

THE NEW SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN DISRUPTION IN NORTH CAROLINA

HAROLD M. PARKER, JR.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America suffered its first major division in 1837. In that year the General Assembly was rent into two nearly equal divisions, each claiming to be the true church. Inasmuch as both retained the same name, they are better remembered by the designations "Old School" and "New School." Several factors were responsible for the schism—theological, ecclesiastical, ethnic and social. For the most part the congregations, presbyteries and synods in the South remained with the Old School; however there were some exceptions, not the least of which occurred in East Tennessee, where the Hopkinsian theology and the anti-slavery sentiments of the mountain folk tended to align that region with the New School. It has been generally assumed that North Carolina Presbyterians remained untouched by the fissure, with all going into the Old School. However recent research points out that in Western North Carolina the New School became strong enough to become a disruptive factor in the development of Presbyterianism in general, and Old School Presbyterianism in particular. It is this development in ecclesiastical history that this paper discusses.

Like many denominations, the strength of structural Presbyterianism lies in its connectional system. This was particularly true in the early 19th century as the church began to spread across the heretofore unoccupied areas of the continent. The ecclesiastical judicatories of the Presbyterian Church were used for many purposes, not the least of which was the founding and supporting of new churches. Quite in contrast to today, where most of the planning for home missions is done by denominational headquarters somewhat removed from the field, in those days much of the planning and implementation of home missions and church extension depended upon individual missionaries who were supported by presbyteries and synods.¹ In 1835 the Synod of North Carolina decided to undergird the western movement by dividing some of her presbyteries so that two new ones would be orientated to the west. Synod also approached the Synod of South

HAROLD M. PARKER, JR. is Associate Professor of History, Western State College of Colorado, Gunnison, Colorado.

¹A word on Presbyterian nomenclature. The General Assembly is the term for the highest church judicatory, which embraces the entire United States and meets once a year. A Synod normally embraces a state or a major portion thereof, meets annually, and is composed of at least three Presbyteries. A Presbytery is normally composed of the ministers and churches in several contiguous counties. The Session is the governing body of Elders and the Pastor of a local church, and is responsible to the Presbytery.

Carolina and Georgia to release Bethel Presbytery, which lay just over the line in Palmetto State. The synod to be formed in the western part of the two states would be known as the Western Synod of the Carolinas. It would be composed of Concord Presbytery, Bethel Presbytery, and a new Presbytery which was erected at that 1835 meeting known as Morganton Presbytery, which had been formed out of the western part of Concord Presbytery.² Morganton Presbytery was originally composed of the churches and ministers in the Counties of Ashe, Buncombe, Buke, Haywood, Lincoln, Macon, Rutherford, Wilkes and Yancey.³ However, the proposed new synod was not erected at that time—a circumstance which would have ominous repercussions.

The erection of the Presbytery of Morganton in 1835 came at a crucial period in Presbyterian history, for the tension between the Old and New School parties was getting quite taut. For several years the annual General Assembly had been threatened with a possible division. As late as 1835 it had been able to keep the church intact. But after the New School-dominated General Assembly of 1836 had rescinded some of the Old School-controlled legislation of 1835, the latter party laid the groundwork for the takeover of the 1837 Assembly by calling for a Convention to meet prior to the Assembly. The commissioners from Morganton Presbytery to the 1837 General Assembly were instructed to attend the Convention,⁴ and it was in the Convention that the plans were made to relieve the Church of the odious New School element that had for so long disturbed the peace of Zion. By the time the Assembly adjourned some days later, four New School-dominated synods had been excinded, embracing some 60,000 members.⁵ The Old School party justified its actions on the grounds that Presbyterianism had been saved; the New School group denounced them because the four synods and 60,000 members had been cut off from the Church without trial or even recourse to one. When the New School commissioners from the excinded synods appeared at the 1838 General Assembly to take their seats, they were denied them; they thus withdrew and organized their own General Assembly.

The reaction across the Church to the actions varied, of course,

²MSS "Minutes," Synod of North Carolina, October 16, 1835, pp. 328-329. These minutes are located at the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina.

³Ibid., pp. 339-340. Other counties would be added from time to time, but to no practical avail.

