

THE
PRESBYTERIAN

GUARDIAN

*Assemblies
and Synods
1970*

VOLUME 39, NUMBER 4

SEPTEMBER 1970



THIRTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PORTLAND, OREGON

JULY 6-10

The God Who Is Here

RALPH E. CLOUGH

The following is a condensed version of the sermon by the Rev. Ralph E. Clough, Moderator of the 36th General Assembly, presented at the opening session of this year's Assembly.

Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, and they died as God had warned. Their first reaction was instinctive, but utterly foolish. Who can hide from the All-seeing Eye?

God's "Where art thou?" demonstrates the divine determination to begin immediately the task of redeeming the sinner. God comes to man; the Hound of Heaven pursues the terror-stricken creature from the outset of his attempt to flee.

God Immanuel

God is "The God Who Is Here." God comes to his own and will not leave them now or ever. God's abiding with man is not a secondary element in revelation; it is the basis for the beauty of the divine-human relationship.

"The Lord went before them by day and by night . . . He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people" (Exodus 13:21, 22). Not only was God's nearness shown in this way, but his presence brought with it constant safety and security in the face of enemies.

When God gave orders to build the tabernacle, he said, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Exodus 29:45). God did not make weekend visits to his people—he dwelled with them. In the tabernacle symbolism, God's purpose to save his people comes into sharper focus.

David spoke of Mount Zion as "the hill which God desireth to dwell in;

yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever . . . Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. . . . even the God of our salvation" (Psalm 68:16-19).

Finally, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Immanuel, God-with-us! God is here now!

But did he come only to leave again? The pillar has vanished; the tabernacle is no more; Immanuel we do not see. But listen: "I will not leave you comfortless. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:18, 23).

Believe your heart! God is here now and forever. When Christ "left" his disciples, it was that they might receive him and know him in a fuller fellowship. God now takes up his abode in the very hearts of his people; the triune God dwells with man.

"I John saw the holy city . . . and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:12, 3). This is the climax—God coming to his people to dwell with them in his own tent.

God the Faithful

In all the varying patterns of God's self-revelation, we see the divine faithfulness underlying it all. Changes there have been, but always God comes. Our God is the covenant-keeping

God. So the believer in every age can say, "His compassions fail not; they are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 2:22, 23).

The "older generation" is accused of failure. We profess one thing and do another. We are an undependable lot, and the coming generation has little confidence in us. But is not the Lord God of Israel the answer to this longing for dependability? No mere man, no generation of men, nor humanity in the aggregate can ever supply that for which hearts yearn. The idealism of today's youth will find fulfillment only in the true and living God.

This is our message: "We have a faithful God!" This is not to deny something less than faithfulness on our part in proclaiming and living this great truth. God varied the presentation of his unchanging truth to meet the changing circumstances of his people. Should not his servants do the same today?

Complacency is the Devil's sharp arrow. Inconsistency in the Christian's life is another. Bigotry is as sharp as any employed by the Adversary. And traditionalism—is it not the sharpest of all?

God's messengers

God adapted his revelation to the needs of his people. Surely we must do the same. We must make every possible effort to reach the child of our times. We have the message the world needs, the message of the faithful God who is here now and forever.

What are we doing with this message? We must tell the world, so the world can understand, that God is *here*, dwelling among men!

The Presbyterian Guardian is published seven times this year (May, June, July-August, September, October, November and December) by the Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, 7401 Old York Rd., Phila., Pa. 19126, at the following rates, payable in advance, postage prepaid: \$3.00 per year (\$2.50 in Clubs of ten or more). Second class mail privileges authorized at the Post Office, Philadelphia, Pa.

Christian Reformed Church

JOHN J. MITCHELL

This report, by the fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the 1970 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, does not provide a digest of synodical actions but is meant to convey some impressions of the tone and trends evident within the Synod.

The 1970 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church met in the Fine Arts Building of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, beginning June 9, 1970. CRC Synods meet for most of two weeks, the first portion being given over to committee study of Agenda items and the latter part spent in plenary sessions of the Synod. Almost every proposal presented to Synod has been studied by some advisory committee beforehand, a procedure that helps to prevent ill-considered motions from being adopted in haste.

Much of Synod's time is given to supervision of its various boards and agencies. Synod also approves all candidates for the ministry within the church, as well as appointments to the faculties of Calvin College and Seminary. To complete so large a docket, the president of Synod is given considerable discretion in matters of limiting debate, and even on disputed issues debate is concise and orderly.

The issue with perhaps the most emotional impact on the delegates concerned the complex of problems that had grown up around the refusal of a Christian school in Illinois to admit certain black children; the Synod warned the classis (or presbytery) involved to carry out certain instructions from the previous synod or be held in "contempt." It would be presumptuous to make a judgment on the merits of the case; but it seemed plain that Synod's intent was to uphold the right of black children to enjoy the same Christian schooling available to other covenant youth.

"More Conservative"

In general, the delegates themselves characterized this Synod as "more

conservative" than other recent ones. There were frequent expressions of concern over doctrinal matters and tendencies toward more liberal views in various areas. To some, such changes appeared as desirable departures from traditionalism; to others, they seemed to be dangerously close to abandonment of the creeds; to this observer, there seemed to be elements of both viewpoints that were valid in certain instances. The concern over possibly dangerous trends came to sharpest expression in several close votes on appointments to Calvin College and Seminary. A temporary two-month appointment to the Seminary was rejected apparently on the grounds that the proposed candidate was sympathetic to views current in the Netherlands that question the historicity of Adam. But a candidate to the College alleged to hold similar views was approved. The Synod at first rejected the appointment to the Seminary of a professor who is an avowed pacifist, but later reconsidered and granted him a temporary appointment. In the polling of delegates on some of these close votes, it frequently happened that the elder-delegates from a classis would vote against a "liberal" matter while minister-delegates from the same classis voted in favor.

Perhaps the most "conservative" decision taken by Synod was to approve a communication to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland that frankly urged this sister-church to explain certain of its actions, including the decision of the Dutch church to join the World Council of Churches and its decision to make some elements of the creeds no longer binding. It seems plain that the Christian Reformed Synod saw a "trend toward liberalism" in its mother church and that the Synod was concerned.

"Liberal Trend"

As fraternal delegate from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, this writer brought greetings to the Synod. The task was difficult, since Synod had heard a report from its Committee on

Closer Relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that the corresponding OPC committee believed it saw a "trend toward liberalism" within the CRC. Nevertheless, and contrary to its committee's recommendation, Synod determined to continue discussions with the OPC looking toward a possible merger. Though speaking quite frankly about this supposed "trend toward liberalism," I was treated most graciously by the delegates. Some made it plain that they disagreed about any such "trend," insisting that it was primarily a matter of healthy study and discussion and an endeavor to discard certain traditional Dutch habits that were not essential. Others, particularly among the elder-delegates, tended to voice more concern about such a "trend," expressing discouragement that attempts to halt it were largely ineffective. Several delegates exhorted the OPC to stand fast in the Reformed Faith and on a sound doctrine of Scripture, and generally much interest in the OPC was shown.

Impressions

The impression made on this observer — and it is certainly no more than his subjective opinion! — was that Synod showed a "more conservative" stance perhaps and that genuine concern over a possible "trend toward liberalism" did exist among many delegates. However, it was also evident at times that there was another concern that controlled many decisions, a concern "not to rock the boat" and further polarize the church. All in all, there was no evidence that any concerted effort to alter the trends existed; frequent dismay at decisions of various boards was heard, but no organized endeavor to change the constituency of these boards was seen.

