

# The Presbyterian Guardian

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First General Assembly

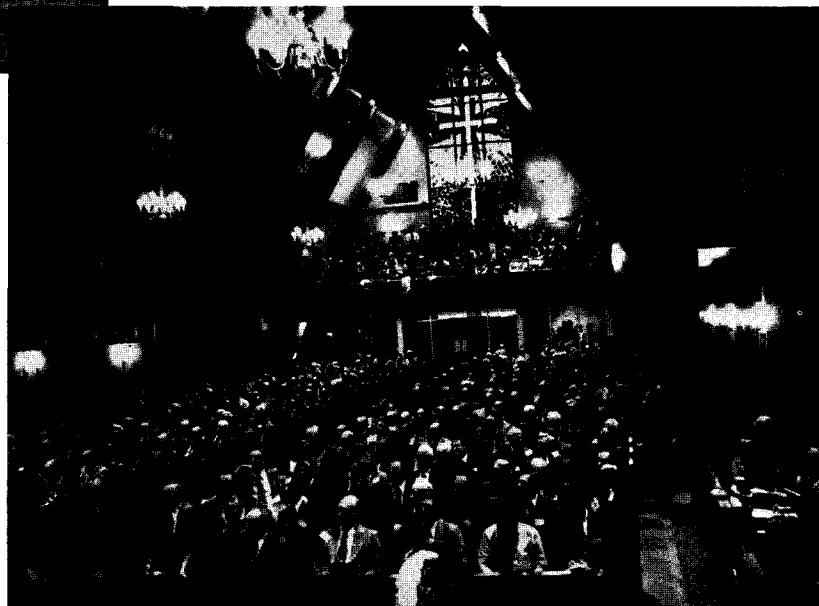
December 4-7, 1973

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Briarwood Presbyterian Church

Birmingham, Alabama

The  
National  
Presbyterian  
Church



More than 260 congregations and 175 ministers have separated from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern), since February 1973. This represents the first major division in the one-million-member denomination since it was organized in 1861.

Why has this division occurred? What has caused it?

Some denominational loyalists, of course, accuse the dissidents of schism, saying that they are merely struggling for personal power or position, or that they are motivated by racism, or by fear of progress and change.

Though we would be highly unrealistic, if not actually dishonest, to hold that not one person in the movement toward a new denomination is motivated unworthily, we should be as seriously in error if we refuse to believe that the overwhelming majority of the people in the movement are motivated by sincere love for Jesus Christ and his truth.

#### Concern for the truth

At stake for most of us is the Truth—the very holiness of God—the honor of Jesus Christ our Savior and Sovereign.

God is holy. He demands that his people be holy. He commands us to put the old man of sin to death, to remain unspotted from the world, to walk not after the flesh but the Spirit, to put sin away and to separate ourselves from it.

He also commands his church, the body of believers, to be holy. The church must separate from itself any who profess faith with the mouth but who are in fact immoral or unbelieving. The church is to strive always to be what she is called to be—the virginal bride of the Lord Jesus.

Ideally, the majority in the church should discipline the immoral or unbelieving minority (1 Corinthians 5;2 John 10). But when the majority is unable to exercise discipline (or refuses to do so), what must the faithful minority do? For the sake of the truth of Jesus Christ, that believing minority must separate from the larger body. Francis Schaeffer calls this "discipline in reverse."

In Acts 19:8-9, we are given a description of the separation of the church from the synagogue. Here certain principles are laid down that are in-

structive to us. Paul, after a period of proclaiming the gospel, finally separated the true disciples when "some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude." The principles are clear: First, Paul diligently worked within the existing body to declare the truth concerning the central issues of the Kingdom of God. Second, when some—not all, or even many—rejected the truth, the Apostle initiated the separation. Third, Paul did not wait for the leaders of the synagogue to expel him, but left with the disciples in tow and went to another preaching place.

#### Separating from "evil speaking"

A similar situation prevails in the Southern Presbyterian Church today. For years conservatives have sought earnestly to return the denomination to its primary task of evangelism and nurture. But some denominational leaders have "spoken evil of the Way"—in pronouncements, programs, policies, publications—in the name of the Church itself.

The most serious example of such "evil speaking" relates to the Bible. Are the Scriptures truly God's written Word, infallible and authoritative in faith and life, or are they merely "witness and instrument" to God's revelation?

The 1972 General Assembly declared that the authority of the Scripture is no greater than "human reason, church history, and Christian experience"! For a generation, officially endorsed literature has taught that the Bible contains myth, error, "pre-scientific" thought-forms, etc., etc. The account of creation, the historicity of Adam and the Fall, Old Testament miracles, the virgin

# Why we are

birth, Christ's vicarious, substitutionary atonement, his physical resurrection from the dead, the Second Coming, the Day of Judgment, and the reality of an eternal Hell—all these precious and important doctrines have been denied, or called into serious question in the official life of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.

Universalism, anti-Trinitarianism, situational ethics, and semi-Pelagianism are among the heresies that are condoned and tolerated in the Church.

The denomination's highest court has placed the Church on record in opposition to biblical teaching concerning capital punishment, obedience to civil law, divorce, and the ordination of women. Official committee reports and Assembly-endorsed literature have advocated premarital sex, adultery, the use of addictive drugs by youth, and abortions for socio-economic reasons.

Recently one ordained minister ran for public office on the Communist Party ticket; another participated in a wedding of homosexuals. Their presbyteries refused to discipline them.

#### Seeking a Spiritual church

A foundational principle of the Southern Church in 1861 was the doctrine of the Spirituality of the Church. This was defined as meaning that the Church had no right to legislate or speak on merely civil or social matters where Christ himself has not spoken or legislated in his Word. Since 1934, the denomination has repeatedly violated this principle by speaking out on practically every passing social phenomenon.

For instance, since 1960 the PCUS has declared its collective mind (which in reality usually represents only the

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# Leaving

mind of the Council on Church and Society and a few other denominational leaders) on such diverse subjects as: the anti-ballistic missile program, birth control, the United Nations, sex, the Middle East crisis, the Vietnam War, campus disorders, poverty, hunger, disarmament, the population explosion, welfare reform, family planning (it is unPresbyterian to have more than two children!), school breakfast and lunch programs, the public school system, and segregation.

## Another voice

### Have the separatists done all that bad?

When people get together to talk about the present withdrawal of congregations from the Presbyterian Church US, it is almost universally assumed that separation movements in the past have produced denominations characterized by evangelical ineffectiveness.

Specifically opponents of the present separation point to the smallness of the two Presbyterian denominations resulting from the 1936 split in the northern Church—the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Their combined communicant membership of less than 30,000 is proof, say the critics, of their ineffectiveness.

A strong *prima facie* argument. Thirty thousand is small.

But just because a baby is small doesn't mean it's unhealthy. In 1955, the two Churches had only half as many communicants, totaling less than 13,000. Such a growth rate, 100 per cent, compares favorably to the 22 per cent rate in the PCUS over the same period. We cannot tell whether the evangelical contingent in the PCUS

Conservatives believe that the Word of God demands that we bring disciplinary action against such blatant deviations from the Truth, that we seek zealously the purity—the Spirituality—of the Church, in love. This we have done. Literally hundreds of overtures and resolutions from individuals, sessions, and presbyteries have flooded the Assemblies, calling upon the denomination to discipline itself. None of these efforts has succeeded.

What then is left for us to do?

during that time has increased or decreased.

Most of this growth has come only recently. Leaders in both denominations note a shift in just the past few years away from the stifling negativism and sometime parochialism of earlier years to a stronger evangelistic emphasis. The RPCES has been regularly reporting yearly growth rates of more than six per cent.

