immutable in their nature, heavenly and divine." Therefore, if the Bible did not provide an explicit statement in support of a particular action, people were bound to refrain from it.¹⁰

reformers. While northern religious people and societies "threw open American doors" the enlightenment of "European and English heterodoxy," Antimissionists stubbornly closed their minds. See Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement," 525. Some historians have pointed to theology as a reason for antimissionism, but have misinterpreted the theology itself. For example, William McLoughlin believed that theology heavily influenced antimission sentiment in Kentucky and Tennessee. However, he argues that it was the "rigid predestinarians" and their beliefs regarding the doctrine of election which led to them to oppose missions. According to McLoughlin, these people believed God would save people "in his own good time and that money for missions was wasted." See William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven, 1984), 152. This interpretation falls short on two counts. First, the Antimissionists' doctrine of predestination, like that of the early Puritans, contrary to popular belief, did *not* lead them to oppose missions. While they believed that God predestined some to salvation, they also believed that God accomplished this salvation through *means*, including human missionary efforts. It is true that Antimissionists criticized missionaries for relying too heavily upon human exertions, and not enough on God, but the doctrine of predestination was not the dividing point. In fact, as I have demonstrated in earlier chapters, the vast majority of early American missionary efforts (other than Methodist missions) were led by Calvinistic, predestinarian Protestants. Second, this criticism is lacking, because the antimissionists themselves *rejected* this criticism. When people accused Daniel Parker of this sort of hyper-Calvinism, he responded, "It is wicked presumption to say, that if I am elected...[I can] go on to sin and rebel against God." He warned "the lazy or ignorant Predestinarian" reader who might be "lulled to sleep" under the false conclusion that because he was saved by grace, there was "nothing left for him to do." See Daniel Parker, *The Second Dose of Doctrine on the Two Seeds, Dealt out in Broken Doses Designed to Purge the Armenian Stuff and Dross out of the Church of Christ and Hearts and Heads of Saints* (Vincennes, IN, 1826), 14, 36; Daniel Parker, *Church Advocate*, 1 (Nov. 1829), 48.

¹⁰ I say "insulated" not because Antimissionists lacked access to the world of letters or lacked knowledge of seminaries and other means of ministerial education, but because they largely rejected written authorities outside of the Bible or their own circles. Like mission societies, seminaries had no explicit biblical warrant, and were thus looked down upon. Furthermore, Antimissionists often rejected comparisons to contemporary groups or historical precedents to their beliefs. So, for example, when Parker was called a "Calvinist," rather than acknowledging how some of his doctrines did flow from Calvinist thought, he wrote that "the Baptist church in faith and practice, existed before John Calvin was born." See *Church Advocate*, 2 (June 1831), 216; Daniel Parker, *Views on the Two Seeds: Taken from*

This reliance on an explicitly biblical warrant is exactly what every antimissionist leader appealed to in their criticism of mission societies. John Taylor of Kentucky objected to people calling God “the God of missions,” not because he (or God) opposed the idea of missions, but because no such title for God existed in the Scriptures. Similarly, Parker spoke out against the missions societies on the grounds that “the mission system [had] neither precept nor example to justify its principle and practice.” The editor of *The Primitive Baptist* in North Carolina wished "to have it distinctly understood" that he was not opposed to "the spread of the Gospel," but to doing so in an "unscriptural" manner. Even some mission societies recognized this principled opposition. An Illinois missionary association reported that the antimissionists along the Wabash River did not merely oppose “eastern influence” or base their opposition on “alleged speculation of benevolent institutions.” Instead, they opposed mission societies out of “practical godliness” and urged “primitive bible principles.” Without such precepts or commands directly from Scripture, antimissionists believed that missions societies had no right to even exist.¹¹

Traveling Missionaries and the Practice of Raising Monetary Support

Mission societies did not need a specific biblical plan for mission societies in order to justify their practices. For them, Jesus's command to "Go into all the world"

Genesis, 3d Chapter, and Part of the 15th Verse (Vandalia, 1826), 19; Daniel Parker, *The Second Dose of Doctrine on the Two Seeds*, 79; *The Millennial Harbinger*, 3 (Aug. 1832), 389.

¹¹ John Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions* (Franklin County, KY, 1820), 29; Daniel Parker, *A Public Address to the Baptist Society and Friends of Religion in General on the Principle and Practice of the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions or the United States of America* (Vincennes, 1820), 22-23; *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Oct. 3, 1835), 1; *The Second Report...of The American Baptist Home Mission Society* (1834), 23.

and make disciples was enough. As I have already detailed, mission societies began their work in America in the 1790s, and through ventures like sponsored missionary tours, began reaching into the trans-Appalachian and southern regions in earnest in the 1810s. After Adonriam Judson and Luther Rice left for India in 1812 as America's first overseas missionaries, these intracontinental missionary tours grew in number. John Schermerhorn, Samuel Mills, Daniel Smith, John Mason Peck, Isaac McCoy and James Welch, among many others, all took sponsored missionary tours of vast portions of the United States and its territories between 1812 and 1818. Luther Rice, after spending time in India with Judson, returned to the United States, and after 1814, conducted missionary tours on behalf of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America (otherwise known as the Triennial Convention). These travelers, including Rice, each reported covering hundreds, even *thousands* of miles during their months-long tours.¹²

These tours were highly public, and raised awareness of missionary and other religious reform societies throughout the country. On one hand, this is exactly what mission societies hoped for. It galvanized urban and rural, rich and poor, to support a grand Christian cause. As we have already seen, eastern North Carolinians like Rev. Joshua Lawrence noted that mission societies had begun to promote their agendas in local churches as early as 1803. In 1815, shortly after Luther Rice passed through, the Miami Baptist Association of Ohio drafted a constitution for its newly-formed Miami

¹² Luther Rice reported traveling 6,600 miles on his missionary tour in 1817. See the *Proceedings of the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1817), 145. For a good, short biography of Luther Rice, see <http://www.tlogical.net/biorice.htm#19>, accessed 3 March 2012.

Baptist Domestic Missionary Society. According to the constitution's second article, the society's "avowed object [would be] to support Baptist Missionaries, in preaching the Gospel in destitute places in this Western Country." The Elkhorn Association of Kentucky also drew inspiration for missions from Luther Rice's multiple tour-stops in 1814 and 1815. In fact, Rice garnered so much support in the West that he reported to the Triennial Convention that backcountry states like Kentucky and Tennessee had contributed more than the New England states! Samuel Mills agreed with this assessment of the breadth of western support for missions. After his tour in 1814-15, he reported that the desire for an increase in missionaries "was not the desire of a few individual Presbyterians merely," but of a wide variety of people, including the governors of Illinois and Indiana.¹³

Even as these missionary tours galvanized nationwide support for mission societies, they also sparked an equal and opposite reaction: nationwide *opposition* to mission societies. For many people on the frontiers, a missionary trip was nothing more than a "begging tour." In Kentucky, John Taylor claimed that the missionaries had to beg for money, because their "hands are too delicate either to make tents, or pick up a bundle of sticks, to make a fire to warm themselves as Paul did." North Carolinian

¹³ Minutes of the Miami Baptist Association, Ohio (1816), 5, 10 (Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville); Minutes of the Elkhorn Association, Kentucky (1814, 1815) (SBHLA, Nashville); *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830*, ed. William Sweet (New York, 1931), 61. Walter Posey claims that Rice collected the most money in Massachusetts, which was closely followed by collections in Kentucky and Tennessee, in *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845* (Lexington, 1957), 65. Either way, the fact that frontier areas supported missions endeavors with fervor remains. Also see Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism*, 51; T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers: Individualism and Conformity on the American Frontier* (Chicago, 1964), 145; and Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 65. For Mills' missionary tour, see Samuel Mills and Daniel Smith, *Missionary Tour Through that Part of the United States which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains; Performed Under the Direction of the Massachusetts Missionary Society* (Andover, 1815), 19-20.

Baptists excoriated Protestant mission societies for following in the footsteps of "the Church of Rome," and instituting "the trade of begging." God "feeds the fowls and clothes the lillies...But these men had rather trust Boards and Conventions for their hire than God, and live by being hired to beg in other people's names."¹⁴

These criticisms struck several true chords. Missionaries, especially those employed primarily as agents, traveled constantly, and solicited donations everywhere they went. They also did this "in other people's names," meaning that they raised money not for themselves, but on behalf of distant mission societies. So essentially, missionaries traveled around, often did not establish long-term and localized relationships with people, raised money for "foreign" societies, and received their pay from those same societies. If yeomen and common folk despised commercial banking for "divorcing wealth from productive labor," then their disgust with supposedly Christian mission societies doing the same would have been exponentially worse. By choosing these forms of labor and payment, missionaries forfeited the right to call themselves true laborers or to ask for monetary support.¹⁵

True labor, according to many frontier antimissionists, consisted not in incessant traveling or begging, but in hard work, especially in land-based labor such as farming and herding. From northern Illinois to Piney Woods Georgia, many yeoman ministers made a living as "preacher-farmers who worked their own land." Parker described his circumstances and "labour for the support of...[his] family" in detail:

¹⁴ Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 24, 16; *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Oct. 3, 1835), 3

¹⁵ Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York, 1983), 103.

A few remarks on my temporal concerns...I got a little spot of poor land...having no improvement on it. I laboured hard when at home, often at night, to get time to preach in the day, my calls to preach being extensive, and the weight on my mind great. Though I believed it right that the Lord's ministers should receive help in their temporal concerns, yet I felt so unworthy to be counted one of them, that I discouraged my brethren in attempting to help me...Farming was my only way to make a support.¹⁶

Religious yeomen like Parker maintained an amalgamation of labor and belief – Locke and the Bible – in their thinking and actions. Historian E.P. Thompson has spoken of this sort of meld as a “moral economy.” He rightly claims that in most crowd actions, whether riots or protests, people had “some legitimizing notion” which justified their actions in *moral* terms, not economic terms. Farmers did not oppose economic practices for thoughtless, reactionary reasons, but rather for highly organized, informed, and even religious reasons. For the zealous participants in the Antimission Movement, this principle holds true. Labor was not simply a means to an end or something that had to be done in order to gain wealth or notoriety. Instead, they connected their beliefs about labor and economics with their deep-seated *religious* beliefs. These religious beliefs “elevated their work to a calling,” something far more meaningful than a mere

¹⁶ Mark Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill, 2005), 36 ("preacher-farmers"). For more on yeomen and herding practices, see Grady McWhiney and Forrest McDonald, "The Antebellum Southern Herdsman: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of Southern History*, 41 (May 1975), 147-166; and "Celtic Origins of Southern Herding Practices," *The Journal of Southern History*, 51 (May 1985), 165-182; and Steven Sarson, "Yeoman Farmers in a Planters' Republic: Socioeconomic Conditions and Relations in Early National Prince George's County, Maryland," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 29 (Spring 2009), 63-99. For a contemporary view of antebellum herding, see Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas, or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (1857; reprint, Austin, 1978), 101; Daniel Parker, *A Public Address to the Baptist Society*, 42; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Sept. 1831), 274-75 ("a few remarks").

job. When that calling was threatened, antimissionists vigorously defended it against perceived invaders.¹⁷

This principle of religiously valuing labor rang especially true for people like Parker and his cohorts. They embraced a form of Reformed theology that had historically esteemed commonplace activities like hands-on labor. The two duties which Parker recognized as his callings – supporting his family and preaching the Gospel – never superseded one another, because he viewed them both as equal callings on his time and labor.

While thousands of yeomen faithfully labored at their own tasks, Parker steamed, “almost every town and settlement are now visited by a self-important young man, who is advocating some of the mission plans, so as to get his living without labouring in the honest way.” In Missouri, citizens referred to missionaries as “mercenaries,” “hirelings,” and “money-made preachers.” As far south as Georgia and Florida, Baptist

¹⁷ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York, 1991), 187-89; and "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, 50 (Feb. 1971), 78-79. The study of the relationship between religion and economy has been revived recently. For example, in 2010, the journal *Early American Studies* published a special issue entitled "Markets and Morality: Intersections of Economy, Ethics, and Religion in Early North America." See *Early American Studies*, 8 (Fall 2010). A few books which have explored the relationship between religion and economy in early America include Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2009); *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860*, ed. Mark Noll (Oxford, 2001); and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying & Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton, 1995). For a similar discussion of crowd action and the moral economy of farmers in early American history, see Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (1985; rev. ed., New York, 2003), 67-97; T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 218-219. For a similar discussion of the intersection between morality and economy, as it pertained to the concept of justice in constitutional law, see Morton Horwitz, *The Transformation of American Law, 1780-1860* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), especially Chapter 3. I owe the beginnings of this idea of the elevated nature of yeoman farm work to Bertram Wyatt-Brown's review of Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, "The Mission and the Masses: The Moral Imperatives of the City Bourgeoisie," *Reviews of American History*, 7 (Dec. 1979), 534. Although he agreed with many of Johnson's descriptions of revivalists, he also believed that Johnson fell short in defining the wildfire revival culture as basically "a sequence of economic cause and effect." Instead, Wyatt-Brown pointed out that religious people may have common economic principles which are not necessarily the foundation for their coming together.

associations commented, "it is not uncommon for professional men of learning [such as missionaries] to expect a living from the sweat of the laboring men." In short, antimissionists believed like John Taylor: that the missionaries knew nothing about real "equality of labour," and therefore, "had but little knowledge" of real property either.¹⁸

Missionaries, contrary to popular antimissionist opinion, did not tour the country as performing charlatans. Neither did they solicit money to fill their coat pockets while secretly holding immense amounts of wealth in their back pockets. Many traveled tirelessly, preached endlessly, cared deeply, and often ended up supporting themselves financially when funding failed to materialize. John Mason Peck wrote to the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in 1831, explaining that as an agent, he intended "not merely to labor myself, but to get as many others to labor as possible." One minister in Illinois claimed that local missionaries were ineffective not for lack of trying, but because they had to sacrifice too much ministry time in order to spend it seeking "temporal" items like "bread to eat and clothes to wear." These missionaries believed they were living honest, hard-working, religious lifestyles and that antimissionists were simply reacting out of spite. What most missionaries did not understand was that the antimissionists had the principles of a moral economy in mind. What missionaries viewed as labor, antimissionists called laziness. What missionaries called legitimate requests for financial support, antimissionists called begging.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Church Advocate*, 2 (Aug. 1831), 247-48; Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism*, 173; Parker, *A Public Address*, 58; John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South: 1815 to the Present* (Gainesville, 1998), 75; John Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 8, 24.