That there is a large number of devoted members of the Christian Reformed Church who dearly love the Reformed Faith cannot be doubted. That there are also some who would rethink the old doctrines and some who would modify certain of them seems also to be true. It is hard for those who remember the experiences that culminated in 1936 not to see parallels in the present situation in the Christian Reformed Church; we should pray that the outcome will be different from that in the old Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod

HERBERT L. HATHAWAY

Mr. Hathaway, ruling elder in the Lansdale Presbyterian Church was a commissioner to Synod and graciously provided this report.

The 148th General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod convened in Seattle on July 24, 1970. A pre-synod meeting sponsored by the Committee on Evangelism heard Dr. William E. Hill, Jr., of the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship (an independent organization working largely in the South), as he challenged his audience to consider "What Time Is It?" Dr. Hill declared that it was time to put off the works of darkness, to awake out of sleep, to put on the armor of light, and to preach for conviction and for a verdict.

Dr. Wilber B. Wallis, professor of New Testament at Covenant Seminary and the outgoing moderator, constituted Synod with prayer and preached on Christ's redemptive reign from 1 Corinthians 15:25. Dr. Wallis suggested that unity for the church may be found in the fields of harvest rather than in the turmoil of debate, and that the challenge to establish forty new churches each year (as proposed by National Presbyterian Missions) should be a fruit of the unity within the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Synod elected Dr. Richard W. Gray as its new moderator by acclamation. Dr. Gray, a leader in working toward union with the Orthodox Presbyterians, is pastor of Calvary Church in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania.

National Presbyterian Missions (the RPCES home missions agency) urged commissioners to communicate in tenderness and urgency with believers still in churches connected with the Consultation on Church Union (COCU). Though many of these people have taken comfort in a proposed "escape clause" that would permit withdrawal from the planned "super-church," it was noted that this provision would not be available until three years after union takes place.

The report from Covenant College showed "all systems Go" as student enrollment continues to gain, the faculty is strengthened, and a multi-million dollar building program is underway. Students at Covenant have shown increasing interest in ministering to blacks in Chattanooga; and Student Summer Service teams (sponsored by Christian Training, Inc., the RPCES agency for Christian education) have been assigned to Mexico and the Caribbean as well as to locations within the United States.

The Rev. Robert K. Churchill, fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, addressed the Synod. [His address appears elsewhere in this issue of the *Guardian*.]

OP-RP Relations

The report of the Fraternal Relations Committee was largely concerned with the relationship to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Since the 1969 OPC General Assembly had acted to delay further action toward a Plan of Union for at least one year, the RPCES committee had not worked on such a plan. It has been a year for study and discussion. The committee expressed its belief that both the OPC and the RPCES have a common commitment to the Reformed Faith as expressed in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and declared that greater understanding had been attained in regard to those issues approached by the two churches in different ways. Concern that the Reformed Presbyterian testimony might be lost in such a union was expressed, and others sensed a hypercritical tone in the discussion of the possibility of merger at the OPC Assembly in Portland. Others, even though with reservations, declared themselves as not opposed to union in principle.

"Christian Liberty"

One issue still nebulous in the minds of many commissioners was that of defining the stance of a united church toward "Christian liberty" and world-

ly practices. It was noted that "the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has . . . given no indication of any willingness to consider either of the two carefully worked out statements of the joint committee on the question of the application of scriptural principles to some of the pressing problems of our day." Synod was asked to break off the negotiations toward union in order that there could be a discussion of differences between the two churches without any pressure; this proposal was defeated by a strong majority. Then by unanimous vote, Synod authorized its committee to arrange for a joint study with the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC on the church's responsibility in defining ethical applications of the Word of God. [See the corresponding action by the OPC General Assembly as reported elsewhere in this issue.]

Dispensationalism

The report of a special committee to study Dispensationalism was appreciated for its irenic spirit, fairness, and incisiveness. It focused on the book *Dispensationalism Today* by Charles C. Ryrie, dean of the graduate school of Dallas Theological Seminary, and said little of the views of such other Dispensationalists as Scofield or Chafer. The report concluded that "the consistent dispensationalist could not subscribe to Chapter VII 'Of God's Covenant with Man' or Chapter XXV 'Of the Church' in the Westminster Confession." After extended debate, Synod determined to "adopt this report for study by presbyteries and sessions and for their guidance in examining candidates who must take a vow to subscribe to the system of truth taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms," and asked "that the committee pursue further study into other sources of dispensational teaching and (other) areas of conflict with our standards."

Foreign missions was reviewed at a public meeting where the report of World Presbyterian Missions (the RPCES foreign missions agency) was presented. Concern to meet the challenge of changing events and cultures was expressed. It was noted that the number of missionaries had declined, and concern to challenge more young

(Continued on next page)

Presbyterian Church in U. S.

LEROY B. OLIVER

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church) in the U. S. (sometimes called the Southern Presbyterian Church) met in the beautiful and spacious buildings of the Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, June 14-19. Following a memorial service honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Assembly elected the Rev. William A. Benfield of Charleston, West Virginia as moderator. Dr. Benfield, chairman of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) and candidate of the theologically liberal forces in the denomination, defeated Dr. Harry A. Fifield of Atlanta, Georgia, a moderate, by a vote of 217 to 212.

The vote for moderator indicated that on crucial issues the Assembly would be controlled by the liberals. On such controversial matters as voluntary abortion, COCU, union with the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., and a proposal that the church withdraw from the National Council of Churches, the liberal position prevailed.

The proposal on abortion was amended to delete a provision that would leave the decision to the woman, her husband and doctor, but it did recognize the socio-economic condition of the family as one possible justi-

fying characteristic "for the willful termination of a pregnancy."

Ecumenical matters

A Plan of Union of nine denominations proposed by COCU was sent to the presbyteries for study; talks of merger with the UPUSA church were continued with the inclusion in the conversations of representatives of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ. Dr. Robert Strong, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church of Montgomery, Alabama and formerly a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, speaking for the conservatives on these ecumenical matters, observed that the failure of opponents of union proposals did not indicate in the slightest a decreasing opposition to the proposals. Dr. Strong in a brilliant speech defended the scriptural teaching that man was a distinct and separate creation of God. However, the Assembly reaffirmed the stand of the 1969 Assembly that organic evolution is not a contradiction of Genesis or the Confession of Faith.

An issue that aroused strong feelings and extended debate was an effort

to cut off support from the magazine *Colloquy*, published by the United Church Press for use by adults as background material in youth work. It was alleged by opponents of the magazine that it contained material that was profane, blasphemous and immoral. The Assembly upheld participation in the project by its Board of Christian Education by a vote of 189 to 179.

According to conservative leaders a major issue before the Assembly was a proposal to reduce the number of synods and presbyteries through restructuring. A vigorous effort by the liberals to adopt the proposal failed and final action was postponed until 1971. Competent observers judge that restructuring is necessary if union with the UPUSA and COCU are to be approved. In the past because of concentration of conservative strength in a few synods and presbyteries, it has been difficult to get the three-fourths majority of presbyteries required by the Constitution for amendment of the Book of Church Order or for merger with other church bodies.

It is the judgment of this observer that conservatives in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. must define their objectives more clearly. While it is apparent that there is conservative strength in the church, these forces must fight the battle vigorously at every stage if the people in the pew are to be educated to the true nature of the struggle—that is, historic Christianity against man-made religion.

(From Previous Page)

people to such service was urged.

A proposed revision to the *Directory for the Worship of God* was sent to presbyteries for action and possible adoption by the 149th Synod. A proposal to require a two-thirds majority favorable vote by members of each local congregation before a church union could be effected was referred for further study. The question of whether it is sinful for a Christian to belong to oath-bound secret societies was answered by reference to a study of this question reported to last year's Synod and the statement that "determination of what is a sin to be censured is a judicial process which must originate in a lower judicatory, not the highest."