But members alone cannot adequately describe the contributions of these denominations. Covenant Seminary (RPCES) in St. Louis and Westminster Seminary (independent but largely supported by the OPC) in Philadelphia have been producing hundreds of fine graduates who have filled evangelical pulpits in many denominations. World Presbyterian Missions of the RPCES is fielding approximately 70 full missionaries, a ratio of one missionary for every 215 members. The PCUS, meanwhile, supports 400 missionaries for a ratio of one missionary for every 2,300 parishioners, and the United Presbyterian

Separate.

"Those who seriously have tried to bring the church to reformation but have found that the church not only refuses to come to reformation, but rather continues to shield error and heresy affecting the fundamentals of the Christian faith, have the *right* and the *duty* to separate from their Church" (Klaas Runia, *Reformation Today*, p. 123).

For the sake of the holiness of God and the integrity of his Word and the purity of his church, we are bound by conscience to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church, U.S., and form a new denomination that, God enabling, will be true to the Bible, to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

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*The Rev. Paul G. Settle of Montgomery, Alabama, has been active in preparing for the birth of the Continuing Presbyterian Church. Mr. Settle has been working especially to develop the new denomination's Christian education program.*

Church USA suffers even more.

The intellectual leadership provided by the two denominations has served the Reformed and evangelical community well: J. Gresham Machen (who led the 1936 separation); Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary; Gordon H. Clark, well-known author who recently retired from the philosophy department of Butler University; J. Oliver Buswell Jr., retired from Covenant Seminary and former president of Wheaton College; Francis Schaeffer, whose international reputation as evangelist to students is unsurpassed in the Reformed world; and many, many others who have diligently labored over the years.

We think it is time to question the critics who see only the sad and unfortunate aspects of withdrawal. No, the separatists haven't done so badly. By God's grace, they will do even better in the years ahead.

So speaks Dr. G. Aiken Taylor, editor of *The Presbyterian Journal* and active participant in the organization of the Continuing Presbyterian Church in the South. This editorial appeared in the September 19 issue of the *Journal*.

# Gathered for the Glory of God

W. Jack Williamson

*Ruling Elder W. Jack Williamson served as Contender of the First General Assembly of the Continuing Presbyterian Church. Portions of his opening address are given here.*

We gather at the call of Almighty God, in the providence of our heavenly Father, to worship our creator, "to glorify and enjoy him forever." We gather to continue a true branch of the church of Jesus Christ, in allegiance to our Lord as the sole Head of the church and only Lawgiver in Zion.

## **Purpose and nature**

The purpose of the church, our portion of which becomes an ecclesiastical entity today, is to exist solely for God's sake. Its purpose lies not in us, to prepare us for heaven, but in God and the glory of his Name. Its origin is in God, its manifestation is from God, its purpose is and always shall be to magnify God's glory.

In its nature, the church is a spiritual organism, including heaven and earth. As we are in the world but not of it, so the church's center is in heaven not on earth. Now we see it as though in silhouette; in the future, the new Jerusalem shall descend out of heaven from God. The true sanctuary is above, with its altar of atonement, its incense of prayer, its only High Priest ministering before God. Christ, in human flesh, has entered the invisible; with him there is the real church.

But who are we to gather and continue on earth a visible branch of this true church? We are those chosen, regenerated, and given every spiritual blessing in Christ, all to the glory of God's grace (Ephesians 1:3-12). We are but sinners saved by grace, and creatures sent out to be ambassadors for our Savior. We are confessors of Christ living in ecclesiastical union and obedient to Christ's ordinances.

We are called to be a visible manifestation of the true church on earth. Christ's church is not a building, an institution, or a spiritual order; it is a group of living stones built on Christ the cornerstone. The church is not a number of pious people united in groups for religious purposes. But the real church is the body of Christ, composed of people who have been born again, united as a priesthood of believers.

Merely for pious, sincere people to get together is not sufficient to form a true church of Christ. This would be only a religious society. There are many of these in our land, but far fewer real Christian churches. Satan uses these societies to mislead people into believing that to be "religious" is to be "Christian." Many of these people may be absolutely sincere—but they are certainly wrong. Saul of Tarsus was deeply and sincerely religious; but the "chief of sinners" was certainly wrong, until he met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Paul became a Christian through the regenerative power of a personal encounter with Christ. Thereafter he was called and sent as an ambassador of the gospel. He preached this gospel and formed many true branches of the church. This true church on earth consists of those who have been

incorporated into Christ, who bow before him, who live in his Word and obey his ordinances.

## **For the purity of truth**

We do not claim to be perfect, nor shall our branch of Christ's church be perfect here on earth. But we do assert that we have been chosen by grace through faith to know Jesus as Savior; that we have been regenerated by the power of the Spirit; that we have been called to proclaim Christ's Word on earth, administer his sacraments to believers, and exercise discipline in the body to preserve the purity of his truth.

As we stand before the face of God and know our hearts and minds, this is the necessity laid upon us. It is not that we would, it is that we must. Today we raise a banner of the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ before this watching world, a banner distinct from those of many false religious societies bearing his name. It shall be a standard to which "the wise and the just may repair." We are but continuing a true branch of Christ's church on this earth. God being our helper, we can do no other.

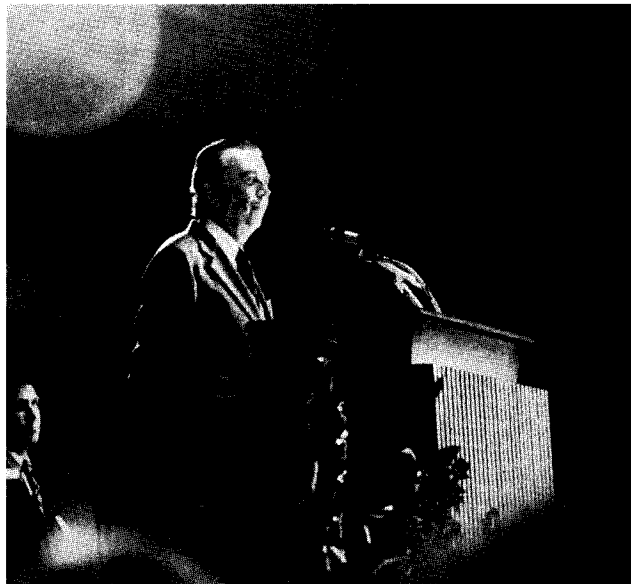
The principle that motivates us, that makes this a necessity for us, is the principle of the purity of the visible church. In order to practice this principle, we have had to leave the visible branch with which we have been associated. We have separated in order to maintain that principle. It has been heartrending, traumatic, accompanied with much prayer, great sorrow and mourning. But to practice the principle of the purity of the visible church, we had to pay the price of separation.

This required us to settle a prior issue, to realize that the church we loved as an organization was not first—but Christ is first. Once Christ is no longer King and Lord in a church, then that church cannot have our loyalty. Long ago faithful men saw our former church losing her first love, as liberalism and modernism made significant inroads in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., as early as the 1940s.

Valiant Christian soldiers fought to return that beloved church to her true mission. We can only mention some of the groups that sought to defend the faith. Over twenty-five years ago a group of men from the *Presbyterian Journal* set forth a list of the dangers they saw then before the Church; every danger listed then, save one, is now an accomplished fact in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. It was this group of men who have led us to this place and hour. Praise God for each of them.

In the early 1960s one man was called by God to begin in faith the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship. These men have fearlessly preached the whole counsel of God; many souls have been saved; many others were quickened and nurtured in the faith. Praise God for each of them.

Then in 1964, a group of laymen formed Concerned



W. Jack Williamson, Convener, addresses the opening session of the First General Assembly of what was later named the National Presbyterian Church.

