

Geographical Considerations

1. In the South - primarily Anglican
2. In New England - primarily Congregational (though connected)
3. In the Middle Colonies (the heart of American Presbyterianism)
 - > By 1700 - New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia
 - > Churches planted by ministers from New England Puritanism, Scotland via Ireland (fleeing persecution),

Forging Connectionalism

1. A word about "presbyterial" church government
 - > Local level -> the Session (composed of minister(s) and elders)
 - > Geographic proximity -> the Presbytery (delegates from the local Sessions)
 - > Broader yet -> the Synod (and/or General Assembly) - (delegates from the Presbyteries)
2. First presbytery organized in 1706 - the Presbytery of Philadelphia
 - > Rev. Francis Makemie
 - > Both New England Puritan and Scotch-Irish strains were present.
3. First synod organized in 1716 - encompassing four presbyteries
NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD

Doctrinal Character and Disputes

1. The *Adopting Act of 1729* - Subscription to the Westminster Standards
 - > Some debate even to today regarding the significance of this - *Full or System Subscription?*
2. Decisions of 1730 & 1736 - point towards "strict/full" subscription

The Great Awakening and its impact (c. 1734-1744)

1. Two different reactions
 - > "New Side" - supportive of the Great Awakening (though critical of excesses). Gross generalization = concerned about formalism and lack of vital religion among clergy. More tolerant of ecumenical practice in participating in the Awakening. Not as concerned over "church order" and "precisionism."
 - > "Old Side" - in opposition to the Great Awakening. Gross generalization = more denominationally oriented. Concerned about proper "church order." Demanded proper education of ministers.
2. 1741 - Old Side/New Side split. Caustic accusations particularly from the New Side (Rev. Gilbert Tennent)
3. 1758 - Old Side/New Side reunion. Repentance on both sides. (Rev. Gilbert Tennent)

Forming of the Presbyterian Church USA

1. American Revolution/War for Independence

> Rev. John Witherspoon - 6th president of College of NJ (Princeton). Member of the continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

2. 1788 - forming of the first General Assembly. (419 Churches; 16 presbyteries; 4 synods)

From New York to the Carolinas. New name = *The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Westminster Standards amended regarding the civil magistrate.

Moving into the 19th Century - the Second Great Awakening

1. Lasts a much longer time than the First Great Awakening (1790's to the 1830's)

2. Has a significant geographic focus - westward expansion

3. The Beginnings of the Second Great Awakening

> Begins with Calvinistic roots

> Begins as a movement *in the church* - Preaching (1 Hour); Prayer (45-60 min.);

significant Bible reading of OT & NT; Psalm singing.

> By 1800 takes another shape and form - the rise of the "Camp Meeting". Moves from in the church to apart from the church and takes on a unique life and style all of its own. Loud & fast songs implemented; Shorter preaching; Shorter prayers; the "altar call" replaces the Lord's Supper. This has a profound influence on the worship of the Church.

> 1801 - *Plan of Union* between PCUSA and the New England Congregationalists. This plan arises out of a desire to cooperate in missionary endeavors on the frontier.

19th Century Challenges and Problems

1. 1810 - The formation of the *Cumberland Presbyterian Church*. They break off from the PCUSA in a desire to lower the educational requirements for ministers and downplay the need to adhere to doctrinal standards - particularly Calvinistic emphases. This was driven by a zeal to "keep up" with the Baptists and Methodists.

2. Problems from the 1801 *Plan of Union*

> Influence of the "New Divinity" coming out of New England Congregationalists. A denial of *Original Sin* and a holding to a *Moral Government Theory* of the atonement.

> The *Doctrine of the Church* (ecclesiology) thrown into confusion. With the "Presbyterianism" agreement church polity, structure, and oversight became secondary issues. Hence there was the rise of multiple "extra-ecclesiastical" societies. (ABS; ATS; etc.)

3. The rise of the *Old School/New School* division (1837-1869)

> Old School party - opposed to lax polity; lax doctrine; parachurch organizations.

> New School party - pro Plan of Union; open to New Divinity; open to parachurch organizations.

> Key doctrinal issues surrounded the downplaying or denial of Original Sin. The Albert Barnes case and the Lyman Beecher case (1829-1835).

> 1837 - Led to the Old School adherents annulling the *1801 Plan of Union* and expelling four New School synods from the PCUSA (~550 congregations and ~500 ministers).

4. The Old School Church - the continuing PCUSA

> Princeton Seminary (founded in 1812) - the bastion of Reformed Orthodoxy in the North. Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge.