⁴MSS "Minutes," Morganton Presbytery, March 17, 1837, p. 37. These minutes are located at Montreat, N.C.

⁵Almost any history of American Presbyterianism will contain a discussion of this schism. Two excellent presentations are found in Jacob Harris Patton, *A Popular History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: R. S. Mighill, 1900), pp. 416-455 and Ernest Trice Thompson, *Presbyterians in the South*, 3 vols. (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1963-1973), 1:350-412.

according to whether a particular court was Old or New School. Sessions, presbyteries, synods—at every level judicatories were passing resolutions praising or condemning the actions of the Assemblies of 1837 and 1838. Morganton Presbytery, along with all of the Tarheel presbyteries, supported the Old School, and adopted a series of resolutions supporting the excinding legislation by a 12-3 vote. The negative votes were cast by the Rev. Christopher Bradshaw, the Rev. George A. Mathes and Ruling Elder Charles Moore of the Asheville church. These men entered a formal protest to Presbytery's action, which was admitted to the minutes of Presbytery. The protest suggests some of the context of Presbytery's resolutions.

The undersigned members of Morganton Presbytery would respectfully enter their solemn protest against a series of resolutions passed by Presbytery sustaining the action of the last General Assembly in reference to the Plan of Union, and the four excinded Synods:—and this for the following reasons, viz:

1st. We view the Plan of Union as a compact between the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. This Plan contains certain proposals and conditions to which the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches consented and on which they had acted in concert for more than thirty years. Here is the consent of both parties to the same proposals and conditions, which constitutes a compact. The Gen. Assembly being only one party was not competent to do away with the agreement, without the consent of the other party. We feel therefore that the abrogating act was violation of covenant obligation on the part of the Assembly, and therefore cannot sustain the resolutions of the Presbytery approving it. If it should be said that this compact was unconstitutional and so null and void from the beginning, we reply, if so the Presbyteries were the proper tribunals to declare its unconstitutionality. But this declaration they never made, but on the contrary by their *tacit consent* then had been declaring the Plan of Union to be constitutional for thirty six [sic] years before its abrogation.

2. The separation of the four Synods from the Presbyterian Church does not seem to follow from the abrogation of the Plan of Union. That Plan makes no provision either directly or indirectly for the organization of Presbyteries and Synods, and consequently neither Presbyteries nor Synods ever were or ever could be formed by the Plan of Union. The declaration then of the Assembly that these Synods were out of the Presbyterian Church, as soon as the Plan of Union was done away, we regards [sic] as

groundless, and think, according to the Assembly's own showing, that the excinding of these Synods was without a foundation. Consequently we are opposed to the resolutions of Presbytery passed to sustain the action of the Assembly on this point.

3. In the fifth resolution it is admitted that the Abrogation of the Plan of Union should not have excluded those churches in the four Synods that were strictly Presbyterian. Now as in those Synods, there were some churches and ministers, and these not a few, indisputably Presbyterian; and that were never any thing else: and as these without discrimination, were cast out of the Presbyterian Church, and declared never to have been in that church either in form or in fact, we therefore solemnly protest against the adoption of the sixth resolution, which proposes for the sake of peace and good order, as well as the purity of the church to sustain the action of the Assembly.— We cannot give our assent to any such resolution, because God's Word forbids us to "do evil that good may come."

4th. We protest against the action of the Presbytery in these resolutions, because in our humble opinion, they support measures which are at war with the principles of our excellent discipline which guarantees to every nominal member of our church a fair and impartial trial on a charge constitutionally preferred.

For these and many other similar reasons, we pray this our solemn protest to be entered on the records of Presbytery—All which is respectfully submitted.