The Synod in Seattle was characterized by a spirit of confidence and optimism. The old zeal for evangelism was evident as Synod adopted the "Coral Ridge Plan" as presented by Dr. D. James Kennedy of the Coral Ridge (Florida) Presbyterian Church. Though there was some disappointment at the slowness of progress toward unity with the Orthodox Presbyterians, it was generally felt that this might serve a stronger union eventually. Certainly it was evident in the Synod that old loyalties and alignments from before the 1965 union of Evangelical and Reformed Presbyterians had, by God's grace, faded away. All members of the Synod could lift their voices in one accord to sing Psalm 133 in Synod's closing session.

New Church in Abilene, Texas

A group of devoted Presbyterians in the city of Abilene have been organized and are seeking admission as an Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Averaging about thirty in attendance, they meet for Sunday worship at 11 a.m. in the YWCA, 1301 N. 10th Street. They are already working to secure a pastor. Contact may be made with Dr. L. G. Hardwicke, 1625 Westwood, Abilene, Texas 79603.

Missionary-at-large John H. Thompson reports contacts in several other Texas communities. Readers who know of others who might be interested in a sound Reformed testimony should forward names to the Rev. Mr. Thompson at 6120 Hudson Terrace, Orlando, Florida 32808.

"What Hath God Wrought!"

ROBERT K. CHURCHILL

Address by the Fraternal Delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the 148th Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, meeting in July 1970.

One cannot trace the history of our two communions without saying, "What hath God wrought!" Our beginnings were with Machen. It was not one or two theological points that brought us into being; the issue was biblical Christianity itself! Machen and those who stood with him saw the whole; they saw that the authority of the Word of God could not be separated from its truth. Accepting its truth bound one to its supreme authority over the laws of church or state. Machen fought for the conscience of the world. He lost in the old church the battle that men today are losing in our entire culture. Far from being dead, these issues explode all around us.

I see the beginnings of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as a Jacob's wrestling, a struggle to realize God's pattern in his church rather than a one-man rule. We watched and saw courage; we saw truth triumph; we saw the Lord's deliverance and blessing. And then we saw two streams merge—the newer evangelical verve with the flinty Covenanter Calvinism. We looked on, and I think we saw the hand of God. And this church grew, especially in its missionary outreach. Now there are educational centers, college and seminary, true to God's Word. We say again, "What hath God wrought!"

Passion for truth

And now two churches, thinking of union—better called reunion—have at the start one thing in common: a passion for truth. This alone is big with promise, for the church devoid of theological passion is no longer a power in the world. But, for a moment, let us look at a bit of Orthodox Presbyterian history, for this has raised questions in some minds.

The issues of 1937-38 should never have split the church. Nor should they prevent church union today. Let us

speaking frankly! Total abstinence was one of the issues then. Generally the view arrived at was that, while total abstinence may be a wonderful and necessary practice for the individual, yet when God's Word commands temperance in all things—and not total abstinence—we may not make total abstinence the rule for the whole church of Christ. How can we even make the statement that abstinence is the best policy when this would cast the Savior, the Word, and a host of godly men in an unfavorable light? The Bible condemns the misuses of wine but not its use. (I think some of us were wrong when, in the heat of debate, it was assumed that we were not responsible for the conscience of the weaker brother; for this, we apologize.) The Word declares that we are responsible for the conscience of the weaker brother; but we may not put the entire church under the conscience of the weaker brother. Paul said that if eating meat offered to idols caused his brother to be offended (to stumble), then he would not eat meat (1 Corinthians 8:13). But the Apostle laid down no such law for the church. Referring to this same questionable meat, he told the church to "eat what is set before you, asking no questions."

Finality of Scripture

In that tragedy of 1937-38, there was a well-meaning movement to add to the Confession a paragraph assuring all men that a certain view of the millennium was allowed. It was also thought that addition of a statement as to the best use of wine would be a good thing. This was discussed, and then voted down. But we were hardly prepared for the avalanche of criticism and misunderstanding that descended upon us! Soon there were rumors abroad that we were a "wet" church. I have a letter signed by several Presbyterian elders who declared that they would not think of being part of a denomination that did not believe in the second coming of Christ. We entered a tribulation period of over three years when even the elect were

deceived. But the reasons for voting against such additions had little to do with the doctrines or practices themselves. Those who voted "No" simply wanted the Confession to remain a summary of the truths of the Bible. We simply decided that it would best serve the church for it to remain just that. Some seem to think that "Christian liberty" means license to do as many harmful things as we wish. This is far from what Paul sought! Basically the issue is the finality of the Word of God. The supreme Judge in all of life can be none other than God speaking to us in the Scriptures. The doctrine of Christian liberty declares that the one and only thing negated is sin itself. What a fresh breeze this is in today's religious chaos!

Out of this debate came this penetrating word: "He who today forbids what God allows will tomorrow allow what God forbids." And history is replete with evidence that human flesh descends to manifold follies when it goes beyond the Word of God. But the New Testament has a word about personal liberty that makes the whole world akin. That word is *love*, love to man and love to God. All sections, either under the direct command of God or in that area where there is no "Thus saith the Lord," must be motivated by love. Love is what calls forth our best and gives it harmony, not in spite of but because of the myriad of diversities the Lord has been pleased to fashion in his church.

Millennial Freedom

Now a further word about eschatology. Every Christian must believe in the second appearing of Christ for that is clearly taught in Scripture. But what happens at which exact time before or after his coming is a matter of interpretation. That is why Presbyterians have traditionally allowed latitude on the question of the millennium. Calvinism — biblical Christianity! — must be dogmatic where the Bible is clear; it must refuse to be dogmatic where the Bible is not clear. This makes for liberty also. If the Spirit of God has brought the church this far, we say again, "What hath God wrought!"

Then we come to 1946-47, after several years of theological debate on the incomprehensibility of God. What

(Continued on page 60)

The Presbyterian
GUARDIAN

EDITOR

JOHN J. MITCHELL



All correspondence should be addressed to The Presbyterian Guardian, 7401 Old York Road, Phila., Pa. 19126

Church Statistics Prove...?

Statistical data from a church do not give an infallible picture of that church's life—or lack of it! Nevertheless, they may point out significant aspects of the church's condition. Two such pointers may be found in the Statistician's Report for the year 1969.

For the second year in a row, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church showed a minimal growth-rate of 1.1% over the preceding year. That was a total of 153 persons gained in 1969. Fifty-four (of the 115) congregations showed either a loss or no gain. Total average Sunday school attendance declined again (though the accuracy of this figure is hard to determine).

On the other hand, total contributions of \$2¼ million, \$240 per communicant member, marked an 8.2% increase over 1968. (And this total does *not* include those gifts by individuals sent directly to such causes as a local Christian school, Westminster Seminary, the *Guardian*, or other non-denominational cause.) Of this total, the portion for all benevolent causes (\$465,000 for missions, general benevolence, and Christian education purposes) increased 11.1%, while that for all local church concerns (\$1,760,000 for general expenses, building programs, and other local endeavors) increased only 7.5%.

What do the figures say?

Membership. Any membership gain at all is cause for rejoicing, especially in this present chaotic and demoralized world. All around us we see people dropping their church connections. Major denominations are showing significant losses both in membership and in contributions. Still, a 1.1% growth-

General Assemblies . . . And the man in the third pew

It's easy to dismiss General Assemblies as some vague happening somewhere far away. Even for those who journeyed to Portland, Oregon, the chief impression may have been the renewing of old friendships and making of new ones, of enjoying good fellowship and hearty singing. That is hardly the end of the matter!