Presbyterians, dedicated to return our beloved Church to its primary mission of evangelism and nurture. They sought to inform that Church of trends toward the liquidation of her historic witness; they sought to arrest such trends through constitutional process in the Church's courts. Many of this group are present today; some have remained behind to seek out those who languish in uncertainty or unconcern. Praise God for each of these soldiers of the cross.

In the late 1960s over 600 ministers, signing a "Declaration of Commitment," organized Presbyterian Churchmen United. They took a fearless stand for the faith. Many have suffered ecclesiastical persecution; yet most of these faithful servants have stood firm. Praise God for each of them.

Finally, let us never forget those who labored in lonely places, those great prayer-warriors, those praying women who spent lonely nights while we traveled, who gave up the best years of the lives of their men, who kept informed so they could educate the men, who built fires under sessions—who deserve as much credit for this hour as any man here. Praise God for each of them.

#### Constrained to leave the PCUS

For over three decades, these people and many more have sought to stop the trends in the Presbyterian Church, U. S. toward humanism, secularism, syncretism. Their efforts failed.

Our beloved former Church has continued the fetish for ecumenism. She is linked already with the United Presbyterian Church through union presbyteries—thus giving approval to the Confession of 1967.

But her greatest deviation has been her attitude toward the Scriptures. The higher critical theories and neo-orthodox views have become the dominant and official position of the PCUS today. The Bible is not God's Word written, not absolute objective truth. It merely contains God's Word, and truth is subjective to man's mind. There is not, I believe, a single professor in the four PCUS seminaries who holds to the doctrine of Scripture of our founding fathers.

Men are consistently being ordained in PCUS presby-

teries who deny cardinal doctrines of Scripture. Universalism is openly defended. Ethics and morality are determined by permissive situationalism. The work of Christ in the world is equated with any noble cause in society. Zeal for the gospel is lost. It appears to me that the PCUS is rapidly becoming a religious society with only an incidental relationship to salvation of souls through faith in Christ.

The denomination is now so much in the hands of liberals that it is no longer possible to have a discipline trial. With no objective standard there can be no judgment. Pluralism is the policy with everyone covered regardless of beliefs. Compromise and concession, live and let live, accommodation of varying views—and the world gets no clear and distinctive view of Jesus Christ. It is to restore this clear witness to Christ that we have felt constrained to separate from the PCUS.

#### Faithful to ordination vows

When I was ordained as a Ruling Elder, I promised to study the peace, unity, edification, and purity of the Church. For a decade I have sought to do this. But I have reluctantly concluded that

(a) I could find little *peace* in a structure whose official acts and doings constantly and consistently contradict my faith;

(b) I could find little *unity* in a structure that advocates a pluralism that tolerates unbelief, for "two cannot walk together except they be agreed";

(c) I could find little *edification* in a structure that continually embarrasses me in its official acts and forces me to spend time in negative reaction and apology;

(d) I could find little hope for *purity* in a structure that permits unbelief to run rampant and has lost its will and ability to discipline.

As I saw my duty, it is not that I wished to go, but that I must. When it became obvious that our beloved Church was abandoning her historic witness and, humanly speaking, the trends could not be stopped, then division became the

*"To practice the principle of the purity of the visible church, we had to pay the price of separation."*

only answer. From then on the only question was that of timing and procedure.

At first we sought a method of peaceful realignment. An acceptable escape clause in the plan of union with the United Presbyterian Church seemed to be the best method for this. Our liberal friends promised this method, and we accepted their promises in good faith. But in February 1973, they succeeded in closing the door by discarding the draft of the plan of union. This method for constitutional division was no longer a viable possibility. Its abandonment by the liberals was an act of pure ecclesiastical expediency. They broke faith with us, and forced us to move to an alternative procedure.

Once the battle for doctrinal purity was lost, we were forced to decide what price to pay to practice the principle of the purity of the visible church. We found it necessary to leave the visible organization to preserve the principle. Separation was the price we had to pay. But note well: We did so with tears—not with drums playing and flags flying.

With Thornwell, in his address to the first General Assembly in 1861, we would claim empathy: "We should be sorry to be regarded by our brethren in any part of the world

as guilty of schism. . . . Our aim has been to promote the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. . . . We have quietly separated, and we are grateful to God that, while leaving for the sake of peace, we leave . . . with the humble consciousness that we ourselves have never given occasion to break the peace."

#### **The commitment that binds us**

We have committed ourselves to the rebirth and continuation of a Presbyterian Church loyal to Scripture, the Reformed faith, and the spiritual mission of Christ commanded in the Great Commission.

For us the Bible is both necessary and sufficient. Apart from Scripture man is hopelessly lost. Man in sin is not only spiritually ill, he is spiritually dead. That is why salvation must come from God. As Paul describes lost sinners, they are "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

When mankind dwells in the darkness of sin, he must have a light in order to see. Such a light God has kindled for us in his holy Word. God also regenerates us, kindling in our hearts a new life. But there is an irreconcilable conflict between the inner world of our hearts and the world outside. The Bible is God's revelation to us of a world of thought, of energies, of a full and beautiful life, in direct opposition to the world.

Scripture is our only infallible rule of faith and practice, in the accepted and ordinary meaning of these terms. Scripture fully contains the will and word of God, what man ought to believe unto salvation and sanctification. God's Word written is without error and is our final authority. We are committed to a church that is loyal to Scripture.

We are committed to a church loyal to the Reformed faith. By this we mean a church that has been renewed according to the Word of God. We seek to recover Christianity in its purity, removing from it the beliefs and practices of

**The Rev. Frank Barker, pastor of the Briarwood Presbyterian Church, with Mr. Williamson during opening service. Reflections are from TV lights.**



our day and generation that have no basis in the Word of God. Only by the Spirit of God can this be accomplished. So we pray for the Spirit to indwell us that this church shall be a clear reflection of the body of Christ.

We believe that this faith is clearly and comprehensively systematized in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. We make no apology that this church will be thoroughly Calvinistic in doctrine and intensely Presbyterian in form of government.

But again with Dr. Thornwell, we affirm that "the ends which we propose to accomplish as a church are . . . to proclaim God's truth as a witness to the nations; to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth, and through the Word, ministers and ordinances, to train them for eternal life." For we have heard our Savior commission us

***"We make no apology that this church will be thoroughly Calvinistic in doctrine and intensely Presbyterian in form of government."***

for the primary mission of his church: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations; . . . and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Confident of the promise of his presence, we shall endeavor after a new obedience to our Lord's great commission.

#### **Our address to others**

For *all the people of the world*, we have this good news: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). God does not desire that any should perish. He sent his Son to earth that sinners might be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. Christ gave his life an atonement for sin, sufficient for all. God calls you to repent and believe this gospel. There is no other way; no man can come to God except through God the Son. The alternative is eternal damnation in hell separated from God. We proclaim God's truth to you regardless of your race, color, creed, or national origin. Repent, and believe this gospel.

To *all the churches of Christ on earth* we send greetings in the ties of Christian brotherhood and common mission. We would cultivate peace and charity with fellow Christians everywhere. We believe and profess one holy catholic and apostolic church, the invisible church that "consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the Head" (Confession of Faith).

We do not hold that ours is the only true church or that we are superior to Christians in other churches. We do declare that the visible unity of Christ's body, though obscured, is not destroyed by its division into different denominations of professing Christians. But all these that maintain the Word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity are to be recognized as true branches of the church of Christ on earth. In his matchless Name we greet you as brothers in Christ.