> Columbia Seminary, SC (founded in 1828) and Union Seminary, VA (founded in 1823) - the bastions of Reformed Orthodoxy in the South. James Henly Thomwell and Robert Lewis Dabney.

> By 1861 had founded 49 colleges/universities in 29 states.

5. The *North/South* split (1861) - the *Civil War or War Between the States*

> Divided views on slavery and how to go about eliminating it - immediate emancipation vs. gradual emancipation.

> Split over the "Gardiner Spring Resolution" which stated that the Church was obligated to submit to the Federal Government as defined by the Constitution. This resolution was passed less than five weeks after the bombardment of Fort Sumter (4/12/1861). The Southern Church believed this to be an improper imposition on them.

> Once the southern states secede the issue of a theological split recedes to the background. It was only natural that the Southern Church should be re-organized along the lines of the new nation in which it dwelt.

> The result? Two "Old School" Presbyterian Churches: the PCUSA, Old School becomes the Northern Church. The Old School Southern Church becomes the *Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America* (after the war it would become the *Presbyterian Church - United States: PCUS*).

6. The *Old School and New School Reunion* in the North - 1869

> This is a reunion on New School terms - the New School had not really changed theologically. Charles Hodge opposed the reunion - one of only 9 negative votes in opposition to 285 votes in favor of reunion at the General Assembly.

> Why this reunion? With the bloody horrors of the Civil War in the backdrop, the *peace and unity* of the church was stressed at the expense of the *purity* of the church. "Union was in the air, the polity questions had been solved, and the doctrinal ones no longer mattered as much."

Moving into the 20th Century - the Triumph of the New School & Liberalism

1. By 1910 Liberalism/biblical higher-criticism overtakes the seminaries of the PCUSA with the exception of Princeton.

2. Last hurrah for the Old School were the heresy trials of Charles Briggs in 1893 and Henry Preserved Smith in 1894.

3. In 1903 the Westminster Standards are revised - softening the Calvinism of the Standards and paving the way for a reunion with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1906 Note well that the CPC was decidedly Arminian!

4. The Conservatives begin to loose influence and fight for a certain least common denominator to maintain some measure of fidelity. They manage to influence the General Assemblies of 1910, 1916, and 1923 to mandate that all ministerial candidates must affirm five fundamentals as "essential doctrines of the Word of God": 1) The inerrancy of the Bible. 2) The virgin birth of Christ. 3) The vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ to satisfy divine justice. 4) The physical resurrection of Christ. 5) The miracles of Christ. Note that this is NOT a raising of the

bar, but a lowering of the bar. The Church no longer paid any attention to her own Confessional Standards.

5. The liberals respond in 1924 with the craning of the "Auburn Affirmation." In this affirmation it is stated that these five fundamentals "are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures." Amazingly, this affirmation was signed by 1,274 ministers. Harry Emerson Fosdick and William Sloane Coffin lead the way here.

The Stage is Set for the Formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

- > 1925 GA - refuses to deal with the Auburn Affirmation
- > 1927 GA - removes the mandate to affirm the 5 points
- > 1929 GA - reorganizes the board of Princeton Seminary, appointing Auburn Affirmation men
- > 1929 - Machen Wilson, Allis, Van Til leave Princeton and found Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia to carry on the Old Princeton tradition.
- > 1933 - Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions formed by Machen to counter the PCUSA's sending of heretical missionaries into the field.
- > 1934 GA - orders all ministers to divest themselves of involvement in the IBPFM
- > 1935 - Machen tried by Presbytery of New Brunswick.
- > 1936 GA - Machen's appeal lost - suspension from the ministry upheld.
- > 1936 - June 11: the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (34 ministers and 17 elders)

Comments on the Southern Church - PCUS

- > Remains doctrinally faithful longer than the Northern Church. They were far more wary of biblical higher criticism, being little affected by it until the 1930's.
- > Administrative changes: Women are added to the GA's Executive Committee in the 1920's. Church becomes more and more bureaucratic.
- > Early 1900's - a decline in evening worship and elimination of Wednesday service. Introduce the celebration of Christmas and Easter. Become more liturgical.
- > By the mid 20th century many became alarmed at the growing liberalism and modernism. Major issues included: Ecumenicity; lack of subscription; laxness in divorce, civil disobedience, and abortion; adoption of social gospel; refashioning of worship.
- > 1963 - Embraces the ordination of women.
- > All of the above leads to the formation of the Presbyterian Church in America – PCA (40,000 members initially) in 1973.
- > The mainline PCUS pursues its liberalism and reunites with the Northern church in 1983 to form what is now the PCUSA.