Suppose we ask a few questions of the man sitting in the third pew from the back of the church: "Mr. Church-member, what does General Assembly mean to you? What does all that debate, and voting, and deciding have to do with your Christian life? What do you know, or think, about the programs and plans of the agencies of your denomination?"

Not much, probably — and Mr. Church-member may be feeling a small sting of conscience for that. It's not enough to force him to read the reports in the *Agenda* or to wade through the *Minutes*; still, he knows he ought to be concerned.

He *ought* to be concerned! After all,

rate is hardly keeping up with the population explosion! There is certainly no room for boasting here.

More to the point perhaps is to see where even that small increase comes from. It is rather startling to discover that we gained 615 adults while losing 625 others, a net loss of ten! Then where did the increase show up? *The entire net gain (153) is accounted for by the 158 covenant children who made public profession of faith during 1969.* (These in turn were replaced by 163 baptized children added to the rolls.)

Contributions. An 8.2% increase in total giving is encouraging. Members seem to be improving in their giving even while the nation as a whole has felt serious economic pressures. (The "recession" seems to have affected the extremes of the economic ladder the most, the blue-collar laborers and the upper management levels. By and large, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church seems to be upper-middle-class who, though they complain a lot, actually tended to gain in real family income.) So far as figures are

the actions of General Assembly, wise or foolish, do affect the life of the church and of each member in it. Those actions affect the spending of the money each member gives to the Lord. Those decisions may affect the emphases in his pastor's preaching and teaching.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a living organism. "I am the vine, and ye are the branches." What General Assembly does, or fails to do, has its effect on every branch in that portion of the church to which our man in the third pew belongs.

This issue of the *Guardian* gives you a look at some of the Assembly's work. We have tried to present these things as they relate to you, and as they may be of interest to friends of the Church. These decisions concern the life within one church, one branch of the vine. Pray that they may enable each individual branch to bring forth more fruit to the glory of God our Father!

— J. J. M.

available, this pattern of increased giving continues into 1970 and may even be improving still more. There is reason to rejoice if our attitudes in giving are approaching that hilarious joy that the Lord loves to see in us.

The proportionately larger increase (11.1%) for benevolence causes is even more encouraging. Why is this pattern being seen? It may mean that we are realizing more fully the need to support the Lord's work outside the local community. Some of the shift in emphasis may be due to the number of churches that have completed major building programs and are now able to turn their attention outward. Still, with less than 21% of our total gifts and offerings going beyond the local scene, we cannot be complacent.

What do we do now?

Your reporter has given this much space to statistics in the hope that readers will follow through. There is a need to examine them in the local situation, to give serious thought to what they may mean about our efforts to fulfill the Lord's commission. Local

circumstances vary, and unique factors may be involved. Even so, the figures can point out where improvement is needed or encourage us to continue with a good program. We have the truth of God's grace that all men need; our question is whether we are making it known as we should.

Local church. Let the session study its own statistics carefully. All those numbers represent people, individuals with needs and with gifts. The questions to ask are many, and these are only suggestions: Where do our new members come from? How do they come into our church? Are most of them transfers, or are some the result of conversions? And where do the dismissed members go? What happens to the family that had to move to a new job? What happens to those who move to retirement homes? And what about the pattern of giving? Is it proportionate to our family incomes? Is the amount given to benevolent causes a reasonable one? Where does the emphasis need to be put?

Let the whole congregation get into the discussion—and not just once a year when the budget is being considered! Every member ought to be concerned. Do we need to start more neighborhood Bible studies? How can we contact the parents of children who attend Sunday school or vacation Bible school? Should we set up more systematic outreach program? Is the Coral Ridge method one we could use? (And if your church has had success in its outreach, the *Guardian* would be pleased to print a report on it.) Do the church members know how to present the gospel to others? Is the pattern of giving a habit, or a conscious effort to serve the Lord in joyful

sacrifice? Do any of us really know what it means to give sacrificially?

Individual member. And what about me as an individual? After all, those figures are the sum of what each one of us is and does. Let's start with this question: Does my Christian life stand out in contrast to the world so that anyone would ever be curious enough to ask for "a reason of the hope that is in you"? Have I ever tried to present the gospel to anyone? Am I ready to do it if the opportunity is there? What about my attitude toward material possessions? Are they blessings from the Lord to be used in his service? How does \$240 per communicant member compare with the cost of a color TV? And finally, do I see myself as one member of Christ's body, caring for the others in love—or am I only a statistic?

Things to think about

If the net gain in membership is primarily due to the entrance of covenant children into communicant membership, then we cannot slacken our efforts in developing these young people. The fostering of family altars, improvements in the Sunday school and catechism program, the encouragement of Bible conferences for young people, and a more effective Machen League activity, must all be pressed diligently. Christian education in the church—and in Christian schools!—must have continuing priority.

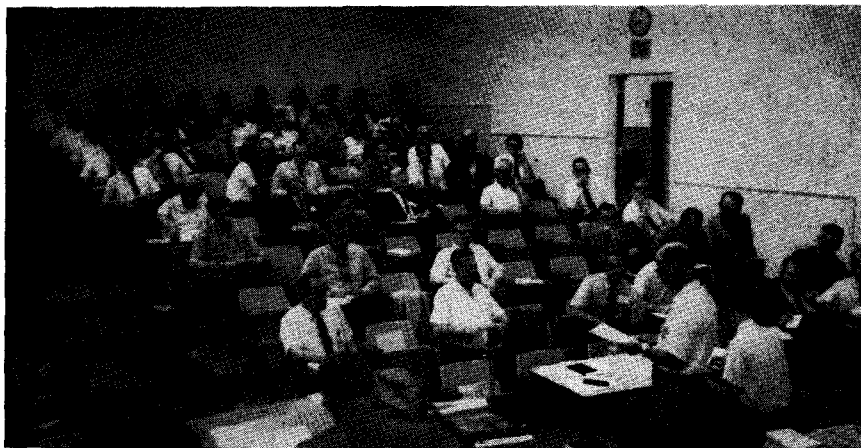
What of those other souls who have come under the church's care only to move on to a new location? Americans are on the move, and so are members of our churches. But there are not Orthodox Presbyterian congregations in every area. No doubt some of those who move are able to find fel-

lowship in other orthodox Reformed churches; but this is not always the case. Is it not time for us to make plans to provide a continuing ministry of the Word to these families and individuals? Perhaps we need more "missionary-at-large" pastors to serve a number of small scattered groups. Perhaps we need to provide a continuing membership for some who cannot find a suitable church-home elsewhere. Perhaps we need a clearinghouse through which a person could learn of other former Orthodox Presbyterians in his new location. We need to think about this.

Finally, there is a question of priorities. If the church is barely going forward, should there be a shift in emphasis? Have we devoted too much of our resources to physical plants while neglecting to seek out the lost? There are groups all over the country asking for pastoral help; but there are no extra funds available for new home missionary effort. There are groups all around the world seeking Bible-believing, orthodox missionaries; and there is not enough money to send them. The demand for sound Christian literature and instructional material increases all the time; though we have made progress, there is an overwhelming amount yet to be done. What are our priorities to be?

Statistics may be a dry subject. But these are statistics that have to do with the life of the church and our work for the Lord. What do they prove? I do not know. But if they cause us to examine our efforts in prayerful seriousness, to make changes if need be, then they have served their purpose.

—J. J. M.



The Rev. Robert E. Nicholas, stated clerk, reads paper to the 37th General Assembly meeting at Multnomah School of the Bible, Portland, Oregon.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1970

The Church's Outreach

Detailed reports from the major standing committees are given in the Agenda. The comments below focus mainly on aspects of our missionary out-reach that were not given in the printed reports.