¹⁹ John Mason Peck to William Leverett (Secretary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society), 23 December 1831, John Mason Peck Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). For the Illinois missionary lacking basic supplies, see a letter written on 26 November 1839 by David Smith, a Congregational

It was not as if antimissionists rejecting paying pastors altogether; they didn't. Instead, they specifically rejected the missionaries' methods and underlying philosophy. Daniel Parker voiced his support for paying ministers unequivocally: "When I travel and preach, I have a *right* to claim my support, and that I am not in debt to the people for the reasonable supplies to enable me to go on in the ministry...[The] Scriptures are too plain to admit of a doubt on that subject." Fellow antimissionist Alexander Campbell echoed this belief, stating that a minister had every right "to receive such earthly things as he *needs* from those to whose education and comfort he contributes by his labors." For them, the issue of ministerial pay and fundraising – and their subsequent criticisms of missionaries – arose out of a more general belief regarding the relationship between a pastor and his congregation.²⁰

First of all, this payment could not be demanded off-hand by pastors. It had to come within the context of a consistent, reciprocal relationship. Mark Bennet, the editor of the antimission-friendly North Carolina periodical *The Primitive Baptist*, elaborated extensively on this subject:

It has been supposed by some of our readers that we are opposed to a minister's receiving any remuneration from the people of his charge, for his time and services in the gospel ministry; this error has probably grown out of our known aversion to the Missionary system. We wish to correct the wrong impression by giving a statement of our views on the subject...The obligations devolving on preachers and churches towards each other are reciprocal; and both parties are views in the New Testament as *Stewards*...As stewards, [the people] are intrusted with temporal things; and as they receive from the stewards of the word, of their spiritual things, they are required to administer to them of their temporal things. This requires no bargaining, between the churches and

minister in Illinois, quoted in *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1850: Vol. III: The Congregationalists*, ed. William Sweet (Chicago, 1939), 190.

²⁰ Parker, *A Public Address*, 42 (emphasis added); *Church Advocate*, 2 (Nov. 1830), 40; *The Christian Baptist*, 1 (June 1824), 221.

preachers, for a stipulated sum of money for a given term of service; the church has a right to expect the labors of the minister of Christ, and the minister has a right to expect from his flock a competent support; neither are they to look for these things on the ground of legal obligation or contract, but from the nature of the relation which they stand in one to the other.²¹

When missionaries stepped into a new region, especially in the South or West, they stepped into a complex system of reciprocity and obligation between congregations and their ministers. Both of these parties owed one another, but only insofar as they each performed their service to the other, within a consistent and contextual environment. Even Parker had a difficult time navigating this system. On one hand, Parker believed that "Christians should consider it a duty to support ministers." On the other hand, aware of the risk that he might be perceived as preaching only for pay, he often simultaneously "discouraged [his] brethren in attempting to help." If local, sympathetic pastors found this system complex, then missionaries from the outside had almost no chance at all.²²

Daniel Parker and Antimissionism on the Frontier

Daniel Parker certainly had all the credentials which pastors needed to succeed in Baptist life and ministry in the West. Parker was born in Culpepper County, Virginia, in 1781, and moved with his family to Georgia when he was a small child. He remembered his childhood as one characterized by a life of farming and "as an Indian hunter, in the back woods." In 1798, around the time of his seventeenth birthday, Parker heard the preaching of a local minister, Elder Moses Sanders, and began seriously considering

²¹ *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Oct. 3, 1835), 4.

²² *Church Advocate*, 1 (Sept. 1830), 276; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Sept. 1831), 274-75.

religion for himself. After several years of wrestling through theological and spiritual questions, Parker converted to Christianity in January of 1802 and was baptized into Nail's Creek Church in Franklin County, Georgia. Parker married Martha "Patsy" Dixon in March 1802, and in June 1803, joined several other families in moving to north-central Tennessee. They purchased "a little poor spot of land" on which they could raise crops. In addition to farming, Parker began preaching. For the next three years, Parker preached and ministered throughout Dixon, Sumner, and other surrounding counties. His ministry reached its highest point thus far when in May 1806, the Baptist church at Turnbull's Creek officially ordained him.²³

Parker was able to gain the respect of thousands of yeomen on the frontier in his crusade against the mission movement, because he was one of them. He came from a family with modest property, but far from wealthy. Like most people on the frontier in the early years of the 19th century, he was a recent migrant. Although he knew how to read and write considerably well, he lacked a formal education, a trait which not only did not hurt him, but likely gave him *more* credibility, particularly among frontier Christians skeptical of theological seminaries. Most of his knowledge of things grammatical came from reading the Bible, the one piece of literature which many frontier families owned, regardless of whether they enjoyed reading or not. Parker considered the protection of his family and local community as paramount to all other loyalties. It was this Daniel Parker who after hearing Luther Rice's requests to support the budding national Baptist

²³ All of the preceding biographical information comes from two documents written by Parker: *Church Advocate*, 2 (Aug. 1831), 259-270; and *The Second Dose of Doctrine on the Two Seeds*; Parker, *Church Advocate*, 2 (Sept. 1831), 267-74.

missions system, vowed to go to war against it. As a common yeoman, Parker was average. As a religious leader, he became exceptional.²⁴

If Rice had been the only representative of northern and eastern plans for the missions system to the West, the Antimission Movement may never have gotten off the ground. But as we know, Rice was far from alone. The Triennial Convention of 1814 had only begun to carry out its plans. The Second Triennial Convention of May 1817 solidified the experimental plans of 1814 by appointing several more missionaries to the West and South. The convention first sent James Ronaldson to minister in Louisiana, and later in Alabama. In support of his work and other missions opportunities in the area, the Mississippi Society for Baptist Missions formed in June of the same year. The Convention then focused its most concerted effort on the area which encompassed the newly-formed state of Indiana, and the Illinois and Missouri territories. They commissioned two men in these areas who would prove to be some of the most powerful adversaries of the Antimission Movement: Isaac McCoy and John Mason Peck.²⁵

John Mason Peck, you will remember from the previous chapter, would become one of the premier proponents of home missions in the early republic. In 1817, in an expedition very similar to Rice's, Peck and his companion James Welch covered hundreds of miles in the Ohio River Valley in an effort to raise funds. When they arrived in St. Louis in 1817, they immediately founded a school. Within months, they

²⁴ For supremely informative discussions of Southern yeomen and their values, see Elliott J. Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *The American Historical Review*, 90 (Feb. 1985), 18-43; Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., ed., *Plain Folk of the South Revisited* (Baton Rouge, 1997); and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford, 1982).

²⁵ Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 66-67, 82.

had begun a second school in nearby St. Charles. In 1822, Peck spearheaded the formation of an academy in Illinois that would later become Shurtleff College, one of the first colleges in the state.²⁶

Peck's zeal for missions and education brought many successes, but his attitude and behavior often made him just as many enemies. Many of the white settlers of Illinois seemed to him lazy, "infidels of a low and indecent grade, and utterly worthless for any useful purposes of society." When the St. Louis locals resisted his efforts to establish educational institutions in the area, he sarcastically remarked, "Some of them were as much afraid of a dictionary as they were of a missionary." This behavior, historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown correctly claimed, "only served to augment the rancor" of people already frustrated with the missionary system. Reverend Th. Green, a native pastor of Missouri who *supported* mission societies, confirmed that it was this poor missionary behavior which turned many otherwise-supportive Christians in the West *against* missions. He warned Jonathan Going in a letter:

It has been misonpresentations, in part, by the friends of Missions, that have injured the Baptists, and prepossessed them against missions. Baptists are a plain people in Missouri, and lovers of the truth_ and when missionaries have made such unwarranted reports, as some have, they have been let to think, that the love of God, and goodwill to men could not rest in the same bosom with a lying spirit.

This criticism certainly applied to Peck, whose words would eventually come back to haunt him. Rufus Babcock, Peck's friend who would edit his journals and

²⁶ Posey, *Baptist Church*, 66; Paul M. Harrison, introduction to *Forty Years of Pioneer Life: Memoir of John Mason Peck, D.D. Edited from His Journals and Correspondence*, ed. Rufus Babcock (Carbondale, 1965), xiii-xiv; Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 260; Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 101.

correspondence after his death, claimed that many in Peck and Welch's audience eventually "went over to the anti-mission party" in protest.²⁷

Later in his life, Daniel Parker would consider Peck as his primary adversary in the missions war, but early on, he developed his strategies against missions in direct response to Isaac McCoy. Since 1808, McCoy had pastored the Maria Creek Baptist Church near Vincennes, Indiana. In 1817, the second Triennial Convention asked McCoy to join their work by setting up the convention's first missions to the Indians along the Wabash River. Within the year, he began the work and received encouraging responses from some Indians and white settlers alike. Parker and the antimissionists did not approve.²⁸

After his encounter with Luther Rice in 1815, Parker began researching and even visiting McCoy's Wabash Valley sporadically. He aimed to know his enemy's plans and tactics. He practiced this long-distance reconnaissance for months, growing increasingly worried about the growth of the missions error in Illinois and Indiana. When McCoy's influence reached heights that Parker felt he could not counter from his home in north-central Tennessee, he decided to move his family to Illinois.

The Parkers were not alone in their emigration. After 1812, thousands upon thousands of Americans moved from the older states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee into regions encompassed by Alabama, Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois. Contemporaries deemed this mass exodus "The Great Migration." John Mason

²⁷ Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 152; Babcock, ed., *Forty Years*, 85-87, 157; Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement," 517; Th. P. Green to Jonathan Going, 1 April and 7 May 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Babcock, ed. *Forty Years*, 171.

²⁸ Lambert, *Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 260; Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 81.

Peck observed from his St. Louis post that it seemed the entire states of “Kentucky and Tennessee were breaking up and moving to the ‘Far West.’” So in December 1817, the fact that Parker and his family left their Tennessee home of fourteen years for Clarke County, Illinois, would not have attracted any special attention; thousands of others did the same. What made Parker’s move significant was that he did not move for more land or a business venture. He moved with the explicit purpose of combating McCoy and the missions system.²⁹

In 1818, Parker made his first move against the missions system. When all the churches of the Wabash Association met that year, Parker’s church sent him as a representative. Without hesitation, he questioned the presence and usefulness of the missions society: “Is there any use for the [Triennial Convention]? If so, wherein does its usefulness consist?” Parker followed his questions up with a proposal that the Wabash Association withdraw its membership with the society. The Association agreed and voted to withdraw immediately. The word of their opposition spread quickly. Within months, congregations at Wood River Church and Lamotte Church were raising support against missions throughout Illinois and Indiana. The antimissionist fire had been lit in the West, and Parker had played a significant role in igniting it.³⁰

After years of observing and hearing about one another, Daniel Parker and John Mason Peck met for the first time at the 1822 meeting of the Wabash Association. The members of the association had come together to discuss local church matters. Instead,

²⁹ John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, 1986), 49-51; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Sept. 1831), 276-78; William Sweet, ed., *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830* (New York, 1931), 68-69; Parker, *A Public Address*, 4.

³⁰ Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 260-261.

they ended up listening to a five-hour debate between Parker and Peck. Peck later described his first impression of Parker in condescending terms: Parker was “uncouth in manners, slovenly in dress, diminutive in person, unprepossessing in appearance, with shriveled features and a small piercing eye.” However unkempt Parker may have seemed, it must not have affected his debating skills. By all accounts, the debate, most of which pertained to the missions question, ended in a draw. Even Peck had to acknowledge the passionate antimissionist’s skill, albeit with reservation: “Repeatedly we have heard him when his mind seemed to rise above his own powers, and he would discourse for a few minutes on the divine attributes, or some doctrinal subject, with such brilliancy of thought and correctness of language as would astonish men of education and talents. Even though Peck derided Parker in word, he had to acknowledge that Parker was succeeding in deed.³¹

While Parker and the antimissionists gathered forces in the 1820s, Peck and the missionists regrouped and sought new ways to inject the gospel into the supposedly pagan West. After Peck and Welch lost the monetary support of the Triennial Convention in 1820, they sought employment from numerous other reform societies. Welch immediately returned to the East to join the staff of the newly formed American Sunday School Union. Peck broadened his reform-society affiliations much more widely. Peck gained the support of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and moved in April 1822 to Rock Spring, Illinois (eighteen miles from St. Louis). By 1827,

³¹ Lambert, *The Rise*, 271, Lawrence Edwards, *The Baptists of Tennessee, with Particular Attention to the Primitive Baptists of East Tennessee*, (M.A. Thesis, University of Tennessee, May, 1940) 33, quoted in Lambert, *The Rise*, 255.

Peck worked not only as a missionary, but as an agent for the American Bible Union, General Sunday School Union, American Colonization Society, and the American Tract Society.³²

Peck could not have made it much easier for Parker and the antimissionists to believe a conspiracy was afoot. With Peck simultaneously representing so many eastern interests, people in the West, including fellow Baptists, were sure he had more than benevolence on his mind. Peck fueled the conspiracy theory even further when in December 1822, he preached to the Illinois House of Representatives on behalf of the American Bible Union. After his sermon, he took up a collection from among the governing body of the state. If missionaries could infiltrate the houses of government and solicit money for their plans, antimissionists feared that it would only be a matter of time before they somehow lost their religious and civil liberties.

Events like this led to the widespread belief among antimissionists that the entire missionary system was nothing more than one giant money-making scheme. Antimissionists lived with this fear of financial takeover by greedy and false religious leaders. They had many concrete reasons for this fear. After all, mission societies like the Triennial Convention set up their entire structure and representation according to the amount of money a person or group contributed. One became a member by donating a small amount, a life member, with voting rights, by donating even more. In a western climate of ever-increasing suspicion of the market, historian T. Scott Miyakawa aptly asked, “What clearer proof was needed to show that the mission system was an eastern

³² Babcock, ed., *Memoir of John Mason Peck*, xiv, 172; Lambert, *The Rise*, 270.

financial instrument,” bent on completely overhauling the economic lives of citizens of the West?³³

Antimissionists needed no further proof, but they found more nonetheless. Parker reported this sentiment from Illinois and Indiana. Taylor railed against it in Kentucky. He singled out Luther Rice as "a modern Tezel," who like "the Pope's old orator" of the 16th century, who lived to "rake the world for money" at any cost; a pretender who "“would not be willing to catch men in the sense the Saviour designed” but would gladly “catch a fish (as Peter did) with a piece of money in its mouth.”” Ebenezer Rogers reported from Missouri that the people were convinced that the missionary enterprise was "a speculating scheme" dangerous to their "civil and religious liberties." One Baptist preacher had even "induced 50 or 60 members" of Rogers' association to follow him in opening a "correspondence with the Kahuka Association in North Carolina." This Kahuka – or Kehukee – Association would soon become one of the most vocal elements of the Antimission Movement. In an article published in *The Primitive Baptist* (published by members of the Kehukee Association), Rev. Joshua Lawrence channeled the biblical story of the prophet Nathan confronting King David for his sins, by confronting the missionaries with his own story about a greedy and heartless sheep-shearer:

³³ This belief that the mission system was a money-making scheme was even more common when it came to *foreign* missions. Not only did foreign mission societies raise money in the same way, but the money was then sent off to missionaries in a foreign country. If antimissionists were suspicious of how missionaries in their midst were using the money they collected, one can understand how much more suspicious they would be of foreign missionaries who they had no connection with at all. For examples of this sort of suspicion of foreign missions, see Ebenezer Rogers to John Stevens (Editor of the Baptist Weekly Journal in Cincinnati), 26 August 1833, John Stevens Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); John Mason Peck to Lynd, Stevens, and Johnson, 25 July 1833, John Mason Peck Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 147-48.

The new scheme preachers are like a certain man I heard of, who was travelling the road and found a sheep in the mire; he got down to help the sheep out and took hold of the wool, but alas the wool all came out. So he continued grip after grip until he fleeced the poor creature to his bare hide, then went off with the wool and left the poor sheep still in the mire, to look for other mired sheep to get the wool. So some new scheme preachers have done. They have gone to some churches where they were in the mire, having no preacher; they have got the wool and then off, to look for other churches in the mire that they might get more wool. Can any man be so blind as not to see that wool and not mutton is the aim of these men. Mire and be damned, sheep, so I get the wool.³⁴

Even if missionaries weren't fleecing the people they were supposed to be serving, antimissionists accused the missionaries of accepting money from an unbiblical source: distant mission societies. Missionaries and agents traveled extensively, raising money along the way and drawing on funds set aside for them by their sending society. Even when they stayed in a single place for months or years, missionaries continued to draw on funds from these same groups, rather than from their local flock.