To *the Reformed family of churches of Jesus Christ*, we extend special greetings. We share with you the sharp accent on Jesus Christ at the heart of our tradition and the foundation of our ecclesiology. We share the view that the church is not only an organism, a fellowship of believers united to Christ, but it is also an institution in society. As such it has distinguishing marks. With you we agree that the marks of

a true church are (1) its preaching of the gospel, (2) its proper administering of the sacraments instituted by Christ, and (3) its exercise of discipline to preserve the honor of Christ, the Head of the church.

With agreement on major points of doctrine and polity, we see great possibilities for closer ties in the future. We seek the "oneness" of which Jesus spoke in John 17. We are convinced there must be a unity of faith before a unity of form. We appreciate the assistance and encouragement you have already given us. We look forward to a closer relationship with you. We see in our mutual relationship the seeds of true ecumenicity. May God hasten the day.

To *the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, we acknowledge our continued love and concern for you. You are our spiritual mother; in your arms we were nurtured, under your ordinances we were baptized, in your courts we were ordained to serve our Lord, and to your visible organization we thought we had committed our lives.

We could sever these ties only with deepest regret. We have done what we think our duty demanded and the honor of Christ required. We sincerely hope that our going may in some way recall you to that historic witness of our common heritage.

Any such separation is traumatic. But in word and deed, we have attempted to show Christian charity for the sake

***"Let men everywhere notice in us the humility, happiness, and holiness that are the effects of nearness to Jesus."***

of peace, for the honor of the church, for the glory of God. We know that many of you agree with us in principle but disagree as to procedure. We respect your right to your judgment before God. We would prefer that you were with us today; your absence makes us feel incomplete.

We covet your continued fellowship in all areas possible. There are so many times and places where we can continue our warm fellowship and friendship. For our part we shall continue to cultivate these opportunities. We now extend to you our hands of love and good will and our open invitation and plea to join us soon. May God hasten that day.

#### **An address to the brethren**

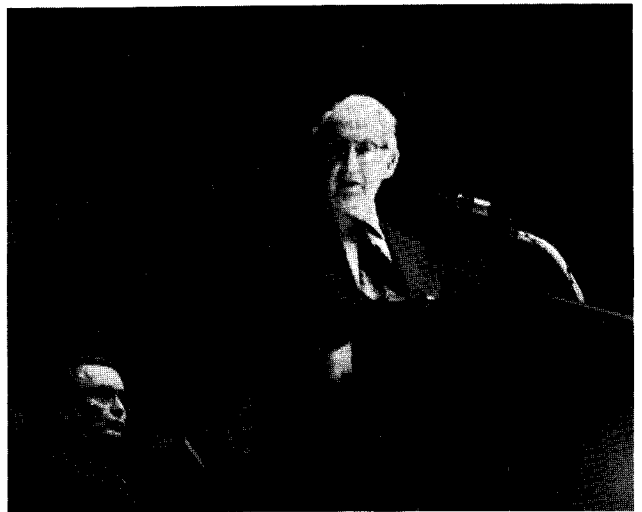
To *our brethren in this Church*, we rejoice with you in praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for bringing us to this hour. Surely his providence has taught us that we are in his will, under his control, led by his Spirit.

I counsel you that our attitude toward others is most important. Regardless of the attitudes or actions of others, we will remember that we represent the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the church. As his ambassadors to the watching world, we must let this mind be in us that was in Christ. Let men everywhere notice in us the humility, happiness, and holiness that are the effects of nearness to Jesus.

Our Lord demonstrated the proper approach when he washed the disciples' feet. We need the Spirit's help to discern the difference between those things revealed in Scripture and those that are the product of human pride and opinion. In the former, we must not compromise; but in the latter, we must learn true humility in subjection to our brethren in the Lord.

We must put away being suspicious of our fellow churchmen; we must trust and believe our brothers until and unless they prove otherwise.

Happiness should also pervade our existence. We should



**Dr. C. Darby Fulton, veteran missionary and former head of the Board of Foreign Missions in the PCUS, addresses the Assembly.**

rejoice and be glad. God has given us an opportunity to witness to his glory the like of which men have not had in many generations. What a privilege to have been born for such a time as this! We have the answer to life and to death—Christ. Yes, there shall be trials and tribulations, but he has overcome the world. We serve a risen Savior who walks with us through life's weary way. We must be happy and glad.

And we should seek to be holy even as God is holy. We bear the name of Christian. We stand in the presence of God. We have a living encounter with our Creator. As Elijah stood before the Lord, our whole existence is lived before him; this is the foundation for our holiness. And the world's only view of Christ may be what they see of him in you!

#### **Prayer to God's glory**

In conclusion, we must undergird this Church with a great outgoing of prayer. It is easier to fight than to pray. But our battle is "not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the rulers of the darkness of this world." Only fervent prayer will prevail.

We must work. The true war-cry of the church is, "The Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." God must do it, but we are not to be idle. If we only cry "the Sword of the Lord," we shall be guilty of an idle presumption; if we cry "the sword of Gideon" alone, we are manifesting an idle reliance on the arm of flesh. We can do nothing by ourselves; we can do everything by the help of our God.

We must be confident of his promise. "You worry at being so small and few, but Abraham was only one when I called him. But I blessed him and he became a great nation" (Isaiah 51:2). What a promise! What a God!

And now we commend you to this God and the word of his grace. We devoutly pray that the whole church catholic may be baptized afresh with the Holy Ghost, and that she may be speedily stirred to give the Lord no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

"Even so, come Lord Jesus." "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

# A Message to All Churches of Jesus Christ throughout the World from the General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church

Greeting: Grace, Mercy and Peace be multiplied upon you!

As the National Presbyterian Church takes her place among the family of Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, we take this opportunity to address all Churches by way of a testimony.

We gather as a true branch of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We affirm our allegiance to Him as the sole Head of the Church and the sole Lawgiver in Zion. We remember that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" against His Church.

The constituency of this new denomination for the most part have separated themselves from the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The decision to separate has come only after long years of struggle and heartache on the part of many of us to return the Church to purity of faith and practice. Principle and conviction entered into that decision, reached only after much soul-searching and earnest prayer. We have reluctantly accepted the necessity of separation, deeming loyalty to Christ to take precedence over relationship to any earthly institution, even to a visible branch of the Church of Christ.

In much prayer and with great sorrow and mourning we have concluded that to practice the principle of purity in the Church visible, we must pay the price of separation. We desire to elaborate upon those principles and convictions that have brought us to that decision.

We are convinced that our former denomination as a whole, and in its leadership, no longer holds those views regarding the nature and mission of the Church, which we accept as both true and essential. When we judged that there was no human remedy for this situation, and in the absence of evidence that God would intervene, we were compelled to raise a new banner bearing the historic, Scriptural faith of our forefathers.

First, we declare the basis of the authority for the Church. According to the Christian faith, the Bible is the Word of God written and carries the authority of its divine Author. We believe the Bible itself asserts that it has been given by inspiration, or, more literally, has been "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). "No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). We declare, therefore, that the Bible is the very Word of God, so inspired in the whole and in all its parts as, in the original autographs, to be the inerrant Word of God. It is, therefore, the only infallible and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

This was the position of the founding fathers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. We affirm with them in their "Address to All Churches" the application of this principle to the Church and her mission:

Let it be distinctly borne in mind that the only rule of judgment is the written Word of God. The Church knows nothing of the intuitions of reason or the deductions of philosophy, except those reproduced in the Sacred Canon. She has a positive constitution in the Holy Scriptures, and has no right to utter a single syllable upon any subject except as the Lord puts words

in her mouth. She is founded, in other words, upon express *revelation*. Her creed is an authoritative testimony of God, and not speculation, and what she proclaims she must proclaim with the infallible certitude of faith, and not with the hesitating assent of an opinion.