Foreign Missions

There were thirteen ordained missionaries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at the end of 1969. Since then the Clarence Duffs have left Ethiopia for retirement, and the Herbert Birds are to leave that same field in 1971. Though the Arthur Steltzers are soon to take up work there, the changes will still leave the Ethiopian field with only one ordained missionary together with the medical staff of the hospital in Ghinda.

This shortage of personnel in Ethiopia is one of the major problems immediately confronting the Committee on Foreign Missions. But similar problems are coming soon on other fields as missionaries there retire. Simply to maintain the present level requires more candidates for service and more financial support to get them onto the fields of labor.

In the face of such needs, and partly meaning to answer them, the committee presented some very far-reaching goals for the next ten years. These call for increasing the number of ordained missionaries to twenty-six, with six each in Formosa, Japan, and Korea, four in Ethiopia, and two each in two new fields. The committee reports that "financially these goals are realistic. . . . An increase in contributions amounting to 10% per year would provide the funds." The challenge is there; will there be workers to go forth and money to send them?

Home Missions

Home mission work has never had the emotional appeal that seems to go with mission work overseas. Yet there are souls to be reached, believers to be strengthened, and churches to be built here at home.

Perhaps the most interest in the work of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension focused on the innercity work of William Krispin in South Philadelphia and that of Missionary-at-large John Thompson in his effort to make new contacts and encourage small groups all over the country. Yet the faithful labors of home missionaries and devoted members will always be part of the church's work, not always exciting or even encouraging, but carrying out the Lord's commission in joyful service.

It seems clear enough that we now live in a pagan country, a field for missions indeed. We should also recognize that major increases in other outreach endeavors will depend very much on a strengthened home base. Though blessed with an abundance of material wealth, there is not an unlimited supply. We need to think carefully how we can most expediently use the Lord's money to serve the Kingdom in this present age.

Christian Education

The development of the Sunday school curriculum continues to be the major concern for the Committee on

Christian Education. The effort at present is concentrated on completing the Junior High material and on getting Junior materials into production. With its limited resources committed to so large an undertaking, the committee is unable to do many other tasks that it knows should be done.

Since the committee's report was drawn up, there have been changes in its staff. John Mitchell, writer of the Senior Sunday school material, has left to take up work for the *Guardian*. Then the committee employed Allen Curry as Director of Educational Services, partly to promote the committee's materials, but mainly to serve as a helper to churches in planning their educational programs and using the printed helps.

Of great encouragement to the committee is the agreement with the Christian Reformed Board of Publications for joint publishing of parts of the Sunday school curriculum. Not only does this arrangement relieve the work load but it will provide added income to the committee. It is good to be able to supply a need in that church, one that has given us so much help over the years.

General Benevolence

Ordinarily the report of the Committee on General Benevolence receives a minimum of attention at General Assembly. This year, however, several proposals were offered to direct the committee to expand its work. Concern to do more in urban areas was expressed; but apparently the commissioners felt it unwise to single out one area for particular concentration. Instead, the Assembly instructed the committee to "examine ways of expanding its diaconal ministry . . . to the needs of the poor and distressed in the church and the world." Again, whether it can will depend on the response of the Lord's people to the work of mercy today.

Outreach and money

Every program of missionary outreach today costs money, money given by the God's people to the Lord's work. Over the years there has been a steady, if not phenomenal, growth in responsible stewardship among Orthodox Presbyterians.

So far during the months of 1970, contributions to the major standing committees have been above those of 1969. The increases for home and foreign missions have enabled those committees to meet their budget plans. The contributions to Christian education has noticeably increased, a fact that seems to be explained as due to the increased awareness of many to the need for soundly biblical instructional materials.

Every church member should ask himself two questions about his practice in giving: Am I giving to the Lord in proportion to the Lord's provision to me? In today's affluence that question is a crucial one. The other question has been mentioned above: How shall I apportion the Lord's money so as best to serve the needs of the Kingdom today? Let us study God's Word, pray for increased wisdom, and do some careful thinking. We hear it so often, but the fields are no less white today!

Doctrine of Scripture

In 1968, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands brought certain questions about Scripture and its inspiration to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The RES urged each of its member churches to give the matter serious study. In response, last year's General Assembly appointed a special committee to prepare a reply. The committee, consisting of Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr., Dr. George W. Knight III, and Professor Norman Shepherd, presented their reply; the crucial portions of it, as adopted by this year's Assembly, are given here.

The Inspiration of Scripture

In the production of Scripture God employed men, and he did so without violence to the full range and integrity of their personalities. The mode of biblical inspiration places the church before a deep mystery which gives rise to continuing reflection upon the way in which the human writers function. The validity of these observations is beyond question. Indeed, it is just this careful attention to the writings of the various authors in all their respective individuality and particularity which serves to disclose in all the richness of its diversity the organic character of the unity of biblical revelation. Nevertheless, all such reflection must remain within and be controlled by the recognition that in the most proper sense of the word God is the final and sole author of the text of Scripture. It is striking that when Scripture itself explicitly conjoins the activity of God and men in the production of Scripture, it does so for the express purpose of subordinating the function of the human writers that it may thereby magnify the divine origin and character of what is written. In the words of the Report [on Scripture to the 1958 RES, Potchefstroom], "The real author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, who employed the prophets and apostles as his organs, and since the action of the Holy Spirit in inspiration was pervasive, the Bible is wholly divine

in all its parts and in all its elements, in its forms of expression as well as in the contents of its teaching. In short, the Bible is the absolutely reliable and authoritative Word of the Most High God" (Acts, 1958, p. 49).

The Authority of Scripture

Holy Scripture ought at all times to be obeyed without reservation. At the same time, the church's obedient response is not the measure of biblical authority. It is not the case that Scripture is authoritative only insofar as its message is obeyed or only by virtue of the fact that it functions authoritatively. It must always be recognized that the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit in the church is not "the authority-imparting factor" (*ibid.*, p. 46). It does not make Scripture authoritative. Rather this witnessing activity compels a recognition of the authority antecedently inherent in the text of Scripture because God is its author. Until that day when her Lord returns, the church will continue to be faced with perplexing questions in her concern to be obedient to the authority of Scripture. But what will remain certain and must ever serve as an immovable point of reference in this concern is the conviction that Scripture possesses authority because God is its author so that the authority of the text is nothing less than the absolute and irrefragable authority of the Most High God.

Any notion of the authority of Scripture in disjunction from its content and purpose is a meaningless abstraction. Indeed, the authority of Scripture is the authority of redemptive revelation; its central purpose is to lead sinners to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to bring into willing subjection to his Lordship. Nevertheless, that authority ultimately derives from and is grounded in not the message of Scripture but God its author. Together with the Report we affirm in the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith: "The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God" (I, iv).

John Thompson reporting on "Southern strategy"

J. Peterson/H. Peterson: "That's my boy!"

Rollin Keller speaking on benevolence work



Ecumenical Relations

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, EVANGELICAL SYNOD

Editor's note: Relations with the RPCES are also discussed in the report by Herbert L. Hathaway on the RP Synod, and the address to that Synod by Robert K. Churchill entitled "What Hath God Wrought!" These are both to be found elsewhere in this issue.

Relations, and possible merger, with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod have been a major item of discussion at General Assembly since 1966, when the Assembly instructed its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to "work toward the ultimate goal of organic union between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, on a scriptural basis." Discussions with a corresponding committee from the RPCES have been held regularly since then, and a *Proposed Basis of Union* (providing for a united church committed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, with the Form of Church Government of the RPCES and the Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship of the OPC) was presented to the highest judicatory of both churches last year. The *Proposed Basis of Union* was sent to presbyteries and sessions for study in both denominations. The next major step would be the drawing up of an actual *Plan of Union*; but work toward this goal was delayed when the OP Assembly extended the time for study of the *Proposed Basis of Union* until at least January 1, 1971.