(Signed) G. A. Mathes
C. Bradshaw
Chas. Moore^e

Only in Morganton Presbytery in the Synod of North Carolina was there any protest against the action of the Old School majority in its excision of the New School. But since the Presbytery was located in the mountains, and there was a general trend in the South for mountainous regions to gravitate toward the New School, the presence of a New School minority certainly does not appear as a surprise. Both Mathes and Bradshaw had been ordained by Union Presbytery, which

⁶"Minutes," Morganton Presbytery, March 16, 1838, pp. 56-58. The Plan of Union referred to was an agreement of cooperation on the western frontier between Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in 1801. Above all other factors for the Old School-New School schism in 1837 looms the Plan of Union. Almost all other causes flow from it, one way or another. The text can be found in numerous sources. See Maurice Armstrong, Lefferts A. Loetscher, and Charles A. Anderson, eds., *The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 102-104.

was located in East Tennessee, and the ministerial roll of that presbytery is sprinkled with others bearing the name of Mathes and Bradshaw.⁷ Mathes had also studied theology at the Southern and Western Theological Seminary, located at Maryville, Tennessee, under the venerable Dr. Isaac Anderson,⁸ who was noted for his Hopkinsian views,⁹ which alone was sufficient to brand one as New School.

The number of ministers in a presbytery in those days was never very large, and thus the protest of even a minority of two could spell trouble. This was particularly true in those days when theological and ecclesiastical matters were so sensitive. Not only did Morganton Presbytery approve the action of the 1837 Assembly in excising the New School, but in 1839 it also approved the 1838 Assembly's action in keeping the door closed against them:

Inasmuch [sic] as the Presbyterian church has for a number of years been disturbed by teachers of false doctrine, and in many parts of it has been characterized by a manifest departure from Presbyterian order; and in as much [sic] as the Gen' Assemblies of 1837 & 1838 have been faithfully engaged in efforts to counteract the disastrous consequences of such doctrine, and restore our beloved Zion to her primitive order, Therefore,

Resolved:—That this Presbytery do cordially approve of the measures adopted by the Assembly of 1837 and carried out in that of 1838.¹⁰

Negative votes again were cast by Mathes, Bradshaw and Moore.

Since Presbytery had already expressed itself relative to the actions of the 1837 General Assembly, and a protest had been registered at that time, the historian must ponder why a similar resolution was passed again, within such a short time, and on a very tender subject. If its purpose was to smoke out the dissenters, the results were soon achieved, for at the following Fall Meeting of Presbytery the following preamble and resolutions were presented, with the names of additional Elders attached:

Whereas at the Sessions of the Assembly of '37 that Assembly did assume the supreme Legislative, Judicial and Executive powers of the Presbyterian Church in these United States, and by

⁷J. E. Alexander, *A Brief History of the Synod of Tennessee from 1817 to 1887* (Philadelphia: McCalla & Company, 1890), pp. 133-139.

⁸Samuel Tyndale Wilson, *Isaac Anderson: Founder and First President of Maryville College, a Memorial Sketch* (Maryville, Tennessee: n. p., 1932), p. 161.

⁹John J. Robinson, *Memoir of Rev. Isaac Anderson, D.D., Late President of Maryville College, and Professor of Didactic Theology* (Knoxville: J. Adison Rayl, 1860), pp. 194-261.

¹⁰"Minutes," Morganton Presbytery, March 15, 1839, p. 97.

various acts and resolutions have transcended the power delegated to them by the Constitution of the Church.

1st. They make the doings of the Assembly of '37 the basis of all future action in all the lower Judicatures of the Church.

2d. They make obedience to the doings of that Assembly the test of Church membership or of Presbyterianism.

3rd. They assume the power of organizing and dissolving Synods, Presbyteries and Churches without their consent.

4th. They have constituted minorities to be Synods, Presbyteries and Churches, if they will support the doings of '37.

5th. They have broken their covenant with Congregationalists founded on the Plan of Union of 1801, which Plan was first proposed by the General Assembly and was ratified by legal negotiations of the two bodies; and had been acted on in good faith for more than thirty years.

6th. They cut off four Synods without form of trial and did attempt to exclude five hundred ministers, and more than sixty thousand communicants from the Church, declaring not only that they were out of the Church, but that they were never in the Church, to the great prejudice of the veracity of the Presbyterian Church.

7th. They have attempted to dissolve all our American institutions, but three, thus showing themselves unfriendly to our republican institutions.