On top of this, many antimissionists believed that missionaries took advantage of the distance between them and their financial supporters by exaggerating their successes on the field, and furthering the belief that no Christians existed in the frontier regions. By making “greater noise about their progress,” Parker asserted, missionaries hoped to prod Eastern Christians into giving more money. Regardless of exactly where the money came from, the antimissionists claimed that having come from anywhere but the local people to whom the missionaries ministered violated New Testament principles regarding the collection and donation of money. Rather than teaching missionaries to look to God for their provision, the societies taught them to “look back” like Lot’s wife,

³⁴ Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 9, 24, 21; Ebenezer Rogers to John Stevens (Editor of the Baptist Weekly Journal in Cincinnati), 26 August 1833, John Stevens Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Jan. 23, 1836), 23.

who had been turned into a pillar of salt after looking back to a burning Sodom for her sustenance, rather than looking to God.³⁵

When antimissionists discovered that some of this already-problematic funding came from non-Christian contributors, their fury grew exponentially. Not only were missionaries engaging in false labor and receiving money not due them, but that money was tainted. Several societies admitted these actions, although reservedly. One claimed, “The aid which is rendered to these charities is *almost altogether* by the professed disciples of Christ – except in a few cases, where these friendly to his cause, but not professors, contribute a small amount in its behalf – and this is small, indeed.” Another society, according to the claims of the Kehukee Association, had “officially solicited, through their Secretary, a successful horse-racer with a part of his gambling gain, to constitute himself a Life Member.” The Baptist Board of Foreign Mission (the governing board of the Triennial Convention), had gone so far in 1824 as to request a loan for their new college in Washington, D.C., from the United States Congress. One state senator wrote later that he had inwardly objected to this request, but refrained from audibly voicing his opinion while the Senate was in session. That senator, recently elected in November 1822, was Daniel Parker.³⁶

³⁵ Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 13; *Church Advocate*, 1 (July 1830), 227. Sweet, ed., *The Congregationalists*, 250; Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 5; Parker, *A Public Address*, 41.

³⁶ *The Baptist*, 1 (June 1835), 84 (emphasis added); *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (Oct. 3 1835), 10. Incidentally, the Board *received* this money, and used it to help establish Columbian College, which would later become present-day George Washington University. For details on this episode, see Elmer Kayser, *Bricks Without Straw: The Evolution of George Washington University* (New York, 1970). Parker records details of this incident in both *The Authors Defence*, 13-16, and in the *Church Advocate*, 2 (Oct. 1830), 12; Lambert, *The Rise*, 271.

John Taylor and the Antimission Movement in Kentucky

By the early 1820s, antimission activity had spread throughout the country, especially in the West and South. One Tennessean observed that “the current of prejudice had gradually swollen” so much against missions that “no one dared to resist it.” In Illinois, Wood River Church announced in October that they were “not willing for any of her members to have any thing to do with the board of Western missions.” So few supported missionaries in Missouri and the St. Louis area that the Triennial Convention factored this into their decision to cancel its plan to continue funding John Mason Peck. Few places, however, would witness the level of tension experienced by the members of the Elkhorn Association of north-central Kentucky.³⁷

If you had attended a meeting of the Elkhorn Association in the Lexington-area in 1819, you would have been hard-pressed to imagine that it would become the site of one of the most contentious battles over the missionary system in the early republic. Up to that time, the association had expressed nothing but heartfelt support for home missions. They rejoiced in the 1814-formation of the Triennial Convention, hailing it a “beautiful and prosperous” attempt to “combine the Baptist denomination in the United States in one ardent effort.” In 1815, after Luther Rice stopped in Lexington to speak at the association's annual meeting (weeks after he had encountered Daniel Parker), those present passed around a hat and collected \$147.75 for the Triennial Convention. In

³⁷ Quoted in Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 72; Minutes of the Wood River Church, in Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier*, 270; T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 146; Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism*, 3-4.

1817, they did the same for the touring James Welch. In 1818, reported on their regular communication with the Kentucky Board for Domestic Missions.³⁸

In 1819, when the Association received its first complaint against home missions from the Mountain Island Church, the rest of the member churches rejected it. These "opposers," the mission-supporting churches argued, owed their beliefs "in a great measure...to misrepresentations" of the home missions system. Even if Mountain Island was correct in identifying "improprieties in the management of the missionary concern," the Association decided, it was no reason to throw out the baby with the bathwater. The Baptists of the Elkhorn Association were experiencing locally what the entire nation was experiencing: the rapid spread of the missionary spirit in America. With the growing success of both home and foreign missions, they had every reason to believe that "the day of the Millennium is about to break."³⁹

In 1820, when John Taylor submitted his antimissionist pamphlet *Thoughts on Missions* to the Elkhorn Association, it wasn't the peace of the Millennium that broke out, but war. The previous year, on his sixty-seventh birthday, Taylor began writing his pamphlet in response to the missionary encroachments he had observed the previous five years. Within a few years, this pamphlet would gain national prominence, reaching associational and presbytery meetings across the country, gaining attention from nationally-known travel-writers like Anne Royall, and getting reprinted and sold in

³⁸ Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1816), 4 (SBHLA, Nashville); for Luther Rice, see Chester Young, "Introduction," *A History of Ten Baptist Churches of Which the Author Has Been Alternately a Member* (Macon, 1995), 51-53. For Welch, the association collected \$76.19 for Welch to use "to promote Western Missions." See Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1817), 6-7; (1818), 6-7 (SBHLA, Nashville).

³⁹ Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1819); (1817), 7 (SBHLA, Nashville).

Philadelphia bookstores. In the pamphlet, Taylor lashed out at missionaries and their sending societies for their abuses of Christianity and their treatment of western peoples. He described the national missions plan in the same sort of dangerous and conspiratorial terms as Parker: “The deadly evil I have in view, is under the epithets or appellations of *Missionary Boards, Conventions, Societies*, and Theological Schools, all bearing the *appearance* of great, though affected sanctity.” Taylor’s complaints resonated clearly with thousands of people across the country, and would ignite fierce battles between Christians (like those of the Elkhorn Association) in the Upper South.⁴⁰

Hailing from a similar geographic area, with a similar family background, it is no surprise that the manner in which Taylor got involved in the Antimission Movement mirrored that of Daniel Parker. Taylor had been born in Virginia in 1752, converted to the Baptist faith at the age of twenty, and moved to Kentucky with his family in 1782. Like most people on the frontier, Taylor’s primary livelihood came from farming. By the end of his life, he had acquired substantial amounts of property, including thousands of acres of land and thirty-two slaves. His wealth, however, did not separate him from Parker and the thousands of others in the western states who saw in the mission system a threat to their liberties.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 226-34, 334-35; Anne Newport Royall, *Letters from Alabama, 1817-1822* (Tuscaloosa, 1965); John Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 4. I added emphasis to “appearance,” because Taylor clearly believed that the professed benevolent plans of missions societies acted as façades for more sinister motives. Influence is difficult to measure, but both Lambert and Carroll considered Taylor’s *Thoughts on Missions* to be one of the most influential antimissionist documents produced. See Carroll, *The Genesis of American Anti-Missionism*, 86; and Lambert, *The Rise*, 335.

⁴¹ For biographical information on John Taylor, see Lambert, *Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 317; John Taylor, *Baptists on the American Frontier: A History of Ten Baptist Churches of Which the Author Has Been Alternately a Member*, (Macon, 1995), 86; and Young, introduction to *Baptists on the American Frontier*, 5-7, 13-21, 75, 83. For the best discussion of the religious and societal upheaval of

Taylor experienced this supposed threat for the first time in late-1812, when John Schermerhorn and Samuel Mills passed through Kentucky as part of their missionary tour. Schermerhorn and Mills wrote very critically, even derisively of religious folk in the Kentucky area, claiming that there was no "great prospect of forming Presbyterian Churches, the greatest part of the people being Baptists or Methodists, and extremely bigoted." In this derision, cloaked with goodwill, Taylor smelled "the New England Rat." In 1818, just after Daniel Parker had moved to Illinois, Taylor began visiting Missouri in order to investigate the reach of John Mason Peck and James Welch. Although he preached along the way, he knew that it would take a more powerful weapon to win the battle. That weapon would be his pen, and its first strike came in the form of his 1819 pamphlet, *Thoughts on Missions*.⁴²

In 1820, Taylor traveled north from his home association, the Franklin Association, to present his pamphlet at the annual meeting of the Elkhorn Association. It was his first attempt at producing an organized explanation for why he opposed the Home Missions Movement. The Association would hear nothing of it. They "agreed to strike out that item" from association business and return the pamphlet to its owner.⁴³

But this time, unlike the previous year when the Mountain Island church had stood alone in its suspicion on missions, Taylor was *not* alone. "Two or three of the

Virginia in the eighteenth century, the context in which Taylor came of age, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

⁴² Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 5; Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 326-27; John Schermerhorn and Samuel Mills, *A Correct View of That Part of the United States Which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains, with Regard to Religion and Morals* (Hartford, 1814), 18-19; Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 5; Young, introduction to *Baptists on the American Frontier*, 51-53.

⁴³ Taylor is cited as coming from the Franklin Association in the Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1821) and (1827); quotation on striking the minutes from Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1820), 7 (SBHLA, Nashville).

Churches belonging to this association," the minutes of 1820 report, "express in their letters a disposition to drop further correspondence with the Missionary board [of the Triennial Convention]." While "some part of the association" remained "warm in the cause of missions," others seemed to have "some conscientious scruples on the subject."⁴⁴

Unfortunately for the mission-sympathizers, they did not take the challenge as seriously as they should have. In their minds, the missions system and its practices represented nothing new in American church history, and therefore, was no threat to the churches. These societies solicited funds for projects, they claimed, just like churches had always done for supporting missionaries and building new meeting houses. As for the issue of accepting money from non-church members, or even non-Christians, mission-society supporters claimed that any money given freely and benevolently was good. Furthermore, the mission work could not "be easily affected" (accomplished) without such donations. Therefore, those who opposed the methods of mission societies should lay aside their "conscientious scruples," and stop "throw[ing] obstacles in the way." In the antimissionists' eyes, the association had decided that pragmatism should rule the day in fundraising.⁴⁵

By 1821, the antimission party had done more than inject their ideas into the Elkhorn Association; they had gained enough power to direct the discussion. A "respectable" and presumably powerful minority of the churches in the Association now opposed cooperating with the Baptist Foreign Board of Missions. The Association thus

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1820), 9-10 (SBHLA, Nashville).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 10-12.

resolved, "That for the sake of peace it is expedient to discontinue the correspondence which has produced some difficulty in the minds of many of our brethren." In northern Kentucky, the Antimission Movement had begun its ascent.⁴⁶

The Nationwide Reach of the Antimission Movement

During the 1820s, the Antimission Movement really began to come into its own as a loosely-organized, diverse, and national phenomenon. While Baptists tended to make up the majority of opposition to mission societies, the sentiment could be found among all the major Protestant denominations. Peter Cartwright, the famed Methodist minister in Illinois left no doubt about his resentment of the "fresh, green...missionaries" who were storming the frontier, as if ministers like himself were not already at work. The Presbyterian church regularly met opposition to their missionary efforts, especially as they ventured into western and southern regions. When one missionary arrived in Mississippi in December 1827, members of the Presbytery of Mississippi assured him that "it would be inexpedient" for him to even attempt his mission in that region." Baptists, according to one Presbyterian missionary in Kentucky, certainly made up the "largest part" of the opposition, but they were not alone.⁴⁷

Even the Baptists who opposed the mission system can be treated as separate groups, even separate denominations. Because their church government was completely

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Elkhorn Association (1821), 7 (SBHLA, Nashville).

⁴⁷ Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography of Peter Cartwright* (New York, 1956), 236, 244. Although Cartwright's autobiography has been mined by historians for decades, the first and only critical biography of him is by Robert Bray, *Peter Cartwright: Legendary Frontier Preacher* (Urbana, 2005); Standing Committee, 31 December 1827, 418. Letter written from a missionary in Georgetown, Kentucky, to the American Home Missionary Society, 13 February 1832, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 104 (pages missing, author unknown). The letter was likely written by Joseph Lane, who was a missionary of the AHMS in Georgetown.

decentralized, Baptists often found themselves coalescing around opposition to mission societies, while still remaining "very much divided among themselves." For example, many Baptist antimissionists distrusted Daniel Parker's leadership. He spoke too "plain and pointed" too often, and alienated many who might have only disagreed with him on minor points of theology or practice. John Taylor, although he admired Parker's resolve, broke with him over his "Two Seeds" doctrine, which he considered possibly heretical. When Alexander Campbell and his followers began speaking out against all creeds, systems of doctrine, and orthodox methods of practicing the sacraments, most antimission Baptists began excluding them from their congregations. Campbell, although he remained in common-cause against the mission system with other antimissionists, broke from Baptists in virtually every other way. He even went so far as to form his own denomination in 1832, the Disciples of Christ, which both Taylor and Parker rejected.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most powerful evidence for the loosely-organized, diverse, and national scope of the Antimission Movement is what can be read: periodicals, pamphlets, and other printed material. During the 1820s and 1830s, religious print culture flourished in the United States. For decades, Philadelphia had functioned as a major hub for this print culture, and antimissionists took full advantage of the opportunities afforded them there.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid.; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Mar. 1831), 121; Young, introduction to *A History of Ten Baptists*, 68-74; Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 121, 70.

⁴⁹ For some of the best recent work on early national and antebellum print culture, see Robert Gross and Mary Kelley, eds., *An Extensive Republic: Print Culture and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840* (Chapel Hill, 2010); Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, Chapter 6; Trish Loughran, *The Republic in*

One very vocal, and very controversial figure in antission history was Philadelphia's Theophilus Gates. Born in Connecticut in 1787 to farmers, Gates became an itinerant preacher at the age of sixteen. For the next fifteen years, he traveled as a preacher and teacher throughout Connecticut, New York, Maryland, the Western Reserve (present-day Ohio), and several southern states.⁵⁰ Sometime before 1820, Gates moved to Philadelphia, where he would become widely known for both his publishing activities, including his periodical called *The Reformer*, which would last for fifteen years.⁵¹

In the first issue of *The Reformer*, published on 1 January 1820, Gates wasted no time in identifying his enemies: the religious denominations, societies, and beliefs which he believed were out of step with true Christianity, *especially* mission societies. In his criticisms, he walked in step with every other Christian suspicious of these groups. "People, in general," he observed, "come into these missionary undertakings, much in the same manner as they come into the fashions of the times; and in order to keep up one's popularity, and to be esteemed of some account, it is necessary to take an active part in, or to applaud them. He lamented the days when preachers (presumably like

Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870 (New York, 2009); Jeffrey Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville, 2002).

⁵⁰ Theophilus Gates, *Life and Writings*, 45, 21bf, 121, 201-208.