We have called ourselves "Continuing" Presbyterians because we seek to continue the faith of the founding fathers of that Church. Deviations in doctrine and practice from historic Presbyterian positions as evident in the Presbyterian Church, U. S., result from accepting other sources of authority, and from making them coordinate or superior to the divine Word. A diluted theology, a gospel tending towards humanism, an unbiblical view of marriage and divorce, the ordination of women, financing of abortion on socio-economic grounds, and numerous other non-Biblical positions are all traceable to a different view of Scripture from that we hold and that which was held by the Southern Presbyterian forefathers.

Change in the PCUS came as a gradual thing, and its ascendancy in the denomination, over a long period of time. We confess that it should not have been permitted. Views and practices that undermine and supplant the system of doctrine or polity of a confessional Church ought never to be tolerated. A Church that will not exercise discipline will not long be able to maintain pure doctrine or godly practice.

When a denomination will not exercise discipline and its courts have become heterodox or disposed to tolerate error, the minority finds itself in the anomalous position of being submissive to a tolerant and erring majority. In order to proclaim the truth and to practice the discipline which they believe obedience to Christ requires, it then becomes necessary for them to separate. This is the exercise of discipline in reverse. It is how we view our separation.

Some of our brethren have felt that the present circumstances do not yet call for such a remedy. They remain in the PCUS. We trust they will continue to contend for the faith, though our departure makes their position more difficult. We express to them our hope that God will bless their efforts, and that there may come a genuine spiritual awakening in the PCUS.

We trust that our departure may cause those who control and direct the programs and policies of the PCUS to re-examine their own position in the light of the Word. Our prayer is that God may use this movement to promote spiritual awakening, not only in the new Church, but also in that from which we have separated. If, in the providence of God, such were to occur, we would gladly acknowledge that the grounds for separation and division would have to be reassessed.

We declare also that we believe the system of doctrine found in God's Word to be the system known as the Reformed Faith. We are committed without reservation to the Reformed Faith as set forth in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. It is our conviction that the Reformed faith is not sectarian, but an authentic and valid expression of Biblical Christianity. We believe it is our duty to seek



fellowship and unity with all who profess this faith. We particularly wish to labor with other Christians committed to this theology.

We further renew and reaffirm our understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. We have declared that Christ is King and only Law-giver in Zion. He has established the Church. His Church is a spiritual reality. As such it is made up of all the elect from all ages. This spiritual entity is manifested visibly upon the earth.

The Church visible is found wherever there are those who profess the true faith together with their children. As an assembly of those who do so profess this faith, we have established this denomination in the belief that it is a true branch of the Christian Church.

We believe the Church in its visible aspect is still essentially a spiritual organism. As such, its authority, motivation and power come from Christ, the Head, who is seated at the right hand of God. He has given us His rulebook for the Church, namely, the Word of God written. We understand the task of the Church to be primarily declarative and ministerial, not legislative or magisterial. It is our duty to set forth what He has given us in His Word and not to devise our own message nor legislate our own laws.

We declare that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God. We believe this includes giving top priority to Christ's Great Commission. We reaffirm the position taken by the founding fathers of our former Church regarding the mission of the Church:

We desire distinctly and deliberately to inscribe on our Church's banner, as she now unfurls it to the world, in immediate subservience to the authority of our Lord as Head and King of the Church His last command: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We regard this as the great end of our organization, and obedience to it, as the indispensable condition of our Lord's promised presence. It is the one great comprehensive objective, a proper conception of whose grandeur and magnitude is the only thing which, under the constraining love of Christ, can ever sufficiently arouse our energies and develop our resources so as to cause us to carry on with that vigor and efficiency, which true loyalty to our Lord demands, those other agencies necessary to our internal growth and prosperity at home.

As a Church, we consciously seek to return to the historic Presbyterian view of Church government. We reaffirm in the words of that earlier "Address to All Churches" the following:

The only thing that will be at all peculiar to us is the manner in which we shall attempt to discharge our duty. In almost every department of labor, except the pastoral care of congregations, it has been usual for the Church to resort to societies more or less closely connected with itself, and yet logically and really distinct. It is our purpose to rely upon the regular organs of our government, and executive agencies directly and immediately responsible to them. We wish to make the Church, not merely a superintendent, but an agent. We wish to develop the idea that the congregation of

believers, advisably organized is the very society or corporation which is divinely called to do the work of the Lord. We shall, therefore, endeavor to do what has never been adequately done—bring out the energies of our Presbyterian system of government. From the session to the Assembly, we shall strive to enlist all our courts, as courts, in every department of Christian effort. We are not ashamed to confess that we are intensely Presbyterian. We embrace all other denominations in the arms of Christian fellowship and love, but our own scheme of government we humbly believe to be according to the pattern shown in the Mount, and, by God's grace, we propose to put its efficiency to the test.

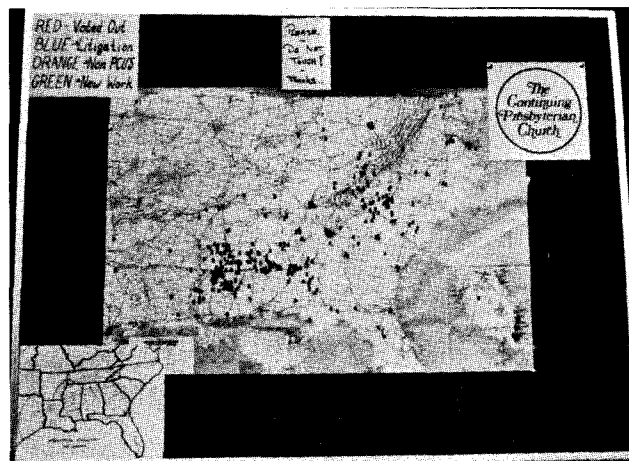
As this new member of the family of Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ comes into being, we necessarily profess the Biblical doctrine of the unity of all who are in Christ. We know that what happens in one portion of His Church affects all of the Body of Christ. We covet the prayers of all Christians that we may witness and serve responsibly. We desire to pursue peace and charity with love towards fellow Christians throughout the world.

To the Presbyterian Church, U. S., in particular, we express our continued love and concern. You are our spiritual mother, in your arms we were nurtured, under your ordinances we were baptized, in your courts we were ordained to serve our Lord and King, and to your visible organization we thought we had committed our lives. We sever these ties only with deepest regret and sorrow. We hope that our going may in some way recall you to that historic witness which we cherish as our common heritage.

We greet all believers in an affirmation of the bonds of Christian brotherhood. We invite into ecclesiastical fellowship all who maintain our principles of faith and order.

We now commend ourselves to God and the Word of His power. We devoutly pray that the Church catholic may be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit, and that she may speedily be stirred up to take no rest until the Lord accomplishes His Kingdom, making Zion a praise in the whole earth.

*Adopted by the First General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church on December 7, 1973, in Birmingham, Alabama.*



Map on display board showing location of churches in the National Presbyterian Church.

# A Reborn Testimony in a Reborn Church

In 1861, the General Assembly ("Old School") of the Presbyterian Church, USA, adopted the "Spring Resolutions." In these heavy-handed pronouncements, Christians who pledged their first loyalty to their state government instead of to the federal union were declared to be rebels. This presumptuous attempt to legislate in an area where equally devout Christians differed led to the first general assembly of what was later named the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

On December 4, 1861, the "Southern" Presbyterian Church (US) was born. It included most Presbyterians in the states of the old Confederacy and many in the border states. It traditionally upheld the principle of the church's spiritual nature and its primary task of evangelizing the lost.