And whereas the Presbytery of Morganton has by various acts and strategies determined to carry into effect the arbitrary and unconstitutional measures of the Assemblies of '37 and '38, against which measures we, George A. Mathes, Christopher Bradshaw, and Charles Moore, did most solemnly protest in March '38: and whereas there was an Assembly formed according to the provisions of the constitution of our church in '38; and has continued its sessions in 39, we therefore, by these presents, with any of our brethren who may join us, declare ourselves to the Church and to the world to be Constitutional Presbyterians, and we do feel ourselves most solemnly bound by our ordination vows, to resist in all proper ways the infringements of the arbitrary powers assumed by the Assemblies of 37 and 38: and whereas we have waited in vain for a reconciliation of the conflicting parties in our beloved Zion, we feel ourselves constrained thus to declare our

standing and Ecclesiastical connexion to the church and to the world.—

Wherefore to the foregoing reasons we declare ourselves to be Constitutional Presbyterians. And in order to save our brethren of the reform party from dealing in misrepresentation and slander, and the world from being deceived we declare our unabated approbation of the Confession of Faith and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church as we did receive the same in our ordination vows.

We declare our entire approbation of all our American institutions, as founded in the charity which seeketh not her own.

And whereas there has been much effort to make it appear that those branded with the odious epithet of New School men were all abolitionists and Pelagians; we therefore for ourselves declare by these presents, that we are not either abolitionists nor Pelagians, and that all who deal in that kind of slander must do it at their own expense and responsibility.¹¹

The document was signed by Mathes, Bradshaw and Moore; in addition it bore the signature of John Penlands, an Elder in the Asheville church, and John Clayton, Sr., John Clayton, Jr., and John Murray, all Elders in the Davidson River church. Presbytery responded to this protest by striking the names of the Ministers and Elders from the Roll.

The next item of business was a communication from the Ebenezer church of Waynesville, which was pastored by Mathes, and was dated August 18, 1839:

Whereas we, the Session of Ebenezer Church, do most decidedly disapprove of the excising acts of the Assembly of '37 and of all the measures subsequently adopted to enforce those acts; and whereas sd. acts have since been solemnly declared, by a competent civil tribunal, to be unconstitutional, and therefore null and void, from the beginning: and whereas the same tribunal did decide that the body over whose deliberations Dr. Fisher presided, was the only true, constitutional Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in which decision we cordially acquiesce: and whereas Mor. Presbytery with which we have hitherto been connected, has refused to adhere to this only true Assembly, & by this refusal as *we* think, has seceded from the Presbyterian Church: and as the aforementioned acts of '37, and

¹¹*Ibid.*, September 12, 1839, pp. 103-106. "Constitutional Presbyterians" was the self-styled designation of New Schoolmen. They felt that the Old School had violated the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church by excising the synods without a trial. They referred to the Old Schoolmen as "reformers."

the measures consequent thereupon, have operated so as to sunder our beloved Zion in twain, and have thus rendered it necessary for all church sessions to determined [sic] their ecclesiastical relations, by choosing the body to whose control they will be subject in the future: And seeing we love the order and discipline of the Presbyterian Church and wish not to be separated from that Church by submitting to the lawless edicts of the Reformers, Therefore

1. Resolved, That we continue to recognise our Confession of Faith, as containing the fundamental principles and doctrines of revelation, and to approve of our system of church polity as laid down in our excellent "Form of Government."
2. That we view all the reforming measures adopted since the year '36 as unconstitutional and revolutionary, and as calculated and intended to dismember the Presbyterian Church.
3. That henceforth we decline all connection [sic] with Morg-Presbytery, until it shall by its official acts declare its adherence to that body which we consider to be the only true Assembly of our church.
4. That we will immediately make application to the Presbytery of Union Tenn. to become connected with it, and to be placed under its spiritual direction hereby promising due submission to sd. Presbytery, and to the higher judicatories to which it holds itself amenable.
5. That our Moderator the Rev. G. A. Mathes be & hereby is requested to unite himself with sd. Presbytery at its next stated sessions.
6. That altho' this may appear somewhat irregular, yet in our opinion it is much more regular and constitutional than to remain longer connected with a Presbytery believed by us to have seceded from the constitution of our church.
7. That if the opinion of the "Court in Bank" as delivered by Judge Gibson shall ultimately be sustained before the judicial authorities of this commonwealth, we as peaceable citizens will then feel bound to submit: but such event will in no degree change our sentiments or course of action from what is indicated by the foregoing resolutions.
8. That nothing herein contained is designed as a censure or reproach on Mor. Presb. the Session has only aimed to express itself with that frankness and candor that would enable said

Presbytery to judge correctly of its views, and of the position which as a church judicatory it is determined to occupy hereafter.¹²

The church was also stricken from the Roll of Presbytery.