⁵¹ We are unsure about exactly when Gates moved to Philadelphia. However, by following the trail of some of his publishing activities, we know that it happened before 1820, but probably not long before, likely between 1814 and 1819. For more on his early life and publications, see Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 153-173.

himself) simply heeded God's call to preach, "without being paid for it five, ten, or twenty-five hundred dollars a year."⁵²

What makes Gates important to this story is that *he* – a son of New-England Presbyterians, and a resident of Philadelphia – criticized them. From an early age, Gates developed an antipathy to official religious affiliations. As a teenager, he gloried in the fact that he maintained membership "in no [denominational] society." Gates also stood out as an antimission writer for the *degree* of his anti-institutionalism. While many people rose up in opposition to organized moral reform societies in the nineteenth century, most remained committed to organized Christianity, at least in the form of their particular denominations. But Gates's anti-institutionalism knew no bounds; he anathemized *all* forms of organized Christianity, including missionary societies, moral reform societies, and even denominations. Protestants as a whole were "but a little behind catholics" in their institutional corruption and unnecessary complexity. In his view:

The great evil of the Christian world, [was] sects and parties...and that every organized body of people, on becoming organized, immediately become contaminated; and that every one who unites himself to it, is in the greatest danger of being infected with a kind of spiritual plague, which more or less prevails in every sect and denomination of people."

It seems to have escaped him that in separating in such a way, he was, in effect, creating a sect of his own.⁵³

⁵² *The Reformer*, 1 (Jan. 1, 1820), 12; Theophilus Gates, *The Life and Writings of Theophilus Gates* (Philadelphia, 1818), 239.

⁵³ Theophilus Gates, *Life and Writings*, 92-93, 265, 302-03, 319-20. For more on Theophilus Gates, see Byron Lambert, *The Rise*, 153-234; and Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 172-79.

Gates is also important to the story of the Antimission Movement in that he confirms what I have been arguing about the national nature of its long history. By the late-1820s, Gates's *The Reformer* enjoyed national circulation, with subscription numbers topping out at around 1,500. Gates drew upon antimission material from throughout the nation for the periodical, including by republishing works like John Taylor's 1819 pamphlet, *Thoughts on Missions*. *The Reformer* became hugely successful (and infamous). By the mid-1820s, Gates's office in Philadelphia received so many letters of both complaint and support that he could not even begin to publish them all as he had in the paper's early years.⁵⁴

In the East, Gates's Philadelphia was only one source of antimission material. In 1830, New York City saw the publication of a sensational and popular periodical called "Priestcraft Unmasked." Its author, Universalist minister Theophilus Fisk, started the paper in order to challenge the mixing of religion and politics, and found plenty to criticize in religious reform societies which sought to "exercise, usurp, or gain power." These two eastern antimission-friendly publications, like print material in general, were passed from person to person, and mailed to subscribers all over the country. In 1833, *ten years* after their original publications, Missouri pastor Ebenezer Rogers was still witnessing the troublesome fruit they had born out: "Infidel papers (the Reformer and

⁵⁴ Lambert provides an excellent discussion of the multid denominational, nationwide reach of Gates's writings in *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 201-226.

Priest-Craft unmasked) were extensively circulated through this country among the Baptist some time ago – they did a vast deal of mischief.”⁵⁵

These two periodicals were but the tip of the iceberg of the "mischief" caused by antissionists in the 1820s and early 1830s. From 1826 to 1829, Alexander Campbell's *The Christian Baptist* circulated antissionist ideas throughout the West, and represented only the first of many such publications from his pen. In 1827, the Kehukee Association of North Carolina published "A Declaration Against the Modern Missionary Movement and Other Institutions of Men." This resolution would soon be followed by a biweekly periodical, *The Primitive Baptist*, an explicitly antission paper which would be spread by agents in thirteen states across the country, as far west as Missouri and Mississippi, and as far north as New Jersey and New York.⁵⁶

Daniel Parker participated in this print war with full force. In 1820, he published "A Public Address to the Baptist Society," a 63-page manifesto against supporting mission societies which quickly circulated throughout the West and South. He followed

⁵⁵ Fisk quoted in Eric Schlerth, "Age of Infidelity: The Politics of Religious Controversy in the Early National United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brandeis University, 2008), 248-250; Ebenezer Rogers to John Stevens, 26 August 1833, John Stevens Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁵⁶ Some historians of the Antission Movement, including Byron Lambert and B.H. Carroll, consider Campbell, because of the reach of his publishing, to be one of the movement's most important leaders. See Lambert, *The Rise*, 315; and Carroll, *The Genesis*, 8. I disagree with this assessment for several reasons, and have thus chosen not to focus on his role in this dissertation. First, although Campbell's writings almost certainly had a larger audience than that of any of the other leaders, his unique and scatter-shot beliefs set him apart distinctly from the foundational issues on which the others – like Parker and Taylor – agreed upon. For example, while most antissionists remained committed to their respective denominations, especially Baptists, Campbell rejected the entire American church, believing every denomination in need of conversion to true Christian principles. Furthermore, Campbell rejected Reformed views of salvation, something on which most antissionists *and* missionaries agreed on at the time. For more detail on Campbell, see Lambert, *The Rise*, 289; Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 69; Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 150; and Campbell's own writings, including *The Christian Baptist*, 2 (Mar. 1825), 70. For the Kehukee Association, see W.J. Berry, ed., *The Kehukee Declaration and Black Rock Address* (Paris, AR, 2005); *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (June 25, 1836), 192. For more on the Kehukee Association, see Jarrett Burch, *Adiel Sherwood: Baptist Antebellum Pioneer in Georgia* (Macon, 2003), 70-75.

this in 1824 with a pamphlet entitled “Reflections on Church Discipline.” In 1826, Parker published his most controversial theological treatise yet, his *Views on the Two Seeds: Taken from Genesis*. Within the next year, he published *A Supplement or Explanation of My Views on the Two Seeds* and *The Second Dose of Doctrine on the Two Seeds*, both of which were attempts to clarify the complex doctrine he promulgated in the first treatise. More than all his other writings, these made the case for a complete rejection of all things related to the missions societies. By making the missions societies and their followers in the family of the “bad seed” of the Devil, and placing the antimissionists in the family of the “good seed” of God, through Eve, he converted a one-issue controversy about missions societies into an epic battle between good and evil. In order to address the mission societies more consistently, from October 1829 until September 1831, Parker published his periodical, *The Church Advocate*. Parker had continued to monitor the missionaries and their “many errors ingeniously circulating through” religious periodicals all over the West, and felt compelled to respond in kind. The missions system had not ceased from spreading lies and deceit, and neither had the chief of all the missionary schemers, John Mason Peck.⁵⁷

Throughout the *Church Advocate*, especially in its final months, Parker participated in an ongoing war of words with Peck regarding the missions system. At the same time Parker published the *Church Advocate*, Peck published his own periodicals: the *Pioneer of the Valley of the Mississippi*, and from 1830-1831, *The*

⁵⁷ Parker, *A Public Address*, 3, 11; Dan B. Wimberly, “Daniel Parker: Pioneer Preacher and Political Leader,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1995), 99; Lambert, *The Rise*, 197-201; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Sept. 1831), 282.

Western Baptist. The two rivals wrote to and about each other in their respective periodicals, always gathering evidence from followers against the other. While Parker attacked from his base in Illinois, Peck continued to travel throughout Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Kentucky in support of mission societies. Parker kept up with Peck's writings, comings, and goings, and always suspected him of conniving on behalf of eastern societies, against the West. Had he the means, Parker would have written, traveled, preached, and debated much more directly with Peck. But because he could not travel as extensively, Parker had to participate in the war from his "periodical watch-tower" in Illinois and Indiana.

Still, despite his inability to travel as extensively as the missionaries, Parker's influence was vast. *The Church Advocate* boasted subscribers as far away as New York, Virginia, and Louisiana. A storm of testimonies from pastors and missionaries throughout the West and South attested to the reach of his ideas. Throughout the 1830s, Tennessean preachers complained to John Mason Peck and Jonathan Going about Parker's influence in their state, which was "plagued more with [his] antinomian doctrines...than any other error." In Washington County, Kentucky, and Washington County, Indiana, pastors and missionaries blamed general opposition to all reform societies (including missions) on two causes: "a want of godliness," and "the influence of Daniel Parker." In Illinois, Missouri, and Tennessee, Jacob Bower and John Mason Peck cautioned the local churches to "be ware of Daniel parker and his two seed doctrine." By the early-1830s, through print and the public participation of leaders like

Parker, the Antimission Movement had spread nationwide and achieved unprecedented success.⁵⁸

The Black Rock Meeting of 1832

As we discovered in the previous chapter, the home missions movement had also attained unprecedented success by the early-1830s, exemplified especially by the establishment of centralized, national mission societies for all of the major Protestant denominations. Led by Jonathan Going and John Mason Peck, the Baptists took part by organizing one of the largest such groups from 1831-32, the American Baptist Home Mission Society. This new national society, its members argued, sought to save the West, a region home to "four millions of immortal spirits" who lived "lamentably destitute of the frequent and faithful preaching of [the] Gospel."⁵⁹

By 1832, missions societies could have spoken of the lack of religion in the West and South only if they ignored a troubling reality: people *within* churches and associations throughout the nation had continued warring over the issue of missions. Westerners may have been "lamentably destitute" of many things which easterners cherished, but religion was not one of them. Peter Cartwright alone claimed he knew

⁵⁸ *Church Advocate*, 2 (July 1831), 217-222; Wimberly, "Daniel Parker," 178-79; Peter Gayle to Jonathan Going, 8 December 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Isaac McCoy and Luther Rice, to John Stevens, 31 October 1833, John Stevens Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Sweet, ed., *The Congregationalists*, 261; Sweet, ed., *The Baptists*, 207; John Mason Peck to William Leverett (Secretary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society), 23 December 1831, John Mason Peck Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁵⁹ *First Anniversary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1832), 6, 13-14.

“hundreds of traveling and local preachers” who had ministered faithfully for years. Apparently, missionaries often confused "destitution" with *opposition*.⁶⁰

Opposition to the mission system had spread and begun building in every state in the Union, especially in the South and West. In Indiana, the conflict had hit hard, and quickly. In 1829, the Silver Creek Church of Indiana had split into two parts due to the missions conflict, the first church in the state to do so. By 1832, every single association in the state had chosen sides in the battle. In Illinois, Daniel Parker's ground, missionary Jacob Bower endured taunting and disturbances during his sermons all the time, and was even denied entry into a house-church meeting after the owner discovered that he supported missions. In Tennessee and Kentucky, the controversy had made “almost a complete sweep” of the Baptist and Presbyterian churches. This left John Mason Peck feeling as if "the efforts of opposers will greatly lessen if not paralyze my efforts," and Presbyterian missionary John Hamilton afraid that "prejudices" threatened to tear the national Presbyterian church apart.⁶¹

With all of this momentum, members of the Antimission Movement convened for what might be called its first "organized" meeting in Black Rock, Maryland, in September 1832. They came together for a very specific purpose: to discuss and express their opposition to all of the religious societies of the day. They made their reasons clear:

We will meet some of the false charges brought against us...by a simple and unequivocal declaration, that we do regard as of the first importance the

⁶⁰ Cartwright, *Autobiography*, 244.

⁶¹ Sweet, ed., *The Baptists*, 62-64; John Mason Peck to the Trustees of the Baptist Missionary Society of Massachusetts, 29 August 1831, John Mason Peck Papers, (ABHS, Atlanta); John Hamilton To Absalom Peters, 31 March 1829, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 104.

command given of Christ, primarily to His apostles, and through them to his ministers in every age, to "Go in to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," ...We also believe it to be the duty of individuals and churches to contribute according to their abilities, for the support, not only of their pastors, but also of those who go preaching the gospel of Christ among the destitute. But we at the same time contend, that we have no right to depart from the order which the Master himself has seen fit to lay down."

The meeting was small, with only twenty two elders and laymen in attendance.

However, the meeting was highly public, and their declaration built on decades of nationwide sympathy for the views therein. For these reasons, the Black Rock Meeting had several important implications for home missions in America.⁶²

First, all of the states represented at the meeting were non-traditional antimission strongholds: Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. While it is true that people all over the country opposed mission societies, most of the *organization* against them, before 1832, seems to have occurred in the West and South. Second, this meeting brought together antimissionists from *many* states, at the same time. Until Black Rock, when antimissionists had met together, they did so on an associational, regional, or state level, at most. This meeting changed that trend, bringing together people from many states, including northern and eastern states.⁶³

Missionary-leaders were well-aware of the importance of the Black Rock meeting. In December 1832, three months later, Jonathan Going was busy working as the Corresponding Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. While he believed that "Home Mission operations [were] daily strengthening," he also feared that

⁶² "The Black Rock Address," in *The Baptist History Collection, Source Documents: The Kehukee Declaration and Black Rock Address*, ed., W.J. Berry, 22.

⁶³ For more information on the Black Rock Meeting, see Lambert, *The Rise*, 365-76.

Black Rock signaled an equal strengthening of opposition. Worried, he wrote Rev.

Bolles, a pastor in Connecticut:

Have you learned the doings of the Baptist anti missionary convention held in Baltimore in Sept. last? – they have laid a foundation to combine the energies of all of kindred feeling in the U. States, to oppose tooth and nail all the benevolent operations of the day. I think with the necessary efforts, they may unite 1/3 of the denomination in the Union. What will be the effect I cannot predict; but one thing is certain, we have need to labor and pray much.

In a second letter to Adiel Sherwood, a pastor in Georgia, Going expressed more frustration: What think you of the Baltimore B. Anti Missionary Convention? I have just read [about it] with mingled pain, pity & contempt."⁶⁴

The Black Rock meeting of 1832, although small, quickly came to represent the strength and staying power of the Antimission Movement. For mission societies, its name would become synonymous with "opposition." Its legacy and meaning would become so prominent that while mission-supporters assigned antimissionists of the West and South epithets like "Parkerites" or "Kehukeeites," they called those in the North and East "Blackrockers."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Jonathan Going to Rev. D.C. Bolles, 7 December 1832; and Jonathan Going to Rev. Adiel Sherwood, 5 December 1832, Jonathan Going Papers, (ABHS, Atlanta).

⁶⁵ "What is learned from History?" in *The Baptist History Collection*, ed., W.J. Berry, 12. I found one example of this epithet in a letter from Ezra Going (Jonathan Going's brother), who wrote a letter to a man named Crosby, while on a boat near Baltimore while traveling as an agent for the ABHMS. After attending a meeting of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, one of the oldest Baptist associations in America, he expressed his frustration with the difficulties therein, especially with the people who "opposed all benevolent operations" without discretion. One of the leaders of this movement in Philadelphia was Dr. Sam Jones, who "lately had a Black Rock Meeting at the meeting house" (the 7th Street Church of Philadelphia). Ezra Going used this phrase "Black Rock Meeting" as a synonym for "antimission" or "anti-benevolence," harkening back to the Black Rock Meeting of 1832 in Baltimore. He was convinced that if mission-supporters in Philadelphia did not stand opposed to Jones's influence, the entire 7th Street Church in Philadelphia might "go over to Blackrocking." See Ezra Going to Crosby, 9 October 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta).

The Antimission Movement and the Simultaneous Nationalization and Sectionalization of America

While acknowledging that explicitly religious meetings like Black Rock played a necessary and crucial role in organizing the Antimission Movement, I also want to continue stressing the corresponding importance of other factors. Just as I have argued that a basic concept of antimissionists' economic principles provides depth to our understanding their religious objections, so a basic concept of their *political* principles will do the same. In 1832, at the very time the Antimission Movement was achieving national prominence, its support also remained heavily weighted in the West and South. I want to argue that in the same way, and at the same time, antimissionists were espousing Jacksonian political ideals. These had also achieved national prominence by 1832, and yet, found their strongest support among the people of the West and South.