Meanwhile, the two committees have discussed various matters of possible difference between the two churches. In a general appraisal of the progress toward union, the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations reported to this year's Assembly that it felt "a greater understanding of the issues which are approached in different way by different officers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod has been attained." At the same time it was noted that "progress toward agreement is slower than had been anticipated by some."

More specifically, the committee reported its evaluation that "there is a common commitment to the Reformed Faith and Reformed standards on the part of the two denominations." The committee also believes that "the imperative to union is such that union should be pursued with a view to providing a single church in which there could be differences of opinion on subjects concerning which there needs to be further progress toward biblical standards."

A minority report took issue with both the evaluation of a "common commitment" and the imperative to work toward union now. The minority felt that at least a part of the RPCES had "apparently a different view of what the Reformed Faith means," and urged a thorough dealing

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Editor's note: See also the report, given elsewhere in this concerning the 1970 Synod of the CRC.

In 1966, the General Assembly instructed its Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church to "work toward the ultimate goal of organic union between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed Church on a scriptural basis." Discussions with a corresponding committee of the CRC have been held in the years since then, and at first there was encouraging progress. In its report to this year's Assembly, however, the committee came with a much less hopeful evaluation. Much time had been spent in its joint meetings on "the question of theological trends in the Christian Reformed Church, especially as those trends seemed to point in the direction of departure from the creeds of the church."

The CRC committee members felt that the OPC was "suspicious and that we read almost all Christian Reformed writers expecting to find heresy." These men insisted that discipline was being pursued in regard to some of these matters, but declared that "free theological discussion and writing would continue and perhaps increase." The OP committee, on the other hand, found "a trend toward liberalism which at points is being checked by the disciplinary process but at other points is not."

The result is to leave it quite uncertain as to "where we go now and what we do from now on." Nevertheless, the committee recommended that discussions be continued and the Assembly agreed. (The OP committee consists of Messrs. Jay E. Adams, Calvin A. Busch, John P. Galbraith, George W. Marston, and Jack J. Peterson.)

with differences "before union takes place." The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations was also criticized for not providing "sufficient grounds for the conclusion that 'there is a common commitment to the Reformed Faith, etc.'"

The Assembly did not adopt the actual recommendations of the minority report, but it was obviously influenced by them. It did adopt the only recommendation of its committee that the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations be authorized "to arrange if possible for such a study [i.e., of "the church's responsibility in defining ethical applications of the Word of God," which was seen as "an issue of importance between the two communions"] with a corresponding committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod." In other words, the role of the church in speaking on matters of "Christian liberty" or the "separated life" is to be the subject studied.

Abortion Resolution

The Presbytery of New Jersey presented the Assembly with an overture proposing a resolution that affirmed God's giving of life and condemning abortion except to preserve the life of the mother. The resolution was intended to serve as a declaration of the church that might be used in any local situation, but particularly in regard to various efforts to legislate "liberalized abortion."

Discussion of the overture took more time than was given any other item on the docket. Some commissioners felt that a biblical basis for the statement had to be supplied before its adoption. Others saw the statement as incomplete or lacking in precision of its terminology. Some desired to add qualifications to it; others were uncertain whether even the preservation of the mother's life was biblically justified as a grounds for taking a human life. Obviously the subject of abortion involves some very crucial matters and requires very careful statement.

On the other hand, proponents of the resolution argued that, even with possible deficiencies, the urgency of the issue demanded some action without delay. Legislatures all over the country are being confronted with demands to enact liberalized abortion laws. Even the Congress itself may soon have the matter before it. The arguments used are largely humanistic, alleging the "right" of a woman not to bear children, the need to relieve psychological or economic problems, even the urgency to prevent further "population explosion." The issue is current and alive.

The Assembly, after some improvements to the original resolution, finally determined that more study and better

formulation were required. Some readers may feel that here is another instance of aborting a crucial question by bottling it up in a committee. But if the church is to speak God's will on such matters, it surely must be careful to speak only what God's Word speaks. The committee to study the subject will feel real pressure to provide a report within one year. Delay beyond that time would rob the result of much of its practical usefulness in today's situation.

The committee to study abortion consists of the following: Professors John M. Frame (Convener) and Paul Woolley, of Westminster Seminary; Dr. Joseph Memme-laar, ruling elder and surgeon from Bangor, Maine; the Rev. Robert L. Malarkey, pastor in Bartlesville, Oklahoma; and Dr. Tom De Meester, ruling elder and surgeon from Baltimore. This assignment is a strenuous one, and the committee needs the particular prayers of the whole church.

But the Assembly also laid a direct responsibility concerning this subject on the rest of us. It determined "*that in view of the growing prevalence of immoral abortion in our nation and the effects of this on the moral fibre of the nation, the General Assembly urges the sessions of the church to make diligent study of this question and to take appropriate action relative to pending civil legislation or other pertinent situations in their respective communities.*" The time for that is now, and the urgency is real. May the Lord grant that we may speak on this matter all and no more than is spoken in the Word!

Ahlfeldt at Home Again

After months of hospitalization, and a brief period at home that a broken leg abruptly ended, the Rev. Carl A. Ahlfeldt is back home once more. Mr. Ahlfeldt, pastor of Pilgrim Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Bangor, Maine until illness prevented further labor, was stricken with multiple myeloma, a bone-cell disease that progressively weakens the skeletal structure and can cause severe pain. Somewhat to the surprise of the doctors, medication has proved helpful and most of the pain is gone. This improvement required the patient to undergo all the withdrawal problems of "kicking" a drug habit as his system adjusted to the discontinuation of pain-killing drugs.

Mr. Ahlfeldt is still quite weak and must be careful in his movements, but is able to get around with the aid of a walker and wheelchair. In a letter to the editor he says,

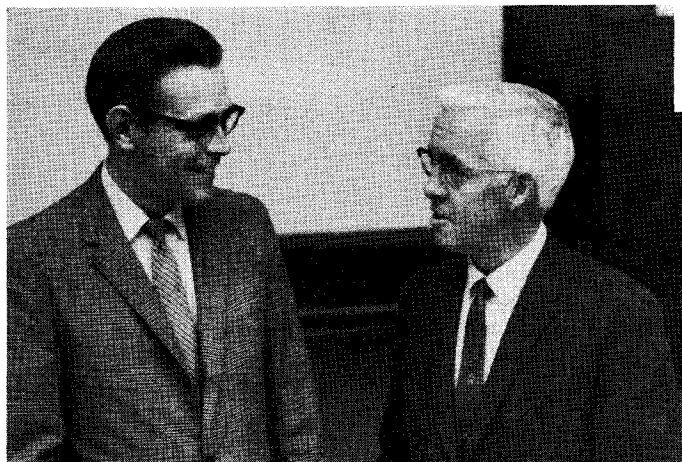
"I appreciate the opportunity of responding to the many brethren who wrote to me from the General Assembly. [About 75 commissioners wrote notes to him at that time.] My reaction is threefold: First, there is a sense of deep humility that they should do this for me. Second, there is a sense of great gratitude for the assurance of their prayers. Third, I deeply appreciate the love and esteem of my many brethren. I have read and reread your valued notes.

"Let me take this occasion also to thank again the many churches and individuals who have contributed to our expense. Especially we would express our appreciation to the Committee on General Benevolence for its great help in past months to stand in the gap for us. We can but marvel at God's gracious provision of our every material need; therefore, I would thank you all again.