In recent decades, the PCUS has increasingly abandoned its historical heritage. It has made pronouncements on all sorts of social issues, declaring itself on matters of societal life in which people of equally good conscience differ. It has urged support of causes — often good in themselves — and has actually supported some that are not part of the church's task to proclaim the gospel of salvation in Christ.

More seriously, the PCUS has openly disavowed the doctrine of Scripture's complete inerrancy and infallibility, has allowed candidates for the ministry to deny such doctrines as Christ's virgin birth, his miracles, and his work of salvation for God's chosen people only. It has advocated abortion for socio-economic reasons, condoned extramarital sex and the use of hallucinatory drugs, either in assembly pronouncements or through approved publications.

A proposed merger with the United Presbyterian Church, USA, was both the "last straw" and a glimmer of hope for conservative members in the PCUS. The even more liberal stance of the UPUSA, with its adoption of the Confession of '67, and its much larger size, convinced most conservatives that genuine reform in a merged denomination would be impossible. They strenuously opposed the plan of union, and defeated a similar proposal in the 1950s.

Because conservative strength seemed likely to kill the proposed union, the pro-union forces persuaded the United Presbyterians to accept an "escape clause" in the Plan of Union. This would have allowed dissident congregations to withdraw in the event of a merger, taking their property with them. Most conservatives agreed to wait for this provision to take effect before seeking to withdraw from the PCUS.

Then in February 1973, the PCUS representatives working on the Plan of Union asked to have the "escape clause" removed — a request that was openly declared to be dishonest by a United Presbyterian representative. As a result, the whole Plan was scrapped, and conservatives were left with no promise of any improvement.

## Continuing Presbyterian Church

Since February, over 250 congregations have withdrawn from the PCUS. Most of these are organized into presbyteries. A few congregations have been challenged by their former presbyteries about the property, and threats against others have been made. But most of these churches have been allowed to leave with their property.

So it was that on a second December 4, this time in 1973, over four hundred commissioners, representing 244 congregations,

met at the Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama. These men then organized America's newest Presbyterian branch, and with some 60,000 members, already the third largest.

## "True to the Scriptures"

This new denomination professes to be "true to the Scriptures." Everything adopted by this first General Assembly, and everything said in speeches and conversations, made it abundantly clear that they mean to be true to the Scriptures as the Word of God written, inerrant in the original manuscripts, God's infallible rule of faith and practice.

In a significant action, the Assembly modified the first vow required of those being ordained by inserting one word (as shown by the Italics): "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the *inerrant* Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" This addition was made because many presbyteries of the PCUS had allowed men to restrict infallibility to matters of faith and practice, or to redefine it into meaninglessness.

## "True to the Reformed faith"

This General Assembly also claims to be "true to the Reformed faith" — but so do other bodies who have moved well beyond the historical meaning of these words.

To be sure, everyone would admit that years of unreformed — not to mention, unBiblical — church literature, deficient training in the church's seminaries, and the distractions of battling for one's faith and rights, have undoubtedly left many church members poorly grounded in basic doctrines of the Reformed understanding of Scripture. But repeatedly, in addresses by various leaders before the Assembly, in resolutions adopted, in debate from the floor, in conversations overheard, the longing to be truly Reformed was openly and insistently stated.

The Assembly readily and enthusiastically adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. The Confession, leaving out amendments made by the PCUS, was adopted in a form nearly identical to that originally received by the first general assembly of Presbyterians in America (and exactly the same as that held by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church now). The Catechisms were adopted in their standard text.

## Presbyterian church government

The Assembly also moved to adoption of a Book of Church Order, or form of government. Basing its work on the 1933 Book of Church Order of the PCUS (which has been replaced in that body by a later version), the Assembly made various amendments, mostly designed to strengthen or clarify certain features and congregational rights that had been weakened in the parent church.

As a result, the new denomination returned to the position that only men may be ordained to church office, which the PCUS had altered to permit women in any office. Control of property rights by local congregations was spelled out fully—in lawyer's language. The role of the ruling elder was also emphasized.

Since the days of Thornwell and Dabney and the birth of "Southern" Presbyterianism, there has been a strong emphasis on the ruling elder. Thornwell taught that there was only one *office* of elder, though elders might differ

in the *functions* of teaching (as ministers, or teaching elders) and ruling (as ruling elders). Every man holding the office of elder, whether teaching or ruling, was "on a par" with any other such elder.

In more recent times, this concept of the "parity" of elders has come to be practiced by maintaining a numerical equality between ministers and ruling elders in the courts above the session level. This numerical "parity" principle was strengthened by the Assembly at almost every point possible, and all committees were organized on this basis.

The Assembly also took steps to provide for a presbytery licensing of certain ruling elders to preach. If a man has gifts, though he may lack the educational requirements for ordination to the ministry, he may be licensed to preach where needed. The question of whether such a licensed elder might administer the sacraments was referred to a committee for recommendation to a later assembly.

Certainly the ruling elder has played a major role in bringing about this new gathering of Presbyterians into one communion. No other Presbyterian church has, in recent times at least, been so blessed with conscientious and knowledgeable ruling elders as this one. The first moderator, W. Jack Williamson, is a ruling elder. Ruling elders outnumbered ministers in the Assembly by about 5 to 3. Would that all ruling elders would take their God-given duties with equal enthusiasm!

#### **"Obedient to the Great Commission"**

Much of the time of the Assembly was spent in organizing in order to carry out Christ's commission to preach the gospel everywhere. Four main committees were organized, and made subject to strict Assembly oversight.

*The Committee on Administration* has responsibility for the business and budgets of all Assembly committees. Though each of the following committees is responsible for raising its own budget, actual budgets are subject to review by this committee before presentation to the Assembly. In general, this committee is responsible to oversee the work of its staff administrator and the Assembly's stated clerk, and to keep the "machinery" of the church running.

*The Committee on Mission to the World* is the foreign missions agency. It already has responsibility for several missionary families who had been supported by the independently organized Executive Commission on Overseas Evangelism. It will be responsible to develop a missions program and to serve presbyteries and local churches in missionary efforts.

*The Committee on Mission to the U. S.* is the home missions and church extension agency. It will be concerned with fostering evangelism efforts, engaging in special outreach to specific groups, and in developing new congregations. Its tasks are huge, especially in respect to the many hundreds of conservative Presbyterians who desire a genuinely Reformed church but are not in congregations willing to withdraw from the PCUS.

*The Committee on Christian Education and Publications* will be responsible for all official publications of the new denomination, to promote Sunday school growth, youth conferences, and leadership training. It is also responsible for the program of the "Women in the Church"—and women's Bible study and missions support has been a very significant aspect of the life of Southern Presbyterian churches. This committee does not contemplate developing its own curriculum materials in Sunday school, but hopes to work with others, notably the Great Commission Publica-

tions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

#### **A "National Presbyterian Church"**

Choosing a name for the new denomination was a difficult decision. The names with the most support were "Continuing Presbyterian Church" (which has been the group's unofficial title so far), "Presbyterian Church in (or "of") America," and "National Presbyterian Church." After vigorous debate, the last title was chosen.

More than one commissioner suggested that the new name might become more obviously the fact as cooperation with Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterians developed. The Assembly's "Address to Churches" and its resolution on inter-church relations (given elsewhere in this issue of the *Guardian*) encourage one to look forward to a growing together of all those who love the Reformed faith and believe that Presbyterian government is that given by Christ for his church.

#### **A troublesome question of "gifts"**

One serious question arose concerning a reference in the Book of Church Order to the "extraordinary officers [of the early church], endued with miraculous gifts, which have long since ceased" (*Church Order*, 7-1). It was thought that this might be used to exclude men who held views sympathetic to or practiced what are called "charismatic gifts," such as "speaking in tongues."