In February of 1832, Henry Clay stood on the Senate floor in defense of the political and economic system which he had spearheaded more than a decade earlier: the American System. This system envisioned a liberal national government which would use its power to limit foreign interests, boost and regulate the national economy with the help of a national bank, and connect the various sections of the country through transportation infrastructure.

In 1832, all of these elements were in place, but Clay found himself having to defend them against a newly-energized attack, led by Senator Robert Hayne and President Andrew Jackson. Jackson and Hayne opposed this American System, claiming that the liberties the general government took with its power actually did more harm to the various states and sections of the nation than good. They touted a competing

vision for American politics, economics, and society, one which prized national power, but protected the rights of individuals and states to govern their own affairs, apart from the programs of the general government.⁶⁶

Jackson and Hayne, like Clay, enjoyed *nationwide* support for their ideas. When Andrew Jackson won the election of 1832, he did something which arguably no other candidate had done: he won a highly-contested presidential election, and did so as a truly *national* candidate. Until 1832, every presidential election had been one of two types: an almost-unanimous election of a popular incumbent (Washington in 1792, Jefferson in 1804, and Monroe in 1820), or, as in every other case, an election clearly divided along sectional lines, pitting the north-Atlantic and New England states against everyone else. But in 1832, Jackson won states, and lost states, across the nation. Unlike previous candidates whose interests had aligned with the South and West, Jackson *lost* both South Carolina and Kentucky (Kentucky went to home-state hero Henry Clay). But, at the same time, he also *won* northern and New England states, which southern and western candidates had not won before, including New York, New Hampshire, and Maine.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ On Henry Clay and his vision for America, see David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, *Henry Clay: The Essential American* (New York, 2011); and Maurice Baxter, *Henry Clay and the American System* (Lexington, KY, 2004).

⁶⁷ For maps of the results of presidential elections according to the votes of the Electoral College, see the webpages for the respective elections on Wikipedia. For example, the Election of 1796 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege1796.svg>; the Election of 1804 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege1804.svg>; the Election of 1820 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege1820.svg>; and the Election of 1832 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege1832.svg>; all accessed on 30 May 2012. Martin van Buren would have virtually the same experience in the Election of 1836, winning and losing the same states as Jackson, with the addition of losing both Indiana and Ohio. Like in Jackson's loss of Kentucky to home-state candidate Henry Clay, Van Buren lost Ohio and Indiana to the home-state hero William Henry Harrison, who would go on to win the presidency in the next presidential election in 1840.

This general electoral information from 1832 reveals an important truth about divisions among the American populace, which goes far in explaining the missions controversy: many divisions happened on a national scale, not primarily along sectional lines, but along *ideological* lines. The competing political, economic, and social visions of Clay's Whigs and Jackson's Democrats divided people into two broad camps *within* states, and *within* regions, throughout the nation.

When Clay spoke before the Senate and President Jackson in February of 1832, he explicitly acknowledged this fundamental and pervasive divide in Americans' visions for the nation:

In one sentiment, Mr. President, expressed by the honorable gentleman [Robert Hayne] from South Carolina, though, perhaps, not in the sense intended by him, I entirely concur. I agree with him, that the decision on the system of policy embraced in this debate involves the future destiny of this growing country. One way, I verily believe, it would lead to deep and general distress, general bankruptcy, and national ruin, without benefit to any part of the Union. The other, the existing prosperity will be preserved and augmented, and the nation will continue rapidly to advance in wealth, power, and greatness, without prejudice to any section of the confederacy.

According to Clay, and to his opponents in Jackson and Hayne, the nation's future would be strictly determined according to which of two plans the Congress chose.⁶⁸

The Antimission Movement as a Jacksonian Movement

The story of the Antimission Movement not only powerfully confirms this stark ideological divide which Clay observed, but it deepens our understanding of it. The controversy over missions shows us that antimissionists held to political ideals which

⁶⁸ Henry Clay, "The American System," in *The Senate, 1789-1989: Classic Speeches, 1830-1993, Volume III*, ed. Wendy Wolff (Washington, DC, 1994), 83.

were informed by their religious ideals, and were deeply-rooted in their ways of life. For this reason, the Antimission Movement should be seen as both corresponding to Jacksonianism, *and* informing it. As such, it provides us with a unique window into understanding the political world of the period.

The first and most visible correlation between the Antimission Movement and Jacksonian support was geographic. As I have already stated, by the time of his reelection in 1832, Andrew Jackson, although highly divisive, drew support from throughout the nation, rather than from one section or another, as had all his predecessors. This divided, yet national support, repeated itself in 1836 with the election of Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren, who won the same states as Jackson had, while losing a few more in the West. Still, if one had to identify a regional weakness for Jackson, it clearly would have been in the Northeast, especially in the old New England states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. This region, which had gone to the Federalists in past decades, went just as faithfully to successors of the party, including the Whig and Anti-Masonic parties.

The subject of home missions generated geographical fervor and debates analogous to those created by Jacksonian political ideals. Like discussions about Jacksonian politics, discussions about missions were incredibly divisive along *ideological* lines, not necessarily sectional lines. As a result, by the 1830s, one could find both strong support for and opposition to the home missions movement in every state of the Union.

Like Jackson, the Antimission Movement drew its most vehement and support from the South and West. No region seems to have experienced so much upheaval amidst the mission wars as the Ohio River Valley, especially the state of Kentucky. By the early-1830s, John Taylor had been publishing his antimission materials for over a decade, all of which circulated in Kentucky, and some of which circulated nationally. Groups like the Elkhorn Association, which had formerly been staunch supporters of missions, had divided over the issue. Presbyterian antimissionism also experienced great success in Kentucky. Joseph Lane, a missionary in Georgetown and north-central Kentucky, reported that he had decided not to even use the term "Home Missions" anymore, "a term more odious, and accompanied with more terror to the minds of many of the good people here than that of perdition." It was extremely difficult for him to convince the people that the American Home Missionary Society was a benevolent group, not just a foreign institution from "over the mountains." In order to gain their trust, he concluded: "Instead of presenting the subject of Home Missions in a general view, I must talk about Kentucky, and labour with all my might for Kentucky...for the benefit of Kentucky, rather than of the [American] Home Missionary Society." In this way, he hoped to convince the crowds of people suspicious of mission societies in general, that he labored for them, not for a distant, faceless organization.⁶⁹

Northern Kentucky may have experienced a disproportionate amount of antimissionism, but the sentiment and activity stretched to every state of the West and South. In Illinois, missionaries Warren Nichols and Jacob Bower reported that

⁶⁹ Joseph Lane to Absalom Peters (Corresponding Secretary of the AHMS), 2 February 1836, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 104 (underlining is in original).

"prejudices" against missions existed everywhere they traveled. Pastors there, and in the neighboring state of Indiana, would need special "patience and fortitude," as many churches refused to even "hear a Baptist preacher" or "allow an investigation of the cause of Missions." Peter Gayle, a long-time advocate of missions in middle-Tennessee, urged Jonathan Going to send more men to his area, and to prepare them to "expect to meet with persecution." By the mid-1830s, antimissionists had acquired substantial power in the states of the deep South as well. In Georgia, only one association in the whole state attended the 1835 state Baptist convention. By 1837, only three out of twenty-one associations in Alabama fully supported missions; the other eighteen either completely opposed missions or remained divided on the issue. The editors of *The Primitive Baptist* (the antimission periodical of Kehukee, North Carolina) reported in July 1836 that they had active subscribers and agents in thirteen states across the nation, more than half of the states in the Union – no small task for a little newspaper published out of eastern North Carolina.⁷⁰

Again, like Jacksonianism, if one had to identify a weak region for antimissionism, it would have been in old New England states like Massachusetts and Connecticut. When missionaries in Connecticut complained about opposition to their efforts, it was never because they encountered organized antimissionism proper.

Instead, they encountered people who for personal reasons, simply did not want to listen

⁷⁰ Sweet, *The Congregationalists*, 166 (footnote 11); Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 391; *The Second Report of the...American Baptist Home Mission Society*, 13; Isaac McCoy and Luther Rice to John Stevens, 31 October 1833, John Stevens Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). Rice and McCoy placed the blame for Indiana Baptists' suspicion of missions squarely on one man: "all [the trouble] may be easily traced back...[to] the influence of D[aniel] Parker of Illinois." Peter Gayle to Jonathan Going, 13 May 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); Wayne Flynt, *Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie* (Tuscaloosa, 1998), 32; *The Primitive Baptist*, 1 (July 9, 1836), 208.

to them. When the Massachusetts Baptist Convention met in 1837, after considering the difficulties their missionaries were having with antimission parties in the West, they expressed relief: "A few (and we rejoice that it is but a few) *anti*-effort churches in this Commonwealth." Tellingly, these states had not only functioned as Federalist strongholds in the early years of the republic (and thus, the future opponents of Jackson), but also as the home of most of the early, successful mission societies.⁷¹

Antimissionism and Jacksonian Political Ideals

The Antimission Movement mirrored Jacksonianism not only in its national, yet sectional appeal, but also in its political philosophy. Antimissionists' beliefs regarding authority and government, in both the secular and sacred realms, strongly resembled Jacksonian ideals. These ideals shaped their responses to the perceived threat of missionary societies. Antimissionists often so seamlessly combined their secular and sacred political rhetoric that it proves difficult for present-day readers to separate the two. For example, Alexander Campbell referred to his call for the true church to separate itself from the false churches of the day as "a declaration of independence of the kingdom of Jesus" – an undeniable reference to both the New Testament and the Declaration of Independence. Daniel Parker also exemplified this melding of secular and religious political ideals. He consistently expressed his fear of missions societies proving ruinous not only to Baptist churches, but also to his political ideals. He believed

⁷¹ For one example of complaints of this nature, see *A Second Address from the Trustees of the Missionary Society of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1801), 6. In this address, the trustees try to assure the public that the lies of "several heretical and loose preachers" can "account for the unfavorable reports which are circulated respecting the feelings of the people...towards Missionaries, and towards supporters of the Missionary Society." Minutes of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention (1837), 17-18 (ABHS, Atlanta).

that the mission societies represented the prophetic fulfillment of Revelation's "awful smoke," which had "so much darkened the sun & air in the east" that it had reached the "western hemisphere" and endangered antissionist liberties, "both religious *and* political." Antissionists had begun protesting missions societies decades before Jackson's fame had swept the country. However, as Jacksonianism burst onto the political scene in the 1820s and 1830s, they found in it an ideal "political outlet" for their deeply religious frustration.⁷²

Antissionists exhibited all sorts of Jacksonian qualities: they fiercely guarded their liberty, maintained authority over their own and their families' lives, and demanded that the majority hold the minority in check, whether in a political or religious context. They believed that the majority of governmental power should be exercised on the local level, led by local people. Simultaneously, they recognized that local democracy had its proper place under a higher authority. For the nation's government, these higher authorities were the elected national officials, and more importantly, the Constitution. In

⁷² In antebellum Christian circles, such religious-political rhetoric abounded. Christians on both sides of the missions controversy rooted their beliefs about secular subjects, such as politics, in theological and ecclesiastical beliefs. As historian Robert Abzug explained, reformers and anti-reformers alike "did not abandon the realm of the sacred in championing "social" causes." Rather, they approached their political situations in light of what they believed about the sacred. Therefore, claims that Antissionists set aside religious conviction and rejected missionary societies for merely political reasons cannot explain the situation properly. See Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 186; Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York, 1994), 4. Concerning the claim that Antissionists opposed missions societies for purely political reasons, separate from religious thought, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Antission Movement"; and T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*. Both of these historians viewed the Antission Movement as *primarily* an exercise in Jacksonian political beliefs. According to them, Antissionists held political beliefs first, then aligned their religious rhetoric accordingly. For Parker's "awful smoke," see *Church Advocate*, 1 (Oct. 1829), 22; 2 (July 1831), 225-26 (emphasis added). For "political outlet," see Wyatt-Brown, "The Antission Movement," 511.

the religious realm, antimissionists recognized their own corresponding higher authorities: God and the Bible.⁷³

President Jackson himself exemplified these dual commitments to liberty and power, and to local and national government during his presidency. When the people of the state of Georgia sought the removal of the Cherokee in the early 1830s, Jackson sided with them, citing state authority, and spurning the authority of the Supreme Court. At the same time this controversy occurred, however, Jackson squashed the right of the people of South Carolina to nullify national tariff laws which they considered unconstitutional. In addition, while he decried the construction of transportation infrastructure which clearly favored special-interests and narrow regions, he spent more on national internal improvements than all of the previous presidential administrations combined. Although one may question the morality of his decisions, Jackson's dual principles fit comfortably in a traditional federal and republican framework. The national government had authority to address truly national issues, but it conceded vast amounts of power to the states regarding local issues.⁷⁴

⁷³ Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 47. Chapter 2 is particularly enlightening in regard to the concepts of "liberty" and "power" and the struggle between them throughout the antebellum era. For works on family life in the antebellum period, especially as it pertained to men desiring to maintain power in the home, see Paul Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in 19th-Century America* (Oxford, 1994); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds, Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford, 1995); Mary Ryan, *The Cradle of the Middle Class*; and Carol Shamas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (Jan. 1995), 104-44.

⁷⁴ Richard Ellis masterfully examines Jackson's divided loyalties to both states' rights and federal authority in *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States' Rights and the Nullification Crisis* (New York, 1987). Chapters 2 and 3 in particular explain in detail how Jackson ultimately relied on the Constitution for determining his actions in state/federal disagreements.