Union Presbytery lay just across the mountain range from the western portion of Morganton Presbytery. True to their intent, Bradshaw and Mathes returned to Union Presbytery at the Stated Fall meeting in 1839, and notified their new brethren of the "great destitution of Presbyterian preaching" in Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood and Macon Counties in western North Carolina. Whereupon Presbytery resolved to consider these counties "an important field of operation for the [American] H[ome] M[issionary] S[ociety] & that this Pby do hereby apply to the Society to send them aid as soon as practicable."¹³

The February 6, 1840, issue of the *Christian Observer* contained Mathes' four-column defense of his action in leaving the Old School and his scathing attack on Reform—Old School—Presbyterianism. At the Stated Spring meeting of April 2, 1840, Union Presbytery received the Davidson River church of Henderson County, N. C., under her care.¹⁴ And less than a month later Morganton Presbytery ceased to exist as a judicatory of the Presbyterian Church. The last meeting of the Presbytery was the Stated Spring Meeting, April 25, 1840. The loss of four congregations and two ministers was more than the enfeebled Presbytery could sustain, and thus she petitioned the Synod of North Carolina to dissolve her and re-attach her churches and ministers to Concord Presbytery, reasoning that "the paucity of our ministers and our consequent liability to continual interruptions in conducting the business of the church" as one of the major reasons for her demise.¹⁵ The Old School-New School controversy had "destroyed any hope for

¹²*Ibid.*, September 12, 1839, pp. 107-109. Regarding the references to the suit in civil courts, when the New School sued for the title and property of the Presbyterian Church, the first hearing was held before Judge Rogers of the Supreme Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, and he ruled in favor of the New School. The Old School immediately appealed and the case went before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania which sat in bank, and reversed the decision. At the time of the resolutions to withdraw by Ebenezer church, the final settlement in the case had not been made.

¹³Typed "Records," Union Presbytery, October 4, 1839, 4:207. These records are found in the McClung Room, Lawson McGhee Public Library, Knoxville, Tennessee. Union Presbytery was one of the strongest southern New School presbyteries in the General Assembly. In 1837, the year of the schism, she reported 26 ministers, 30 churches and 2,469 members (Alexander, *Synod of Tennessee*, p. 11). In addition to Ebenezer, Union Presbytery also received Asheville, Davidson River and Reems Creek by 1840. In 1844 the Wilkesborough, N. C., church was received and in 1859 the Mills River church (Alexander, *Synod of Tennessee*, p. 153).

¹⁴"Records," Union Presbytery, April 2, 1840, 4:211.

¹⁵"Minutes," Morganton Presbytery, April 25, 1840, pp. 121-122.

growth and vitality" in the short-lived Presbytery, is the judgment of one church historian.¹⁶

Unquestionably another reason for the untimely end of the Presbytery was the failure or oversight of the General Assembly to erect the Western Synod of the Carolinas. At that time the role of synod was most important to the founding and nurture of new churches as well as the provision and supervision of missionaries and evangelists. With Morganton Presbytery no longer existent, there was no hope that the new synod could be erected, for it is necessary for a synod to have at least three presbyteries in her constituency.¹⁷ So at the Stated Fall meeting of Concord Presbytery in 1840 the remnants of Morganton Presbytery were received—four ministers and nineteen churches.¹⁸ Earlier that month Union Presbytery had met in Asheville.¹⁹