It appeared to this observer that the majority of commissioners were unwilling to open the door to "charismatics," but neither were they prepared to slam it shut. The disputed paragraph was not adopted, but referred to a special study committee for its recommendations to a later assembly. (Provision was made for further amendments in the constitutional documents, except the Confession and Catechisms, by simple majority decision in the second assembly.) A committee, balanced between the different views and containing some of the new church's best theologians, was chosen to study this difficult problem.

#### **One observer's impression**

All in all, this first General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church was a delight to behold and a reason for thanksgiving to God. As one born and baptized into the old Presbyterian Church, U. S., growing up in a manse of that denomination, being ordained a deacon in it—and then being rejected as a candidate for the ministry because I felt duty-bound to seek seminary training outside the official institutions of the PCUS—I felt thoroughly at home and strongly involved in all that went on.

The tone of speeches made, the warm reception given to observers from other Reformed and Presbyterian bodies, the personal affirmation of desire for closer fellowship and cooperation in making the Reformed faith a real force in American life, all contributed to strengthen impressions made by the Assembly's official acts. The impact of Covenant, Reformed, and Westminster seminaries was apparent. But what chiefly impressed this observer was the strength of ruling elders, of men who had given time and money and prayer and thought to bringing out a remnant of God's people and in developing the foundations for a church "true to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ."

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head of the church and sole Lawgiver in Zion, pour out rich blessings on the National Presbyterian Church!

—John J. Mitchell

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## Resolution on Interchurch Relations

*The following resolution was adopted by the First General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church, meeting at Birmingham, Alabama, on December 7, 1973.*

*Whereas* the Sovereign God has been pleased to call sixteen presbyteries, approximately 250 churches and approximately 60,000 believers into a new fellowship of Presbyterians;

*And whereas* the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head of the Church and the only Lawgiver in Zion has constituted this fellowship into a Continuing Presbyterian Church known as National Presbyterian Church;

*And whereas* in the adopted constitution these members and judicatories have reaffirmed their faith in the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture, which Scriptures are inerrant in their original manuscripts; and have further reaffirmed their adherence to the Reformed faith as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms; and have further declared their acceptance of the presbyterian representative form of church government; humbly believing that this position is a sacred trust from God;

*And whereas* the National Presbyterian Church does not intend at this time to enter into organic union with

any other denomination, but nevertheless earnestly desires to have fellowship and communication with likeminded Christians;

*Be it therefore resolved:*

1. That the Interchurch Relations Committee of the Mission to the U. S. be authorized and hereby directed to place suitable notices in appropriate religious publications throughout the United States extending the right hand of fellowship to all Christians of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition who believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God written.

2. That the Interchurch Relations Committee be specifically authorized to correspond with similar committees of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.

3. That any correspondence resulting from these contacts be explored as possibilities for broadening and strengthening the spirit of love and understanding between Christians in the United States who believe the Bible as the Word of God written, the Reformed faith and the Presbyterian order.

## Letters

I still think the *Guardian* is too much a men's and theologians' magazine and should be more well-rounded for all ages and types. The October issue, while interesting to read, is not as good as it should be. Do you encourage presbyteries and presbyterials to appoint reporters? How about covering a missions conference somewhere? Could you send a reporter to Urbana in December? Just what are the goals and purposes of the *Guardian* anyway? Now there's an article. . . .

L. P., Cuyahoga, Ohio

### Thanks for AACS sum-up

May I commend you for the excellent pieces that have appeared in the

## The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR

JOHN J. MITCHELL

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

exchange between the AACS people and others—along with so many other fine examples of Reform writing that you call forth. Your "Summing Up" editorial was superb in every way, the loving unequivocal approach near-perfect.

Thank you for what you give us in the *Guardian*.

Robert M. Metcalf, Jr.  
Memphis, Tenn.

*The Presbyterian Guardian*

# The Bread of Life

**KARL DORTZBACH**



Over three hundred people sat, plate in hand, waiting for food. A month or two before there had been as many as two thousand gathered for food, having come from over sixty different villages.

I stood to speak. Many of those before me had been fed for months; but had they feasted on the Bread of Life? During the worst times as many as thirty people had died each night. That day only one had died. Only one went to an eternal starvation, an everlasting separation from my heavenly Father. *Only one* had died, did I say? But it was one, and he would never be able to hear the words of life.

## **"You are hungry"**

"You have come because you are hungry," I began. Immediately the empty plates were lifted by bony, rag-covered arms. "You were given bread this morning, but now you are hungry again." Groans of agreement rang out. I continued: "In a moment now you will eat again. But I want to tell you what Jesus said when he stood before many people like you."

"I am the Bread of Life," Jesus says. "He who comes to me shall not hunger, and he that believes in me shall not thirst."

Never before had those words seemed so fitting to me as then. All the people in front of me needed bread; but how much more they needed the Bread of Life! Thousands had quietly breathed their last never having heard the words of life. Many of these before me knew well the reality and pain of death. It was carved into

their emaciated bodies. It hung on them like the rags they wore.

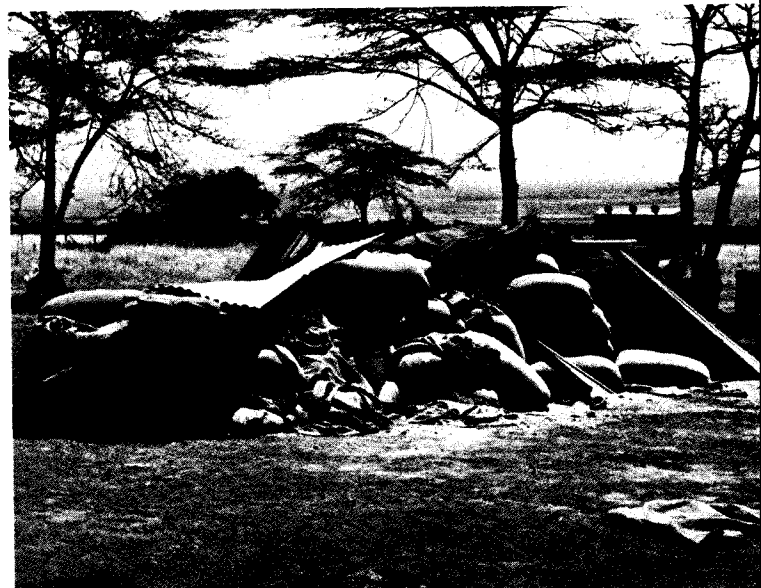
## **The gift of bread**

Hunger is ugly. Famine is ugly. An infant dies clinging to the breast of his starving mother. An old man in a diarrhea-drenched blanket refuses food because hunger has taken away all appetite.

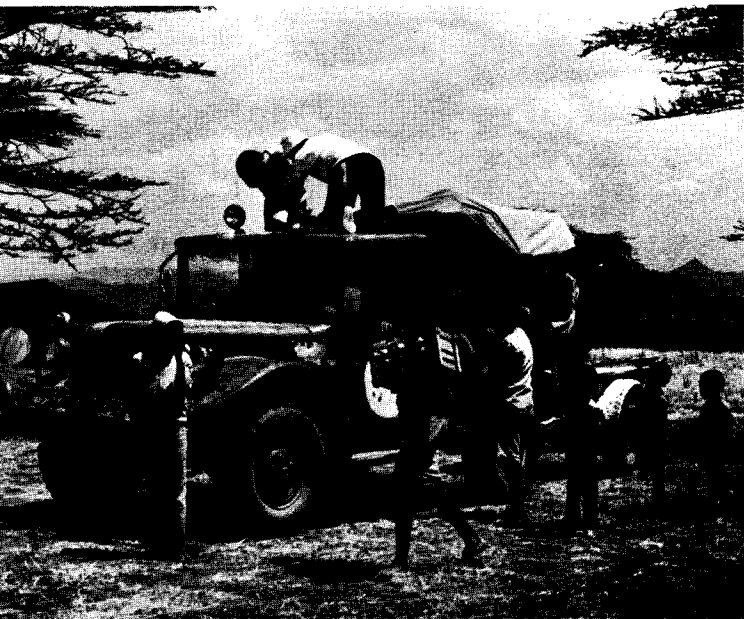
These are the conditions that famine-relief must meet. This is the ugliness that is being relieved by those who gave money to buy food. Over \$25,000 has been given by Orthodox Presbyterians to bring physical life to many.