"I have been asked whether there be any particular spiritual lesson gained through these days. One portion of Scripture has been especially precious: 'And . . . there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong' (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Never have I felt more weak or more needy; but thank God also, never has His grace been more sufficient.

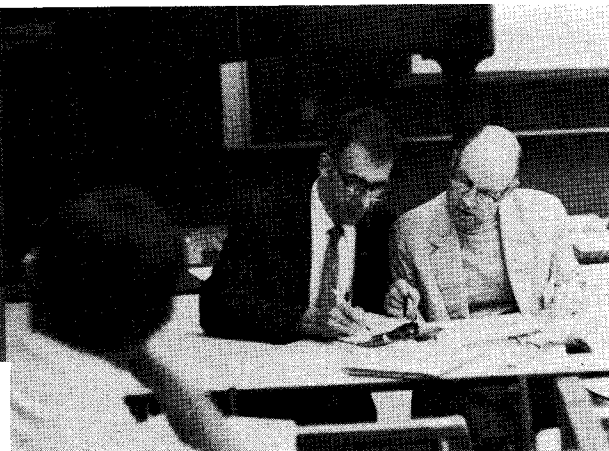
"May I ask once again for your continuing prayers."

Other Assembly Actions



The Rev. Ralph E. Clough (right), moderator of the 36th Assembly, welcomes the Rev. John J. Mitchell, newly elected moderator of the 37th General Assembly.

The Rev. Ronald M. Jenkins (left), assistant clerk, and the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas, stated clerk, work to keep the minutes straight for the 37th General Assembly.



- The Assembly redefined the bounds of the presbyteries so as to place all fifty states within some presbyterial jurisdiction. It also divided the Presbytery of Philadelphia to form the new Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic including the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia.

- In elections to Assembly offices, ruling elder Edward A. Haug was reelected as Statistician; the Rev. Robert E. Nicholas became Stated Clerk, with the Rev. Ronald M. Jenkins given a second stint as Assistant Clerk; the Rev. John J. Mitchell, relieved of his former duties as Stated Clerk, was then elected Moderator.

- Perhaps the most far-reaching proposal affecting the future of the Assembly was the detailed plan for a representative Assembly. The proposal would require amendment of the *Form of Government* as well as the Standing Rules of the Assembly. Proposed to meet the problems of Assemblies too large for convenience or even full debate, the plan would result in commissioners being chosen according to a pattern like that of the U. S. House of Representatives; minister-commissioners from each presbytery would be allotted according to the number of ministers on a presbytery's roll, and elder-commissioners according to the number of churches. (There would not be an equal number of commissioners from each presbytery, therefore, nor would the representation provide for a numerical "parity" of ministers and elders.) Adoption of the proposal requires the approval of two-thirds of the presbyteries and two-thirds of the next Assembly for the change in the *Form of Government*, and adoption of changes in the Standing Rules by the next Assembly. This proposal should receive the most careful study.

- Another proposal that would result in a significant change grew out of the report of the former Stated Clerk in which the heavy burdens of that office were noted. In response, the Assembly proposed a change in the Standing

Rules to the next Assembly that would enlarge the Stated Clerk's duties and make the office a full-time job. The Assembly also increased the "honorarium" for the present Stated Clerk to \$1500. The creation of a full-time Stated Clerk's position will seem to some to be a dangerous centralization of authority; it is certainly a centralization, but the possible "danger" and "authority" would be subject to Assembly control. It would also cost money, but the present arrangement is grossly unfair to the incumbent and is not serving the church very well. Sessions and presbyteries should study this matter carefully.

- An overture to last year's Assembly had urged publication of a church paper, possibly *The Presbyterian Guardian* under Assembly control. This was referred to the Committee on Christian Education for study, and the committee recommended to this year's Assembly that a special committee of five be erected to study the whole matter, both as to the merits of such a paper, the specific qualities that should characterize it, as well as the relative priority it should have on the resources of the church. The Assembly approved this recommendation and elected Messrs. George W. Knight III, Robert E. Nicholas, Edwin C. Urban, Robley J. Johnston and Paul Fromer as the Committee on a Church Paper.

- Neither the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government nor that on Revisions to the Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship had final reports for this Assembly. The Committee on Revisions to the Hymnal, finding little need for revision at this time, recommended that it be discontinued; the Assembly approved this request.

- The Assembly determined to have next year's Assembly meet at Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware on May 24, 1971. The Emmanuel (formerly Eastlake) Church will observe its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1971.

THE CONDEMNED

HENRY W. CORAY

When the Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of New Brunswick disallowed the introduction of doctrinal material into Dr. Machen's trials it became abundantly clear that the accused was to be denied those items which constituted the very core of his defense. From then on, the outcome was never in doubt. On March 9, 1935, Machen, foreseeing this, released a statement which was published in *New York Times*:

Yesterday's action of the Special Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of New Brunswick of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which is "trying" me because of my membership in the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, exhibits a blatancy of unfairness which goes even beyond what might have been expected from so partisan a court.

Without allowing a word of evidence or argument, the commission simply announced that all consideration of the constitutionality of the action of the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. against the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions would be debarred, and also all criticism of the doctrinal policy of the official Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

A moment's consideration will show that simply prejudices my whole case without even allowing me a hearing.

I am to be condemned on the ground that I have disobeyed a lawful order, but am not allowed to be heard when I offer to prove that the order is not lawful but unlawful.

And I am to be condemned for making false assertions against the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., but not allowed to be heard when I offer to prove that those assertions are not false but true.

It is difficult to see how ruthless unfairness could go much further than that.

Fair-minded people, whether in the church or outside of it, will ask why friends of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America are apparently so anxious to prevent light from being shed into the affairs of that board.

Every honest treasurer not only permits but demands that his books shall be audited. One might think that friends of the Board of Foreign

Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America would make a similar demand regarding the activities of that board.

But as a matter of fact, though they talk about an examination supposed to have been carried on in secret committees of the General Assembly, they refuse any examination the moment the doors are opened as public opinion required them to be opened in the sessions of this judicial commission.

I for one cannot be a party to any such concealment. I must, in simple fulfilment of my ordination pledge, do all I can to let light into this dark place, in order that sweetness and honesty and peace may be regained.

I have no doubt but that I shall be condemned by this commission for doing so. But I cannot regard it as any great disgrace to be condemned by a commission that has unanimously confirmed as its presiding officer a signer of a document, the Auburn Affirmation, that casts despite upon the holiest things of the Christian religion.

This commission has dishonored Christ before it dishonors me.

The publication of the article infuriated Machen's judges. At the subsequent court session of March 19, the Moderator of the Judicial Commission demanded to know if the statement had been sent to the paper over the defendant's signature. Mr. Griffiths, Counsel for the Accused, asked the Commission "under what section of the Book of Discipline this inquiry is made?" Then followed a verbal conflict between Griffiths and the Moderator. This quote (in part) is from the official transcript of the trial:

THE MODERATOR: There is a very clear statement in the Book of Discipline that in a matter of trial we have to be very careful about publicity that is given to the newspapers.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Moderator, the defense would like to have the question answered.

THE MODERATOR: There is a very clear statement in the Book of Discipline. We would like to have the statement from Dr. Machen, whether this is correct or not.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Moderator, may the statement be entered on the

record?

THE MODERATOR: As it is in the Books of Discipline?

MR. GRIFFITHS: May it be read and admitted in the record, I mean, the statement in the Book of Discipline, not the statement there.

THE MODERATOR: I am looking for the statement in the Book of Discipline.

MR. HANKINSON: May I ask the defendant a question?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

MR. HANKINSON: Do you care to answer this question, Dr. Machen?