Antimissionists held to similar principles regarding secular government. For example, they believed in the right of the national government to hold some power over the states. At the same time, they believed that ideally, that national government existed not only to rule, but to protect the interests of local authorities and individuals. Echoing the Bill of Rights, Parker claimed that “Security to every man his right...is the supreme law of the nation.” In return for this national guard on the watchtower, antimissionists claimed that individuals should be ready, if called upon, to sacrifice some of their individual liberty “in order to secure the greater, or most precious parts” of the union. Among independent, Jacksonian antimissionists, this inevitably created tension. On one hand, antimissionists “were unionists first, ‘if it be indeed a Union of rights, interest, and honor.’” On the other hand, they always stood ready to defend themselves against a national body which might encroach on their individual or local rights.⁷⁵

Parker explicitly compared these principles of government to the antimissionists' struggle against missions societies. He believed that national missions societies like Jonathan Going's and John Mason Peck's American Baptist Home Mission Society, had wrested authority away from local churches, God's appointed governors. So, although he would have preferred to live in a common Christian union with the missionaries, Parker and other antimissionists felt compelled to consider the mission societies as enemies, “at war with the first, and dearest, principles of the christian religion and the republican government.” John Leland had voiced similar criticisms, claiming that mission societies were aping old Federalist principles of organization, and slowly eating

⁷⁵ *Church Advocate*, 1 (Nov. 1829), 27-28.

away at the local and congregational liberties of individual churches. Although groups like the American Baptist Home Mission Society claimed “to be but the servant of the churches” and pretended “no ecclesiastical authority,” antimissionists claimed precisely the opposite – that the societies exemplified the general “disposition manifested in the east to govern the west.”⁷⁶

At the root of antimissionists' suspicion of broad, national authority, was their commitment to the principle of local government, in both the secular and religious realms. In the sphere of church government, they held fast to the primacy of local congregations, presbyteries, and other denominationally-normative, biblically-based authorities. For example, Article 6 of the Constitution of Daniel Parker’s church in southern Illinois clearly stated that: “each member should submit themselves to the church,” and to no other body. That local church alone had the God-given authority to oversee, guard, and discipline its members, including the pastor.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid.; Wetherington, *Plain Folk’s Fight*, 54; *Church Advocate*, 1 (Oct. 1829), 22; 2 (Aug. 1831), 247; Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 116-27; Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers*, 15-16, 145. Lambert considers Leland “the first and by far the greatest of the anti-Missionist Baptists (116).” Leland was certainly the most prolific writer and public figure who opposed the mission system. However, I do not think that this speaks to whether his long-term influence was the greatest, particularly in the antebellum South and West. *First Anniversary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (1832), 12; *Church Advocate*, 2 (Oct. 1830), 15. Nathan Hatch discusses these issues in the writings of Antimissionists in *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 176-79;

⁷⁷ *Church Advocate*, 1 (Aug. 1830), 243-47; Parker, *Views on the Two Seeds*, 38; *Church Advocate*, 1 (Mar. 1830), 139-40. This level of oversight and discipline proved especially successful in small communities on the frontier, because unlike in large cities, with large churches and populations, “there was no unnecessary delay between the act of offense and the trial of the offender.” If a person sinned in a frontier church with twenty members, which met in an area with only a handful of families, avoiding a speedy act of discipline would prove difficult. Whether the offense was gambling, drunkenness, adultery, or even providing funds to missionary organizations, Antimissionist Baptist churches governed with vigilance and regularity. A study of the records of any antebellum Baptist church would yield a wealth of examples of such discipline. At the Wood River Church in 1814, a dispute arose between Paul Beck and J. Beman over whether Beck had intentionally defrauded Beman by selling him “an unsound mare.” The church began the investigation by asking Beck to appear before the church at its monthly meeting. Here, the church would allow him to make his defense. When he did not show up to either the

Considering the close watch they kept on their own congregations, antissionists found it absurd that any national group would even *attempt* to watch over and discipline local Christians. Thus, when missionaries claimed to have tens or hundreds of thousands of Baptist followers under their care, John Taylor mocked their “ignorance of Baptist government.” By bypassing local church governments and appealing directly to individual members of congregations, they undermined a fundamental Baptist ecclesiological principle. No one with a proper understanding of Baptist government would ever assume that a national Baptist body, itself illegitimate, would have any right to appeal to or govern local Baptists.⁷⁸

Proponents of mission societies, as might be expected, denied these charges of usurping local ecclesiastical authorities. In fact, many of the societies and their leaders consistently *supported* the idea of local church leadership as consistent with, even

July or August meeting and subsequently refused to talk to any church members, the congregation had only one choice: “he not being Present nor no incouragement that he would come to meeting he is therefore excluded for neglecting to hear the Church.” Not until August, 1815, an entire year later, did the church receive Beck back into fellowship, and that only by his “recantation & acknowledgment” of the church’s authority over him. See Records of the Wood River Church, in Sweet, *The Baptists*, 263-66. For an excellent discussion of Baptist church discipline, see Chapter 3 of Walter Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845*.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 25. For a discussion of Taylor's views, see Wyatt-Brown, “The Antission Movement,” 510. The only other level of “government” which Baptists recognized was the Association, a topic discussed in various other portions of this dissertation. Of associations, Daniel Parker wrote: “Thus we believe, that the same spirit that taught the utility and benefit of the combination of members in a Church capacity, for the benefit of each other, and the glory of God, teaches the same utility and benefit of a combination of the different incorporated partcles of the gospel Church, for the same purposes, in something like an associated capacity” (see *Church Advocate*, 1 (Nov. 1829), 33). As useful as they might be, however, Parker also argued that associations should remember their place as helpful, but not necessary. When many of the churches of the Wabash Association began to lobby for the support missions in the late 1820s, Parker sarcastically defied them: “Is the Association the head, ruler and law giver of the Churches? Or is she a creature of the Churches, for their own benefit, and therefore not bound by the illegal acts of the Association?” His church barred associations from even overseeing “arguments and investigations of subjects,” because such an act would constitute a “violation of the principles of [their] union.” See Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 155-57; *Church Advocate*, 1 (Nov. 1829), 34; Daniel Parker, *The Authors’ Defence, by Explanations and Matters of Fact. Remarks on Discipline, and Reflections on the Church Christ with the Utility and Benefits of Associations* (E. Stout, 1824), 23; Parker, *A Second Dose*, 50, 63.

integral to their plans. In December 1832, Jonathan Going wrote to Rev. Adiel Sherwood in Georgia to inquire whether he knew any ministers "adapted to travel in [Louisiana] as missionaries" on behalf of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society. "We want from 2 to 5," Going explained, "and *southern men* will do better than northern." When he wrote to the secretary of the Baptist Domestic Missionary Society of Louisiana, Going expressed a similar desire for local pastors to lead the way in southern states: "It is desirable...to find men on the ground, or at least, southern men, for the purpose." The leaders of the General Convention of Western Baptists in Ohio encouraged members to remember that while the national societies may have led the work from the East, "still the *greater portion* of the work of supply must be performed by local societies." The Executive Committee of the ABHMS confirmed this statement in their own reports, stating that the society "never relied exclusively, nor chiefly, on the north and east for missionaries," but "believed from the first, that there were many [pastors] on the ground" who could serve locals more effectively.⁷⁹

Furthermore, in contrast to antimissionist claims that they were undermining republican governmental principles, mission societies argued that their enterprises were actually *prime examples* of republican government. After all, along with the Gospel message, their missionaries carried the ideas of church membership, authority, and

⁷⁹ Jonathan Going to Adiel Sherwood, 5 December 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). For more on the role of southern Baptists who supported the work of the ABHMS, see Jarrett Burch, *Adiel Sherwood: Baptist Antebellum Pioneer in Georgia*. Jonathan Going to Joel Coe (Corresponding Sec. Baptist Dm. of Louisiana), 29 November 1833, Jonathan Going Papers, (ABHS, Atlanta) ("It is desirable"). John Mason Peck argued this position too, consistently calling for the recruitment of "native men" for missions. See Jonathan Going to John Mason Peck, 31 August 1832, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta); *Proceedings of the General Convention of Western Baptists* (1836), 10 (ABHS, Atlanta); *The First Report...of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1833), 12-13.

participation to thousands of people throughout the United States, many of whom had not previously engaged in any ecclesiastical activity.

Even as they began to centralize and nationalize in the late-1820s and 1830s, the societies were explicit about the limits of their authority. The leaders of the American Home Missionary Society and American Baptist Home Mission Society, even as they claimed to represent the interests of distant congregations, never claimed authority over them. The General Convention of Western Baptists made it clear in their publications that they should "never possess a single attribute of power or authority over any church or association," even as they directed missionary efforts. Clearly, if it all practicable, mission societies wanted to utilize local and regional leadership, not overrule it.⁸⁰

Presbyterians struggled with the centralization of mission-society authority as well. The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) began centralizing its missionary efforts in the 1830s, complete with a Board of Foreign Missions, and a Standing Committee on home missions, which had significant powers since its founding in 1802. These groups could not rule autocratically. They both answered to the highest Presbyterian governing body, the General Assembly, which itself was made up of democratically-elected pastors and elders from churches throughout the nation.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Report and Proceedings of the Ohio Baptist Convention* (1835), 7 (ABHS, Atlanta).

Presbyterians struggled mightily with the implications of centralization as well. As their missionary efforts began to centralize in the 1830s with the creation of the Board of Foreign Missions, many Presbyterians, especially those in the South, objected. As with the Baptists, Kentucky would become a battleground for Presbyterians, one side leaning toward the nationalization and centralization of the missionary effort, and the other side leaning toward local control, or even opposition.

⁸¹ Another example of Presbyterians limiting their own national authority can be seen in their withdrawal from the Plan of Union. As detailed in Chapter One, Presbyterians and Congregationalists had

Still, any antimissionists, including men like John Taylor, remained wary of the trend toward the centralization of power in the missions system. “These great men,” he claimed, “are verging close to an aristocracy, with an object to sap the foundation of Baptist republican government.” These missionaries assumed “a free hold all over the United States” and asked “their vassals for money,” all the while considering themselves more worthy of “the name of preachers” than the local Baptist ministers. Their sending societies perpetually repudiated Baptist ecclesiology by taking their money and orders from national conventions and societies without the consent of the local church. For these ecclesiastical sins, Parker spared no judgment:

And this is what constitutes the whore of Rome, the mother of harlots and her daughters, the body of anti-Christ, and the reason why they are anti-christians, because they have refused to submit to the authority of Christ in his church, and have set themselves up in separate bodies, claiming the name, word, and authority which Christ has give to his church, the married wife.⁸²

Antimissionists accused mission societies of exploring even greater depths of depravity when they mingled their authority and affairs with those of secular governments. In doing so, mission societies became "a mongrel breed," a species formed from the unnatural joining of “the spirit of God” and the “spirit of the world.” Parker believed that Constantine had initiated this sinful meld fifteen centuries earlier when he “established religion by law” and thereby, poured “poison...into the church.”

shared missionary efforts, and governing efforts, in the early-19th century under a program called the Plan of Union. However, by the 1830s, such cooperation was gone, both because the Congregational church was quickly dying out, and because Presbyterians had decided that they should stick to their own denominational affairs, particularly in matters of government. One example of the PCUSA limiting its own power in this regard can be found when the Board of Missions rejected a request from a Congregational Church to send them a Presbyterian missionary. The board claimed that it was only authorized to "appropriate its funds" to Presbyterian churches. See Minutes of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, 11 August 1834, 40 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia).

⁸² Taylor, *Thoughts on Missions*, 10, 25, 12; Parker, *Views on the Two Seeds*, 36.

The missionary societies had simply continued the trend by pursuing “a course to mix or amalgamate the world and church together in the christian name or character.” Few antimissionists feared the rise of a true theocracy in America, in which church leaders actually become the leaders of the state. Many, however, feared that their denominations would develop into powers with theocratic tendencies, especially if they continued working with the state. Of course, as we have seen throughout the history of home missions in the early republic, these fears of church-state partnerships were not unfounded.⁸³

Postscript on the Antimission Movement after Black Rock

After the Black-Rock Convention in 1832, the Antimission Movement showed no signs of going away any time soon. In the western states of the Mississippi Valley, mission societies, led by the AHMS and ABHMS, increased their efforts exponentially. Their representatives, men like John Mason Peck and Jonathan Going, would preach, raise support, educate, train ministers, and aid in the building of a benevolent empire unprecedented in American history. All of this effort, however, continued to give impetus to strong opposition in the West, leaving pastors like Rev. Hall of Indiana wary about the "condition and future prosperity" of the nation.⁸⁴

Elsewhere, churches and associations which had initially supported the mission-society effort in the 1810s and 1820s, now found themselves torn apart in the wake of the Antimission Movement. The Baptists of the Miami Association of Ohio were one

⁸³ *Church Advocate*, 1 (Aug. 1830), 249 ("mongrel breed"); *Church Advocate*, 2 (Jan. 1831), 79 ("spirit of the world"); *Church Advocate*, 2 (Jan. 1831), 85 ("established religion").

⁸⁴ *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Baptist Convention* (1839), 5 (ABHS, Atlanta).

such group, who as late as 1834, had maintained a strong majority which supported the missionary effort. But in 1835, suspicion, which had been heating below the surface, exploded into the annual association meeting. The rising antimission party in the association proposed the following resolution:

Whereas there has been so much disagreement over societies of all kinds, *“Therefore, Resolved* – That this Association regards those said societies and institutions as having no authority, foundation or support in the SACRED SCRIPTURES; but we regard them as having had their origin in, and as belonging exclusively to the WORLD, and as such we have NO FELLOWSHIP for them, as being of religious character. Amendment – But do not hereby declare nonfellowship with those brethren, and churches, who now advocate them. – Votes for the resolution – yeas 40, nays 21.”

The resolution was "warmly debated" for eight hours, and ended in the antimission party urging "a split, or separation...as being essential to the peace and happiness of the Churches." The pro-mission society churches agreed, and spent the next day meeting in the Presbyterian meeting house instead. These four churches, which included the two largest churches in the region, would continue to meet as the Miami Association and maintain their support of mission societies. The antimission churches christened themselves the "Old School Predestinarian Regular Baptist Association" and went forward in their cause with as much zeal as the mission-supporters.⁸⁵

The Elkhorn Association of Kentucky had experienced the same sort of division ten years previous, and had continued in this split-fashion ever since. The antimission party followed the lead of men like John Taylor, and the missionary party continued to express its support for leaders like Isaac McCoy. By 1840, the Columbus Baptist

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Miami Baptist Association of Ohio (1835) (SBHLA, Nashville); *Proceedings of the Ohio Baptist Convention* (1837), (ABHS, Atlanta).

Association of Ohio (located due-east of the Miami Association) lamented that although mission societies were witnessing great gains, "nearly all" of the churches in the West contained "more or less of the anti-effort spirit."⁸⁶

As the antimission spirit spread throughout the nation in the years following the Black Rock Meeting of 1832, its most prominent leaders began to drift apart. For more than a decade, Theophilus Gates had lived in Philadelphia and functioned as a hub for criticism of American reform. However, in 1837, he began a new project, publishing a new paper called *The Battle-Axe*. In it, Gates advocated a form of experimental free love, inspired by John Humphrey Noyes, which promoted plural marriages and sexual relationships. In 1840, he and a small group of supporters left Philadelphia and moved west into rural Chester County, PA, where he left his antimission days behind him. After years of criticizing existing American denominations and their futile reform experiments, Alexander Campbell left the established denominations altogether. In 1832 he helped found the Disciples of Christ (the forerunners of the present-day Church of Christ), and invested his time from then-on into its success, with much less attention to the missionary affairs of his former Baptist home. By the 1830s, even John Taylor, while still suspicious of the missionary effort, had begun to question the ferocity of his previous attacks. His criticisms faded in the years leading up to his death in 1835.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Drawn from the minutes of the Elkhorn Association, 1835-1841 (SBHLA, Nashville). Isaac McCoy was invited to speak at the annual association meeting of the mission-society supporters in 1841. Minutes of the Columbus Baptist Association (formerly the Muskingum Baptist Association, until 1818) (1840), 12 (SBHLA, Nashville)

⁸⁷ For Gates and *The Battle-Axe*, see Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 169-73; and the online article on Theophilus Gates and Chester County at <http://chester-county-genealogy.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=9>, accessed 20 May 2012. For an overview of Campbell's role in the Antimission Movement, see Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*,

Daniel Parker, weary of controversy in Illinois and Indiana, began contemplating yet another move for his family. Along with his brother James, Parker made a prospective visit to Texas in October 1832. On March 16, 1833, they both took the oath of allegiance to the Mexican government and thus solidified their plans to move. Because the Mexican government only allowed the Catholic Church to plant new congregations in Texas, Parker exploited a loophole in the system. After returning to Illinois in the late spring of 1833, Parker and his congregation formed the Pilgrim Predestinarian Regular Baptist Church. In August 1833, these pilgrims and their Illinois-based congregation left for Texas, where they became the first Baptist church to ever reside in the state. While he held to his convictions about the dangers of the Home Missions Movement, the movement had not yet reached Texas en masse. As a result, Parker would spend the majority of his time on more pressing matters, including establishing a new homestead, and getting involved in Texas politics during the turbulent years of revolution, republic, and statehood in the 1830s and 1840s.⁸⁸

Conclusion

For many reasons, the Antimission Movement, unlike its leaders, would have incredible staying power. One surface-level, but very human reason for the prolonged conflict was its endless cycle of name-calling and slander. Both sides participated in the verbal brawl. Missionaries called antimissionists simple-minded, backwards, unoriginal,

65-80, 167-179; and Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 289-316. For John Taylor's later years, see Lambert, *The Rise*, 392 (footnote 4); Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, 77; Chester Young, introduction to *A History of Ten Baptist Churches*, 76.