It was not so much the fact that a few churches and ministers left Morganton Presbytery to enter the New School as it was that the remaining part of the Presbytery was so weakened that it could not function. The division not only struck the Presbytery, but entered into some of the churches. For instance, when the Old School-New School fissure divided the Presbytery, the only Elder in the Asheville church went New School. An Old School group remained, however, and after the dissolution of Morganton Presbytery it returned to Concord Presbytery. The relationships between the Old and New School elements in the Asheville church were quite amicable, and they shared the same building facilities which they had jointly built.²⁰ In 1849 the two groups forgot their differences and the merged congregation went Old School.²¹

¹⁶Neill Roderick McGeachey, "Men and Mission: A History of the Presbytery of Concord Synod of North Carolina from 1795 to ——" (unpublished typed manuscript at the Historical Foundation, Montreat, N.C., n. d.), p. 260. I would like to thank Dr. McGeachey for permission to quote his work and for his devoted labors that have brought this work to this point. Students of Presbyterian history will indeed rejoice when this work is finally published.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 661; "Minutes," Morganton Presbytery, April 25, 1840, pp. 121-122.

¹⁸"Minutes," Synod of North Carolina, October 23, 1840, pp. 643, 653-654.

¹⁹"Records" Union Presbytery, October 2, 1840, 4:217.

²⁰George W. McCoy, *The First Presbyterian Church Asheville, N. C. 1794-1951* (Asheville: First Presbyterian Church, 1951), p. 20. Interestingly enough, this was not an uncommon practice. While the Old School-New School squabble on the local level was often marked with acrimony, at the same time the sheer role of economics frequently dictated that the two groups must work out some sort of arrangement in regard to the use of the church edifice. In Bowling Green, Kentucky, one group would have exclusive use of the church for the first half of the month, and the other would use it the latter half. In the Lebanon, Kentucky, church the two groups alternated on Sundays—but the congregations would in most instances attend each Sunday, whether a New School or an Old School preacher was in the pulpit! Suffice it to say that this mutual use of the same facilities was indeed a factor that hastened the reunion in such situations.

²¹Ora Blackmun, *A Spire in the Mountains: The Story of 176 Years of a Church and a Town Growing Together, 1794-1970* (Asheville: First Presbyterian Church, 1970), p. 36.

The Session records of the Davidson River church give no mention at all of that church going New School. The first reference to Union Presbytery is not found until the minutes of August 17, 1851.²² This church did not long remain in the New School, however. In 1857 the southern New School judicatories withdrew from the parent body and organized the United Synod of the South. At Davidson River a vote was taken on August 15, 1858, to ascertain where the church would go, and by a vote of 21-5 it decided to return to the Old School rather than enter the United Synod.²³ The *Christian Observer* carried this reason for the congregation's decision:

This, in the providence of God, is the result of the agitation of the slavery question in the General Assembly, and the new organization in consequence of the division and weakening of the General Assembly. Hence, in view of our great distance from the highly favored body of Union Presbytery . . . and having received little missionary aid from that venerable body, and being surrounded, as we are, with the Old School; therefore in the view of this Church, under these circumstances of our peculiar position, *Resolved*, that it is our imperative duty, to take this step and unite with the Old School, in order to promote the best interests of the Church and the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, while we still feel grateful to our Tennessee brethren for their faithful and successful preaching in this region.²⁴

At the Stated Fall Meeting of Union Presbytery in 1859 it was announced that the Rev. Wm. H. Smith had organized a new church in Henderson County, called Mill's River. It had 33 members.²⁵ Since Union Presbytery was now in the United Synod, this church was the child of that new denomination. Several of the charter members of Mill's River had belonged to the New School portion of Davidson River. When that church returned to the Old School, those New School members living in the vicinity of the new Mill's River church joined it. On September 12, 1859, Concord Presbytery, through the ministrations of the Rev. George Dickinson Parks, organized an Old School church at Mill's River.²⁶ The property of the two churches was

²²MSS "Records," Davidson River Church, p. 31, located at the Historical Foundation, Montreat, N.C.

²³*Ibid.*, August 15, 1858, p. 64. For a brief history of the United Synod, see Thomas Cary Johnson, "A Brief Sketch of the United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," *Papers of the American Society of Church History*, 8 (1897): 1-38. For a more detailed account see my "The Organic Unions of the Southern Presbyterian Church" (unpublished, typed manuscripts on deposit in the Historical Foundation, Montreat, N. C., 1960), pp. 78-200.