MR. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Moderator—

MR. HANKINSON: I am asking a question of Dr. Machen, sir. This is out of order.

MR. GRIFFITHS: I don't care of whom he is asking the question. I am counsel in this case and all questions of the defense must be put to me.

THE MODERATOR: "No party to case of administrative or judicial discipline before a higher judicatory shall circulate, or cause to be circulated among the members of the judicatory, any written or printed arguments or briefs upon any matter in question, before the disposition of the question by the judicatory hearing the same, except at the request or direction of that judicatory."

MR. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Moderator, may I ask for the reference on that?

THE MODERATOR: Chapter 12, Section 3.

MR. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Moderator, may I ask what you understand by the words "no party to a case of administrative or judicial discipline before a higher judicatory—"? May I ask you, sir, if you consider this to be a higher judicatory, and if so what the lower judicatory was.

THE MODERATOR: We feel this might have an effect on the higher judicatory that will review this case.

MR. GRIFFITHS: That is not what this says, "No party to a case of administrative or judicial discipline before a higher judicatory—." You might possibly say this would apply after this case has been closed toward the circularization, if you wish to speak of it in that manner, of the members of the Synod of New Jersey which, of course, we do not concede any newspaper statement would naturally do. Nevertheless, it is quite clear this has nothing to do with state-

ments issued by defendants when the case is not pending before a higher judiciary.

The silent accused

Again the Moderator asked Dr. Machen if he would answer the original question: had he in fact released the statement to the *Times* over his signature? On constitutional grounds the accused retained a dignified silence. The debate between Griffiths and the Moderator sputtered to a grinding halt.

The futility of maintaining a defense in the face of overwhelming odds finally drew this declaration from Mr. Griffiths: "In view of the rulings of this Commission as to evidence and argument, the defense simply requests what it has said before, that you have not permitted us to make any constitutional case, and, therefore, we do not feel that there is any further function to play so far as these charges are concerned."

Eventually the trial reached its climax when with great solemnity the Clerk read the charges (previously listed) against the defendant. A vote as to his guilt or innocence was taken. By a count of six to nothing the Commission, sitting as a court of Jesus Christ, found the accused guilty. The official pronouncement was then read:

The Judicial Commission in accordance with the above findings and in exercise of the authority vested in it, does hereby judge and determine that the said Defendant, J. Gresham Machen, shall be suspended from the office of a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, until such time as he shall give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

The irony of the verdict given that day was not lost on certain public figures doctrinally out of accord with Machen's stand, as well as by churchmen sympathetic to his position.

Albert C. Diffenbach, a learned Unitarian, religious editor of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, wrote:

Here is a man of distinction in scholarship and of unquestionable devoutness who for twenty years and more has declared that those who control the power of his communion have repudiated the authentic and official Presbyterian faith in favor of a modernistic emasculation of the pure Gospel of the Bible and the Reformation. It is a dramatic situation extraordinary for its utter reversal of the usual situation in a judicial doctrinal conflict. It amounts virtually to this: one man

is declaring that, in administrative effect, his whole church has become heretical.

Dr. Daniel Russell, Moderator of the Presbytery of New York, a notoriously liberal body, said:

Was Dr. Machen's trial a fair one? Ecclesiastical lawyers maintain that no question of doctrine is involved. In the more adequate view there are doctrinal differences that run into the heart of the entire problem. These the accused was not permitted to discuss in the defense.

Strong evangelically minded church leaders were equally incensed over the verdict. Dr. A. Z. Conrad, minister of Boston's famous Park Street Congregational Church exploded:

Not for a generation has anything so high-handed, so unjust, so utter-

ly un-Christian been witnessed as the trial of Dr. Gresham Machen in the New Brunswick Presbytery.

Machen's close friend and former fellow-seminarian, Dr. Clarence Edward Macartney, asserted:

Sad, lamentable, tragic, unthinkable that the church Dr. Machen has served for thirty years, and more than twenty of them at our oldest and most famous seminary, and to which he has brought renown by his great talent, should now repay him by casting him out of its fellowship.

One can almost hear the echo of the plaintive cry of the prophet Isaiah:

Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let God be glorified (Isaiah 66:5).

COMING IN THE GUARDIAN . . .

YOU will be reading about

- Evolution and the interpretation of Genesis
- "Liberalized" abortion—or legalized murder?
- The Fourth Commandment for the Christian
- Prayer in the life of the believer
- Christians confronting this secular world
- The "Christian liberty" question now
- A "new hermeneutic" in Reformed circles
- The Christian woman, in church and society
- What are Christian young people saying?
- News and reports from Reformed churches

IF your subscription has not expired! Check the expiration date in the address label on the back cover. You and many others will help us meet rising costs. Subscriptions do **not** cover publishing costs for the **Guardian!**

Renew your subscription, or subscribe for a friend. Use this form:

Mail to:

The Presbyterian Guardian
7401 Old York Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19126
Sir: Please send the **GUARDIAN** to

Name:

Street address/box number

City and state ZIP

I am enclosing \$..... for year(s) of the **GUARDIAN**. (The rate for individuals is still \$3.00 per year; for members of clubs, \$2.50 per year.)

I am also enclosing \$..... as a contribution.

Return Requested

“What Hath God Wrought !”

(continued from page 50)

a blessing that was! Ministers were actually forced to study theology! And the practical side of the problem came gradually to the fore—the sincere offer of the gospel to all men. What a strange sight in modern days—Hebrew texts written on a blackboard before a General Assembly; an exegesis conference lasting three days!

There were no newspaper headlines about this debate and the decision; but we heard Christ speak with new urgency, “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields: they are white already to harvest.” But how could we offer the gospel sincerely to all men if God had not? Suddenly we awoke to the fact that we were fighting hyper-Calvinism, a battle every Reformed Christian must fight sooner or later. In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Word of God won the battle so that no one could take one bit of glory. “*What hath God wrought!*”

What about merger?

What of the proposed merger of our two churches? A year has brought changes. There has come discouragement. Negotiations may grind to a

halt on unanswered questions or basic differences. Our General Assembly has asked its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to supply more information to the church to show the existence of a common commitment to the Reformed Faith in both our churches.

But this may spell hope rather than defeat. Willingness to face the issues honestly, rather than sweep them under the rug, could make for unity rather than disunity. The need for each of us to show that our commitment to the Reformed Faith is well-founded is hardly an impediment to the marriage of true minds. The life-blood of that church union which honors God is Christian unity. If we cannot achieve that unity in spirit and in truth then let church union be postponed.

We will do anything to win the world for Christ. But there is one thing we cannot do—we cannot suffer any diminution or reduction in that message God has given us. We will do anything to unite the scattered church of Christ. But we cannot see any shrinking or dismantling of that divinely structured faith that God in his mercy has put into our trust.

Of the things we have said, this is the sum: Two parts of Christ’s church stand here in a new kind of confrontation. We are conscious of our sins. In fact, we may wonder why the Lord has not removed the candlestick from its place! Nevertheless, I have tried to show that, in a few crises in our history, the Word of God prevailed in spite of our weakness and sins. And I am sure that Reformed Presbyterians are equally conscious of the arm of the Lord being laid bare in your midst. There has been a shaping by the hand of God that goes beyond our little boxes of interest.

Now we are come to such a time as this in the history of our nation and the world. We are dull indeed if we do not sense that both the stage and the drama are larger than we once thought. We are conscious also of having so little; but do we not have a few small stones from the brook while the honor of our covenant God is at stake? We would play games; we would shun the awesome responsibility. But the Lord would put into our hand the instruments of the moving drama of world redemption. “*What hath God wrought!*”

Younger faces among the commissioners to the 37th General Assembly.

