

Notes/questions for Jeremy Hegi's thesis defense, 12 December 2011

Very fine work. Chapter one is especially polished and well-developed. I think the whole represents an important contribution to scholarship on Churches of Christ and their missions history, and I'd encourage you to consider continuing your work in this vein. Might parts of this be published in *Restoration Quarterly*?

Chapter One – no significant questions/revisions. You've incorporated feedback I already gave you. It's in excellent shape.

Chapter Two – I would say this is the least developed of the chapters. Many of its main ideas are more suggested or outlined generally than actually developed. A good example of this is the section on Janes' early life and influences. While you do outline these enough to give us a rough idea, the section is too abbreviated and too much of a general overview to have any real analytical force for use later on. This might be usefully expanded.

Questions that arose as I read this chapter:

You cite William Carey's Enquiry here and even compare Janes' work to that of a missionary society as envisioned by Carey. I was struck reading this by the similarities between Janes' and Carey's respective contexts. In the Particular Baptist church of late 18th c. Britain, Carey's desire to form a society ran up against a similar view of God's sovereignty, the outworking of Providence (Carey was famously told by a big-name London minister to "sit down" in a meeting because "if the good Lord pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine") and concerns that a society would infringe upon individual conscience, congregational autonomy, and Biblical primitivism. But in Carey's tradition, these concerns were overcome, with considerable success. What was different about the Stone-Campbell tradition/churches of Christ, such that the same objections could NOT be overcome?

Did Janes pattern his promotion style or his periodicals after a particular mission society's publications or fundraising methods? Knowing this might be key to answering the charge of whether Janes was, in fact, functioning consciously as a "one-man missionary society."

What did Janes' periodicals promoting missions contain? Letters from agents in the field? Greeting from recent converts? Or just "facts concerning missions that were present in Scripture" (p. 70)? I ask this partly because throughout my reading of the thesis, I was wondering about the position of the missionaries themselves, and those whom the missionaries were preaching to, converts who were ideally founding 'self-governing churches,' on the matters you are discussing.

Final observation/correction for Chapter Two is regarding your discussion of the "indigenous church principle" page 76ff. Though not under that title, the Serampore Mission (William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward, working outside of

Calcutta c. 1800-1840s) pursued this same mission methodology long before Janes, or Rufus Anderson or Henry Venn, did. The mission family at Serampore drew up a document called the Form of Agreement in 1805 that explicitly espoused these principles of self-government, self-support, and self-extension, though not in those terms. And the Serampore missionaries themselves attributed it mostly to the Moravians who had preceded them.

The British BMS had a fascinating and convoluted relationship with the ideal of indigenous churches and native agency in the 19th century. The Serampore missionaries pioneered it, and that was the ideal the BMS pursued until the late 1830s; then they fell back on what Janes calls the “common method,” and then “repented” and returned to the indigenous model in the 1860s. It’s interesting to see the same difference of opinion happening in churches of Christ in the 1920s.

Overall, Chapter Two left me wanting more (in a good way!) I’d like to get to know Janes the man better.

Chapter Three

I really liked this chapter. It was very well paced and full of action; I wanted to know what would happen next.

Questions as I read this chapter: How did missionaries themselves view Janes? Where did they side in the controversy surrounding him? Did Janes seem to identify more with missionaries in the field, or with these mover-and-shaker types at home? Is it possible that his deviance, his willingness to get into disputes at home, arose out of his orientation towards the needs of missionaries and the exigencies of the mission field, rather than towards the vagaries of church politics? I ask this because if so, Janes’ situation would fit a broader pattern in missions history where focus on the periphery leads to tension in the center. (Again, happened with the BMS in 19th c.)

Structural suggestion: I wonder whether the material about the will and its force as evidence for Janes’ favoring premillennial missionaries might work better at the end of the chapter. This way we don’t have Janes die and read the will, and then resurrect him to hear about his navigational strategies.

In the pp120s, where you’re working to exonerate Janes of the charges against him (embezzling, inefficiency, etc.), you pretty much only cite Janes and his closest friends, in particular Jorgenson. This is somewhat problematic, right? See if you can pull in less biased sources to help your case here. At the least, you need to acknowledge Jorgenson’s bias.

Instead of relying on these types of sources to exonerate Janes, you might consider comparing what percentage of the money Janes’ handled actually went to the missionaries, versus the percentage that a traditional missionary society forwarded on to its agents.

Your parting shot in chapter three is just wonderful! Excellent use of source material to establish that it was really all about the premillennialism.

Broader things: I think your use of theoretical or scholarly lenses and apparatuses like the term anomie, the Constants in Context categories, and strategic deviance is helpful and effective.

If this thesis had been written at a state school, you would need to spend more time defining terms like “apostolic” and “primitivism,” and your conclusion would have to change. (This is just an observation for your information in case of future graduate work, not a suggestion to change anything now.)

In light of Brother Taliaferro and your very believable contention that it was ultimately Janes’ premillennialism, not his mission work, that marginalized him, I wonder whether you might want to reframe your entire research question. (And this is only relevant to possible future work on this; I am NOT suggesting you reframe for the thesis.) Instead of “what strategies did Janes devise to navigate tensions generated by this deviations”—deviations which you have now suggested were eschatological, not so much related to polity—you might ask “how did Janes’ premillennial eschatology color the way mainline churches of Christ perceived his work.” This question might be especially useful if you do someday take up a larger project about our premillennial past.

Last thing I wondered: If Janes was so instrumental in drumming up missionary volunteers and funding, can we see an immediate dip in missionary fervor in churches of Christ at the time of his death?

Thanks for having me on the committee. I really enjoyed reading the thesis.