⁸⁸ Dan Wimberly, *Frontier Religion: Elder Daniel Parker, His Religious and Political Life* (Austin, 2002), 91-95.

and primitive. Antimissionists had a whole host of epithets for missionaries: swindlers, horse leeches, ticks, and mongrels, among others. They claimed that mission societies, although benevolent on the surface, were actually vast, fraudulent networks, which worked mainly to acquire money and power. Not to be outdone, missionaries accused their opponents of the same thing. In 1834, one pastor in central Tennessee wrote to Jonathan Going to report a rumor he had heard: "that the famous Daniel Parker has agreed to furnish a certain number of persons as settlers in the Province of Texas for which he is to receive \$18,000." Parker, he claimed, was a hypocrite, "engaged in a wealthy Craft," just like the mission societies he reviled. Of course, neither side was fair to the other. Like most prolonged confrontations, the battle over missions gained energy as each side presumed the worst about the other.⁸⁹

Another human element which lent steam to the disagreement over missions was simple miscommunication and misunderstanding. Missionaries and their opponents often came from different worlds, with different worldviews, and simply did not communicate well with one another when it came to defining terms and goals. For example, members on both sides argued that only the proper ecclesiastical authorities should be involved in promoting missions; they just could never agree on who those "proper" authorities were.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Peter Gayle to Jonathan Going, 25 January 1834, and 10 February 1834, Jonathan Going Papers (ABHS, Atlanta). I have listed two dates, because it appears that Gayle began writing the letter on 25 January, but did not finish it and send it until 10 February.

⁹⁰ The argument about proper authority is at the root of most the antimission movement, so no specific citation is needed. Mission societies had been concerned about this issue since their beginnings as well. The Standing Committee of the PCUSA debated this upon their formation in 1802, and groups like the Missionary Society of Connecticut heard sermons which specifically addressed the issue. See A

Both sides also warned churches of the danger which the world of politics posed to the church. At the same time, members on both sides participated in politics, and criticized the other side for doing the same. Daniel Parker held elected state offices in Illinois and Texas, but criticized John Mason Peck for speaking too boldly on the Illinois House floor. Peck believed that "Pastors & Churches had better...let politics & national affairs alone," claiming that he "never knew an honest minister who turned politician but was duped at every corner." The Federalists had fallen for it during the War of 1812, and he was sure that Baptists would do the same. And yet, Peck, more than most other missionaries, walked in the world of politics for much of his life.⁹¹

The name-calling and the miscommunications, however, were merely symptomatic of the central problem: antimissionists saw in the mission system a competing *way of life*, and they would not stand for it. The mission system was whiggish in nature, akin to Henry Clay's outlook for the American future. Supporters looked to the frontiers and the peoples therein, and saw vast potential for church expansion, social reform, and ecclesiastical connections. For them, patriotism and nationalism translated into empowering groups like themselves to accomplish their national goals, all the while working alongside local and regional interests – an American System of missions.

The tens of thousands who opposed the mission system, as theologically and geographically diverse as they were, shared a common, alternate vision. If the

Sermon Delivered in the North Presbyterian Church in Hartford...by Appointment...of the Missionary Society of Connecticut (Hartford, 1815), 10-14.

⁹¹ Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists*, 271; John Mason Peck to Rufus Babcock, 27 June 1846, John Mason Peck Papers (ABHS, Atlanta) (emphasis in original).

missionaries walked in the way of Henry Clay, the antimissionists walked in the way of Andrew Jackson. They too exhibited patriotism and nationalism. But these ideals did not therefore translate into support for the *nationalization* of religious, political, or economic affairs. In other words, they needed no religious American system. Instead, they remained committed to a distinctly federal system, in which local bodies managed local affairs, national bodies managed national affairs, and both refrained from stepping into the other's sphere of influence.

In the mission system, antimissionists rightly saw a distinctly different way of viewing religious, economic, and political life. And this system was not passive. Missionaries and mission societies sought more than individual conversions. They sought what they believed followed from amassed individual conversions: total social transformation. Antimissionists of many types understood this all too well, and rose across the country, and across a half-century in protest.⁹²

⁹² See John Thomas McPherson, "John Mason Peck: A Conversionist Methodology for a Social Transformation on the American Frontier," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), 169-70. William McLoughlin identified a similar resistance to missionary societies and their transformative goals among the Cherokee antimissionists in *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 191.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

On April 29, 1845, the crowds present at the annual meeting of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in Providence, Rhode Island, mourned the death of one of the society's principal founders, its first Corresponding Secretary, and one of their greatest champions: Jonathan Going. In November of 1844, Going had passed away, and left a gaping hole in the American Baptist world. Of all the net losses his death precipitated, the members of the ABHMS believed that the greatest was to the "cause of Home Missions." It was this "object of Christian benevolence upon which his mind loved to dwell and to promote, which he was willing to labor and sacrifice more than for another." Even in his final moments, "his last prayers were offered for its prosperity." Surely, they reflected, "it is appropriate to pause a moment, and drop a tear of sorrow over the record of his death."¹

If Jonathan Going could have spoken at the meeting, he likely would have told them to shed a tear over a subject much bigger than himself in that year's meeting: the division of the American Baptist church. Although Baptist churches had always retained congregational independence, they had been cooperating with one another across the nation in missions (and other benevolence projects) since the formation of the Triennial Convention in 1814. When this convention began focusing on foreign missions exclusively, Jonathan Going had led the way in 1832 by establishing the American

¹ *Thirteenth Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1845), 5, 9.

Baptist Home Mission Society. But in 1845, this cooperation ended, when representatives from the southern states withdrew from both the Triennial Convention and the ABHMS, and formed their own organization, the Southern Baptist Convention. For the first time in American Baptist History, the denomination had split along decisively sectional lines.

By 1845, Baptists were the *third* of the three major Protestant denominations to divide in this way, having been preceded by the Presbyterians in 1837 and the Methodists in 1844. These divisions were not the first for any of them; each had experienced some small-scale separations during the early republic. Cumberland Presbyterians had left the Presbyterian Church in the early 1800s, Wesleyan Methodists left the national body in 1843, and Baptists had splintered into Freewills, Hardshells, Regulars, Predestinarians, and a host of other small groups. But until the late-1830s and 1840s, none of them had experienced a divide of this magnitude.

I want to contend that in the Presbyterian and Baptist cases, the subject of home missions played a central role in the schisms which tore them apart. Most accounts of these divisions have focused almost exclusively on the role of slavery. I do not intend to argue *against* this interpretation; slavery absolutely played a crucial role in each division. However, I do intend to argue that slavery was not the *only* central issue. In fact, for many of the people directly involved in the schisms, slavery was decidedly *not* the primary issue. Instead, that distinction belonged to the longstanding theological and

ecclesiastical disputes which had plagued their denominations, especially as they pertained to the practice and governance of home missions.²

Slavery and the Schisms

In May 1837, representatives from churches in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America gathered in Philadelphia for their annual General Assembly. Since the first meeting in 1789, this national assembly had functioned as a place for debate, judicial appeal, and denominational rulings among the churches, presbyteries, and synods of the denomination. But the 1837-meeting would reach unprecedented levels of conflict. At this meeting, the majority of the Assembly, led by Old School Presbyterians, voted to excise four entire synods: the synods of Utica, Geneva, Genesee, and the Western Reserve. These synods, and the presbyteries and churches therein, would no longer have any "ecclesiastical connexion" with the PCUSA. This decision effectively cut off dozens of churches and tens of thousands of members from the PCUSA. If any churches wished to rejoin the denomination, they would have to apply through nearby presbyteries which were still in good standing with the denomination.³

² I am omitting the story of the Methodist schism for two reasons. First, I have chosen not to focus on Methodists throughout the dissertation, primarily because they did not practice domestic missions in nearly the same way as almost every other Protestant group in America. To then talk about their division would be out of place. Secondly, although I would argue just as strongly that the Methodist Church also divided over theological and ecclesiastical disputes (rather than over slavery alone), their disputes were focused much more narrowly on the ecclesiastical authority of local churches and conferences, rather than on home missions or other benevolent projects. For a fascinating look at the intersections of slavery, church authority, and family history in the Methodist Schism of 1844, see Mark Anslander, *The Accidental Slaveowner: Revisiting a Myth of Race and Finding an American Family* (Athens, 2011).

³ Old School Presbyterians were so named in reference to the group they tended to oppose within the PCUSA, the New School Presbyterians. For decades, these two loosely-defined groups tended to

Eight years later, in May of 1845, 377 Baptists from eight southern states and Washington, D.C., met in Augusta, Georgia. They all opposed the policies of the Triennial Convention and American Baptist Home Mission Society in particular, and the general direction of northern and western Baptists as a whole. In protest, they announced the formation of their own denomination, a decidedly southern denomination: the Southern Baptist Convention.⁴

In both of these major denominational schisms, historians have consistently (and correctly) identified a common contributing factor: slavery. In each case, the denominations split along a more-or-less sectional line; the Southern Baptist Convention was obviously a southern secession, while the four excinded Presbyterian synods were all located in the New York and Old Northwest regions. In both cases, the denominations were left with one group that claimed neutrality on the issues of slavery, and a separated group which took a clear stand on one side of the issue. In the Presbyterian schism, it was the central body, the General Assembly, which purported to remain neutral on the matter of slavery, while the excinded synods publicly embraced antislavery and abolition. The central Baptist bodies tried to maintain the same sort of neutrality as the central Presbyterian groups, claiming that the subject of slavery was both an individual matter and a state matter, but not a matter for the church to rule on. In

divide on matters of theology and polity, the New Schoolmen tending toward liberalizing the church according to the changing American culture, the Old Schoolmen tending toward conserving the traditional interpretations of the Bible and Westminster Confession of Faith which the denomination had previously maintained. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: with an Appendix, A.D. 1837* (Philadelphia, 1837), 438-440, 444-446; Walter Posey, *The Presbyterian Church in the Old Southwest, 1778-1838* (Richmond, 1952), 120-22.

⁴ Walter Posey, *The Baptist Church in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1776-1845* (Lexington, KY, 1957).

protest of their perceived second-class treatment as slaveholders or supporters of slavery, southern churches simply left the central Baptist societies, rather than wait to be forced out.⁵

Home Missions and the Presbyterian Schism of 1837

Looking back at the 1830s and 1840s from this side of the Civil War, it is easy to see how these denominations' disagreements on the subject of slavery led them to schism, and led the country toward the same. Undoubtedly, slavery remains crucial for understanding these divides. However, while slavery certainly became the showcase point of contention within the Presbyterian and Baptist churches, that point arose within broader discussions about the organization, practice, and governance of home missions.⁶

Since 1789, the Presbyterian Church had been wrestling with at least three major issues, each of which contributed directly to the 1837 schism. The first, which I have already discussed, was slavery. The second was theological controversy, namely, the longstanding battle between Old School and New School Presbyterians within the PCUSA. For decades, Old Schoolmen had tended to hold conservative, strict interpretations of both the Bible and the Westminster Confession of Faith. New Schoolmen, on the other hand, tended to take a more liberal stance toward their faith and governing documents. In addressing contemporary issues, they sought ways to remain

⁵ Posey, *The Presbyterian Church*, 120; and Elwyn Smith, "The Role of the South in the Presbyterian Schism of 1837-38," *Church History*, 29 (Mar. 1960), 61. Monica Najjar argues that Baptists in the South, particularly in Kentucky, had been moving toward this decision for years. By relegating slavery to the political and civil realms, rather than the moral or ecclesiastical realms, they were able to simply avoid having to take a definitive stand either for or against slavery as an institution. See Monica Najjar, *Evangelizing the South: A Social History of Church and State in Early America* (New York, 2008).

⁶ Walter Posey goes so far as to conclude that in the Presbyterian schism, slavery played a "more incidental than direct" role. See Posey, *The Presbyterian Church*, 120.

faithful to the *spirit* of their governing documents, even if they strayed from following them to the letter. As early as 1811, Ezra Stiles Ely characterized the debate between these two sides not as "Old vs. New," but as his book title named it, a *Contrast Between Calvinism and Hopkinsianism*. These two ways of reading the Bible and practicing Presbyterianism, he argued, were not variations on a common theme; they were antithetical to one another.⁷

The contention between these two divergent modes of interpretation and cultural engagement pervaded every aspect of American Presbyterianism, including its internal conflicts. From the 1810s through the 1830s, major Presbyterian leaders would be caught up in these theological divisions. Nationally-recognized preachers like Nathaniel Taylor, Lyman Beecher, and Albert Barnes were all brought up on charges of liberalism (or even outright heresy) within their presbyteries, synods, and even as high as the General Assembly. In 1833, four years before the schism, Ashbel Green knew that "a separation must eventually take place." When it did, he hoped that such a damaging division would come only as a result of "a decided stand for the truth" against the "mess of error & corruption" infecting Presbyterian theology.⁸

⁷ Hopkinsianism was a loosely-defined theological movement in the early republic, named after Rev. Samuel Hopkins, an 18th-century Congregationalist pastor and theologian. While his brother-in-law Jonathan Edwards represented what came to be called "consistent Calvinism," Hopkins led the way in developing the theological framework which bears his name, Hopkinsianism, also known as the New Divinity. While it certainly had its roots in the theological lineage begun by the 16th-century reformer John Calvin, it took a more liberal approach to some of its key doctrines. See Joseph Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism and Reform in New England Between the Great Awakenings* (Eugene, 2008); and Elwyn Smith, "The Role of the South," 70.

⁸ Ashbel Green to Rev. Thomas Barr (Munroe, Ohio), 12 July 1833, Ashbel Green Papers (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia). One historian has argued that these theological divisions were actually the *decisive* factor in the 1837 schism. This is the argument of Charlie Vaught, a Ph.D. student at the University of Texas, Austin, who is currently completing a dissertation on the heresy trials of Albert Barnes, and the centrality of theology and biblical interpretation to the divide of the Presbyterian

While both slavery and theology played substantial roles in the coming divide, I want to propose that by 1837, what really set the stage for these two issues was the division over the governance and practice of Presbyterian benevolent activity, most notably domestic missions. Ashbel Green, a founding member of the Standing Committee on Missions, and one of the most prominent Presbyterian leaders of the nineteenth century, agreed with this assessment. In 1838, in his pamphlet on the history of Presbyterian missions, Green placed the historic disagreement over the practice, means, and governance of home missions at the center of the schism, which had occurred the year before he published it.