²⁴*Christian Observer*, December 23, 1858.

²⁵*Ibid.*, October 15, 1859.

²⁶J. Bruce Frye, *The Mills River Presbyterian Church, Horse Shoe, North Carolina* (Horse Shoe, N. C.: Mills River Presbyterian Church, 1959), p. 9.

jointly used by both groups and consisted of a two-story building with academy on the lower floor, a church auditorium on the upper floor, and a Manse. The United Synod pastor, the Rev. Jacob Hood, lived in the Manse, and two of the three trustees were also United Synod. These facts indicate that the United School congregation probably enjoyed the advantage over the Old School group because of its use of the property.²⁷ During the Civil War the United Synod and the southern Old School—the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America—united into one denomination. However, due in part to the slowness of communication union was not always effected quickly on the local level.

This seems to have been true at Mills River. There is no record of a formal union between the New School Church and the Old School Church in Mills River. The records that still exist indicate that members of the New School Church gradually began to unite with the Old School Church until the New School congregation was absorbed and ceased to exist. The death knell of the New School Presbyterians in Mills River sounded when the Rev. Jacob Hood, though no longer pastor at Mills River, was received into the Old School and became a member of Concord Presbytery on October 3, 1866.²⁸

Thus it can be seen that the dream of a strong New School work in the mountains of western North Carolina rested on a very shaky foundation—certainly not as strong as the foundation which supported the vigorous work in the presbyteries of East Tennessee, particularly Union Presbytery. In the 1846 report to the General Assembly Union Presbytery listed but four churches in North Carolina. No figures were given for the membership statistics of Ebenezer and Wilkesboro, but Davidson River reported 97 members while Asheville reported only 12.²⁹ In 1855 Davidson River contributed \$3.00 to the Erection Fund of the New School General Assembly and the outpost at Mills River contributed \$5.00.³⁰ The bleak outlook for the New School prospects in western North Carolina is reflected in the following report of the Rev. H. Taylor, whom Union Presbytery had assigned as home missionary to Buncombe and Henderson Counties:

In Buncombe I preach twice a month at Asheville, the county seat, which is 20 miles from where I reside. . . . The church here is small, but the congregation large and attentive. We have also

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

²⁹"Records," Union Presbytery, April 17, 1846, 4:303.

³⁰"Records," Davidson River Church, September 16, 1855, p. 52.

a good church building, lately dedicated. . . . I am greatly assisted by the Rev. Dr. Dickson, whose ill health will not allow him to preach regularly, but who preaches oftener than once a month, superintends a flourishing Sabbath School, attends to the monthly concerts, circulates tracts, and in various ways, being on the ground, does much for the church. At the Sulphur Springs, four miles from Asheville, where a portion of the Asheville church reside . . . I maintain evening and night appointments, usually at the house of an elder. Here I always have the pleasure of preaching to a full house. Twelve miles below Asheville and 30 miles from where I live, I bestow my fifth Sabbaths on the Rim's Creek Church, which consists of 14 members, has one elder only, is harmonious and prosperous. The population does not admit of large congregations, but the little band are so thankful for a visit once in a few months which have 5 Sabbaths that I have hitherto found it good to go.⁸¹

He also preached at Davidson River and Mills River. But the terrain and the scope of the territory certainly militated against that kind of a ministry. The churches were spread too far apart for one missionary to look after them fruitfully, even with the assistance of one whose health was not good.

Thus the New School disruption, which caused the early, untimely demise of Morganton Presbytery and prevented the establishment of the Synod of the Western Carolinas, was itself unable to cut much of a swath in the mountains of North Carolina. Never able to establish strong congregations, decimated by the United Synod movement, by 1864 most of the North Carolina congregations were back in the Old School fold. Nor must one fail to note that the Old School probably lost a score of precious years in her schedule of planting the blue flag of Presbyterianism in Western North Carolina due primarily to that disruption.

⁸¹*Home Missionary*, 16 (May, 1843): 17.

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