In Green's view, the denomination's troubles had started all the way back in 1796, with the formation of the New York Missionary Society. The New York Missionary Society (NYMS), you might recall, had been formed principally by Presbyterians, but also included substantial Congregational influence in both leadership and membership. Looking back, Green believed that this mixing of interdenominational governance, even for benevolent goals, had been wrongheaded:

The present writer can state from a distinct recollection of his feelings and language at the period now referred to, that although he highly approved the zeal of the founders of this [New York Missionary] Society, and was perfectly willing that they should prosecute their own views of duty, yet for himself he saw no need of any new organization, for missionary operations in the Presbyterian

Church, and subsequently, of the South and North. Vaught points out that in 1838, when the four excised synods failed in their attempt to rejoin the annual meeting of the General Assembly, it was Albert Barnes who led them out of the assembly hall. I first garnered these ideas from a paper Vaught presented at the Texas A&M Graduate Conference, March 2010, College Station, TX. For more on the 1835 trial of Albert Barnes, see Arthur J. Stansbury, *Trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes before the Synod of Philadelphia in Session at York, Pennsylvania, October, 1835, on a Charge of Heresy, Preferred Against Him by the Rev. George Junkin, as Reported for the New York Observer* (New York, 1836); and D.G. Hart and John Muether, "Turning Points in American Presbyterian History, Part 5: The Plan of Union, 1801," an article published online by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, http://www.opc.org/nh.html?article_id=27, accessed 6 June 2012.

church...in a word, it was his opinion, that every member of the Presbyterian church should use his influence, and all his means, for evangelizing the heathen, through the agency of the Supreme Judicatory of our Church.

In 1838, after the General Assembly excised four synods and thereby split the PCUSA, *neither* side would have disagreed with this assessment of the disagreement – that it came down to two divergent ways of expanding the Presbyterian church. They had been arguing about it for decades.⁹

In 1801, the leaders of the Congregational and Presbyterian denominations joined together in the Plan of Union. In order to maximize missionary and church-planting efforts on the frontier, the two groups set out plans to combine and coordinate their efforts, so as not to compete with one another. Part of this agreement entailed each group recognizing the pastoral and denominational authority of the other group in their given church or region. While a majority of Presbyterian leaders had assented to this arrangement (in addition to having already commended the NYMS), it remained a point of contention for many, from day one, through the Summer of 1837.¹⁰

Even the PCUSA's own, *internal* missionary organization – the Standing Committee on Missions – consistently sparked intradenominational controversy. As detailed in earlier chapters, the Standing Committee, upon its founding in 1802, met immediate resistance from some of the southern and western synods. Although these

⁹ Ashbel Green, *A Historical Sketch or Compendious View of Domestic and Foreign Missions in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1838), 46.

¹⁰ At the General Assembly of 1835, a committee appointed the previous year to prepare an assessment of the troubles facing the denomination, presented the "Act and Testimony." In it, they identified the Plan of Union as one of the earliest, and most important problems which had contributed to all other denominational problems since. See the "Act and Testimony" from the General Assembly of 1835 in Rev. Samuel J. Baird, ed., *A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia, 1856), 679-80.

synods appreciated the missionary work of the Standing Committee, they preferred to conduct their own missions, in their own regions, with their own locally-appointed missionaries. Between local presbyteries, regional synods, the Plan of Union, the Standing Committee, interdenominational mission societies like the NYMS, and the General Assembly, Presbyterians had a minefield of ecclesiastical government before them and their common desire to participate in missions.

By the mid-1820s, the question of who controlled the education, appointment, and sending of missionaries and pastors had become even more complicated. Extra-denominational reform societies had risen to prominence throughout the nation. The most crucial blow yet to the internal governing power of the PCUSA came in 1826, when representatives from Congregational, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed denominations came together to form the American Home Missionary Society (AHMS). The AHMS was an interdenominational voluntary organization, and had no official denominational support from the Presbyterian Church. Yet, by the 1830s, it had become clear to many of the denomination's leaders that it was exerting an undue amount of influence over their people.

In some areas, especially in the West, the AHMS and its missionaries (who were not official representatives of the PCUSA) held a better rapport with local Presbyterians than did the Standing Committee. In the late-1820s and early-1830s, churches and presbyteries began requesting that the General Assembly and the Standing Committee on Missions, rather than competing with the AHMS, should just join its work. Maybe,

some suggested, the PCUSA and AHMS could even combine their governing structures by creating "a union of the two Boards."¹¹

Over and over again, the Standing Committee and the General Assembly rejected these requests for a fusion of their missionary efforts with the AHMS. Such a decision, they claimed, would be "inexpedient" and irresponsible. It was the duty of the denomination "to continue to prosecute her Missionary operations by her own Board, appointed by & responsible to her general Assembly alone without any amalgamation with any voluntary association." Already, by merely approving of the work of the AHMS, many denominational leaders believed Presbyterians were losing control of their own missions. If they took the step of officially combining their governing bodies and efforts, they would eventually lose control of the entire denomination.¹²

In 1834, the General Assembly appointed a group of nine of these concerned leaders, including Ashbel Green, to prepare an "Act and Testimony to the Churches" regarding the crises facing the church. In 1835, the committee made its report, identifying three major problems: the failure of the denomination to allow presbyteries to conduct their own internal affairs, a general trend toward liberalism in biblical and theological thought, and the "existence and operation within our Church of [the American Home] Missionary Society," which was "in no sense amenable [to

¹¹ Standing Committee, 26 December 1828. For other examples of these requests for the Standing Committee to combine its efforts with the AHMS, see the exchange between the Cincinnati Presbytery and the Board of Missions in the Minutes of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, 10 August 1830, 14 September 1830, and 9 November 1830 (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia); and the exchange between a church in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Corresponding Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, 8 April 1831, Papers of the American Home Missionary Society, Reel 104.

¹² Standing Committee, 29 December 1828, 440-441; and 9 March 1830, 457; Posey, *The Presbyterian Church*, 119.

Presbyterian] ecclesiastical jurisdiction." This division of authority and jurisdiction had led to problems in virtually every sector of the church. By the mid-1830s, non-Presbyterian groups were leading Presbyterian missions, printing Presbyterian Sunday School material, and training Presbyterian ministers and missionaries. Presbyterian leaders, especially Old Schoolmen, feared for the denomination's future.¹³

When the General Assembly finally voted to excise four major northern synods in 1837, the subject of slavery was not even mentioned. Instead, the Assembly focused on theology and ecclesiology, and how these worked out specifically in benevolent activities like home missions. So, in addition to voting on the expelling of the four offending synods, the majority of the Assembly also voted to separate the denomination from "the so called American Home Missionary Society, and the American Education Society," two groups "injurious to the peace and purity of the Presbyterian Church." From then on, their own boards of missions and education would be the only acceptable agents of the denomination.¹⁴

Home Missions and the Baptist Schism of 1845

In the early 1840s, Baptist churches all over the North and West were also struggling through conflicts over slavery and missions within their denomination. Some came out clearly, condemning slavery in general, and the practice of slaveholding as incompatible with missionary work. For example, the Miami Association of Ohio

¹³ From the General Assembly of 1835, collected in Rev. Samuel J. Baird, ed., *A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia, 1856), 678-79.

¹⁴ Posey, *The Presbyterian Church*, 120-122; Smith, "The Role of the South," 60; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1837), 442-443.

reported that its churches were holding "monthly concerts [of prayer] for the success of Missions and the abolition of Slavery." The churches of the Westfield Baptist Association of western Massachusetts felt so strongly about the incompatibility of the two that they refused to continue giving money to the ABHMS until it took a public stand against slavery. Sure enough, in 1844, they donated money to a total of eight benevolent societies that year, none of it to the ABHMS.¹⁵

On the other hand, many Baptist churches, and the ABHMS itself, tried to remain neutral on the issue of slavery. They offered neither strong denunciations of it, nor open support for it. For example, some of the churches of the Cayuga Association and Black River Baptist Associations of New York decided that while slavery was a sinful issue, it was still a private issue. Because of this, they declined to offer harsh criticism or to "interfere" in what they believed was outside of the church's sphere of influence. The ABHMS led the way in this practice of indecision. Up through their annual meeting in April of 1844, the organization hardly even mentioned the existence of slavery in their reports. In fact, the only the subject of slavery came up was in the reports on the status of *missions* to slaves in southern states like Texas and Florida.¹⁶

Southern Baptists, however, were not so silent. For years, although they contributed their share of money to the ABHMS, they complained that they had not received a proportional return on their investment in the form of missionaries. Instead, the ABHMS had continually sent a disproportionate amount of money and missionaries

¹⁵ Minutes of the Miami Association of Regular Baptists (1844), 13; and Minutes of the Westfield Baptist Association (MA) (1844), 8-10 (SBHLA, Nashville).

¹⁶ Minutes of the Cayuga Association (NY) (1844), 9-10; and Minutes of the Black River Baptist Association (NY) (1844), 6 (SBHLA, Nashville); *Twelfth Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1844), 59.

to the western states and territories, the area which *they* believed would determine the future of the nation. Some suspected that this unfair treatment in the missionary realm came as a result of their approval of, and participation in the practice of slavery.

In October 1844, in an attempt to force the issue, the Georgia Baptist Convention requested that the ABHMS appoint Rev. James E. Reeve, a Georgian native, as a missionary within Georgia. This request has come to be known as the Georgia Test Case. A "test" is exactly what the Georgia Baptist Convention hoped it would be, and what the ABHMS had tried to avoid for years. In their request, the Georgia Convention made it clear to the ABHMS that Rev. Reeve was a slaveholder, and that they intended to bring the issue into the light. They wrote: "We wish his appointment...as it will stop the mouth of gainsayers...There are good brethren among us, who...are hard to believe that you will appoint a slaveholder as a Missionary, even when the funds are supplied by those who wish such an appointment." Surely, the Georgia Convention argued, the ABHMS would do no such thing.¹⁷

The Executive Board of the ABHMS saw this request as the setup which it was, and found a way to respond with its characteristic-of-late avoidance:

We disclaim attributing to our Georgia brethren a design to *disturb the deliberations of the Board* by introducing the subject of slavery through the medium of their application, but such, evidently, is its tendency. In the opinion of several members of the Board, the application seeks the appointment, not in the usual manner, merely of a Missionary, but of a slaveholder, and is designed as a test whether the Board will appoint a slaveholder as a Missionary...The appointment of Missionaries, constitutionally eligible, and recommended according to our established rules, without the introduction of extraneous

¹⁷ *Minutes of the Meetings of the American Baptist Home Mission Society and of Its Executive Committee*, 7 Oct. 1844, in Joseph Early, Jr., ed., *Readings in Baptist History: Four Centuries of Selected Documents* (Nashville, 2008), 100-101.

considerations calculated to disturb our deliberations, this Board are during the period of their appointment, sacredly bound in equity and justice, to make...But when an application is made for the appointment of a slaveholder, or an abolitionist, or an anti-slavery man, as such, or for appropriations to fields where the design of the applicant is apparently to test the action of the Board in respect to the subjects of slavery or anti-slavery, their official obligation either to act on the appointment or to entertain the application, ceases. Therefore,

Resolved, That in view of the preceding considerations it is not expedient to introduce the subjects of slavery or anti-slavery into our deliberations, nor to entertain applications in which they are introduced.

Resolved, That taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case, we deem ourselves not at liberty to entertain the application for the appointment of Rev. James E. Reeve.

The ABHMS thought they had dodged the issue, but less than one month later, the Baptist State Convention of Alabama brought it back into the open. In November 1844, the Alabama convention wrote a letter of protest to the ABHMS, claiming that Reeve, Georgians, and slaveholders in general were being unfairly treated by the organization. Therefore, until they received "all the privileges and immunities" due them, they refused to send any money for missions out of the state of Alabama, effectually withdrawing themselves from the ABHMS.¹⁸

Realizing that they could no longer keep an "open" policy in home missions strategy and appointments, the Executive Board of the ABHMS finally took a stand on the issue. In August 1845, in *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, a nationally-circulating periodical, they published their response to the Baptist State Convention of Alabama:

In the thirty years in which the Board has existed no slaveholder, to our knowledge, has applied to be a Missionary...If, however, one should offer himself as a Missionary, having slaves, and should insist on retaining them as his property, we could not appoint him. One thing is certain; we can never be a party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In May 1845, just before this response was published, the ABHMS had already begun preparing at its annual meeting for an expected "amicable dissolution of the Society" and the formation of a "separate organization at the South."¹⁹

Sure enough, in early May, at the same time as the ABHMS was meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, that very dissolution was taking place. From May 8-12, 1845, 377 delegates from Baptist churches Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, and the District of Columbia met together in Augusta, Georgia, to form a new denomination: the Southern Baptist Convention. While slavery had precipitated the division, it was the long-standing divisions over the practice and governance of denominational affairs – like home missions – which provided the context. With the formation of their own denomination, and their own mission societies, southerners no longer had to wade into the controversy.²⁰

Conclusion

When the American Baptist Home Mission Society met in 1846, without the support of the majority of its former southern contingency, it approved unprecedented changes to its constitution. Up until 1845, under the ABHMS constitution, "any Baptist

¹⁹ Response written by the President of the Executive Board, Dan. Sharp, published in *The Baptist Missionary Magazine*, 25 (Aug. 1845), 220, in Joseph Early, Jr., ed., *Readings in Baptist History*, 101-103; *Thirteenth Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1845), 6-7.

²⁰ By 1846, there were an estimated 68,000 people who were members of churches which identified themselves as antimissionist. The majority of these people were in the South, especially strong in states like Kentucky and Alabama. See Posey, *The Baptist Church*, 153-54; Sweet, *The Baptists*, 66. For an excellent survey of the work of all types of reform societies in the South and West, and southerners' resentment of them, see John W. Kuykendall, *Southern Enterprise: The Work of National Evangelical Societies in the Antebellum South* (Westport, 1982).

Missionary Society" could become auxiliary to the national organization by simply paying its surplus funds into the central treasury, and regularly communicating with the corresponding secretary. Local mission societies all over the country took advantage of this program. In return, the ABHMS would see to it that each local mission society would play a part in the national effort, including through requesting and receiving missionaries for its area.²¹

Under the amended constitution of 1846, membership, participation, and authority would not come so easily to local societies. No longer would local societies be allowed to join as auxiliaries based merely upon a request and donation; southerners had ruined these privileges for everyone. Instead, an Executive Board, appointed by the Officers and Life Directors of the ABHMS, would maintain complete control over the mission system. They would "appoint Agents and Missionaries; fix their compensation; direct and instruct them concerning their particularly fields and labors, [and] make all appropriations to be paid out of the treasury." All of this activity would occur with *regard* to local requests, but with *no obligation* to fulfill them.²²

In both the Presbyterian and Baptist schisms, home missions had played a foundational role in setting the stage for division. For decades, members of both denominations had disagreed with one another over theology, ecclesiology, benevolent practice, and slavery. In the 1830s and 1840s, all of these subjects converged in the

²¹ For example, see the 1845-copy of the Constitution of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, as printed in *Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1845), 3.

²² "Constitution of the American Baptist Home Mission Society," printed in *Fourteenth Report of the American Baptist Home Mission Society* (New York, 1846), 3.

subject of home missions. When they did, none of the major denominations survived intact. Within two more decades, neither would the nation.

Throughout this dissertation, my overall goal has been twofold. First, I have wanted to tell the story of the home missions movement, a longstanding, wealthy, nationwide, interdenominational movement, which, despite its prominence, had somehow managed to remain absent from the historical literature. Second, my goal has been to show how an understanding of this religious movement can enlighten our understanding of the broader socio-political world of the early republic. From church-state relations, to Indian affairs, to trends of nationalization and centralization, and finally, to the sectional division of the nation in the late-antebellum period, I hope this story of the home missions movement has done just that.

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