We have spent the money to purchase two Army-surplus, four-wheel-drive trucks, one trailer, a compressor, and grain itself. Why buy equipment first and then grain? The reason is simple. Tons of grain from other organizations had been stockpiled in several famine areas. But the grain sat there for weeks without the trucks to take it to the people. True relief comes only when the grain is taken to the villages.

The famine-relief program works like this: Several feeding stations have been set up in different famine areas. Here both medical help and prepared food are given out. These stations became necessary as thousands of starving and homeless people flocked to larger towns looking for work and relief. Some towns doubled in population in a few weeks. The need was to take care



*January, 1974*



of these people. But the problem was not solved by feeding them in huge centers!

#### **Food to where they are**

The real problem could only be solved when the people could receive grain in their own villages. How can a man farm his land when he is living in another village? How can a man live in his own village if he has no grain? The famine area in Ethiopia was blessed with rain this year, but many people were in the wrong place to farm or had no oxen for plowing. Some had even sold their land to buy food!

This is why our mission bought trucks. And these have become the key to successful famine relief on one major area of the famine. The trucks are able to go where there are no roads, taking grain to the small needy villages.

The compressor has not yet been fully used, but in a few weeks it will be used to drill village wells deep enough so that each village will have a water supply. A continued water shortage would only cause continued famine. The compressor will be a great help indeed!

The rest of the money given for famine-relief was spent for grain. Many of the famine areas are now having their first harvest in three years. Because of that harvest we are now buying grain from local farmers to be stored until the small harvest is used up and hunger again comes to most of the people.

#### **Working with other missions**

Have you wondered who gives the grain out? Or who drives the trucks? Or who runs the feeding stations? Ghinda, where the Orthodox Presbyterian mission is located, is not in the famine area. So our mission decided to work with other evangelical missions already in the famine area. All of our grain and equipment has been administered by the Society of International Missionaries

(better known as the Sudan Interior Mission). In this way the body of Christ has worked to insure that money is spent for actual famine relief—not to fatten some official's pocket!

Giving food to relieve famine is necessary, for Christ commanded us to feed the hungry. But giving the Bread of Life is the purpose for which we minister to men's physical needs. Without giving the Bread of Life, we have only ministered "a cup of cold water"—but *not* in Christ's name. Our primary concern must be to give the message of eternal life. This concern is shared by SIM. Evangelism has not been neglected, and the desire to give the Bread of Life reigns supreme in the minds of the SIM staff.

National evangelists have been assigned by SIM to each distribution station. You may hear reports of even thousands "accepting Christ." Let no one suppose there have been that many true conversions; but let no one deny that the Holy Spirit is working in a great way! Muslim and Coptic beliefs have long hardened hearts and closed opportunities for preaching in this land. Now, praise God, there are opportunities and openness never before imagined. Survey and relief trucks are greeted with, "You are the ones who have come to teach us the Bible."

#### **Relief of spiritual famine**

God sent a famine of food, and people's hearts were softened. Many of you have given money, and starving masses have been fed. Everyone is concerned that the money is spent wisely. We are also concerned that the Bread of Life be offered with the grain. Do you share this same concern?

Giving money is fairly easy. You give once or twice and then reason that you've done your part. But sharing the Bread of Life is not something that stops when the offering plate has gone by. Giving must be accompanied by praying. Without your prayer, your money is worthless.





What does a man profit if he is made strong and healthy only to spend eternity crying out because of starvation from the love of God? Pray about the *spiritual* famine. Pray for the evangelists who minister each day. Pray that God will make them speak words of truth. Pray that the power of the Word of God will control the hearts of the famine-relief staff and the famine victims. Pray for yourself, that God would enable you to be faithful in your prayers.

Your concern for men's bodies has brought over \$25,000 for famine relief. We trust that you are praying that the Bread of Life will bring an everlasting "famine relief" to people dead in their sins. Are you as concerned for the work of home missions and foreign missions and Christian education—all working to offer men the Bread of Life—as you were concerned in seeing dying people receive food?

Three of us knelt beside a boy perhaps five or six years old. He had been at the station for two months. But now we were rushing madly to start an IV into his bony wrist. It was too late, though, to give him food. Early the next morning he died.

Now it was too late to give him eternal life. Had he ever been offered the Bread of Life? I don't know. But must we always wait until the last minute to offer starving souls the Bread of Life?

The pain of hell is far greater, and far longer lasting, than the pains of starvation. Has God provided you with all things necessary for physical life? Is your heart thankful for the Lord's goodness? Then make an offering to the Lord, an offering of gratitude to support the giving of the Bread of Life to hungry hearts. Pray that the Word may be preached. Pray that God's servant may be sent. Pray that the Spirit will open many hearts to receive the Bread of Life that never perishes, the Bread that if a man eats of it he will never hunger again.

*Mr. Dortzbach is serving with the Orthodox Presbyterian mission in Ethiopia on a short-term, intern basis. He wrote this account and plea hoping to have it published before the Orthodox Presbyterian Church received*



*its November Thank Offering. That simply was not possible. We sincerely hope that readers will be persuaded to pray—and to make "Thank Offerings"—throughout the year that the Bread of Life may be freely offered to countless thousands in Ethiopia and elsewhere.*

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# Humans in dire need . . . which picture do you see?

**ROLLIN P. KELLER**

Christian compassion is a beautiful thing to see. As a member of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I am thrilled with the knowledge that when a brother is in desperate need his fellow Christians are touched and moved to supply help in loving abundance.

Take, for example, the needs of our brethren whose property was damaged or destroyed in the flood following Hurricane Agnes. Or consider the many overwhelming medical emergencies of ministers and their families in recent years when almost invariably more than enough was given to supply the urgency.

Now the needs of famine relief in Africa have touched the hearts of our people. And again the response has been far more than we imagined. Such a concern for the desperate needs of fellow human beings is evidence of the Spirit's work in generating love and compassion in the hearts of God's people. Praise God for that!

## Two pictures of need

*Time* magazine some weeks ago showed a picture of an African woman, baby strapped to her back, scraping the ground in search of seeds. The stark landscape and bony body of this woman formed a picture worth several thousand words. When you can see a human in need, you are moved.

But today my mind's eye sees another picture of desperate human need. The picture is a vision, and it was first given to the apostle Paul as he spent a restless night in Troas, agonizing for God to direct his next step.

"Come over into Macedonia, and help us," said the pleading figure in the picture. Luke tells us that no time was wasted in guesswork. God wanted the gospel preached to this pathetic pleader of the vision, and Paul's little group knew it. Nor was any time wasted getting there.

## Can we see the man?

Now the reception of the St. Paul Evangelistic Crusade left something to be desired. When the group arrived in Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, they did not even find an organized synagogue of people religiously prepared for the gospel. Only a woman's prayer meeting, and that was out of town. Before long the ferocity of

heathen unbelief saw Paul and his team beaten, thrown in jail, and then quietly leaving town.

But where was the man of Paul's picture? Where was that desperately needy person, pleading to hear the gospel? I have no doubt that Paul saw him. But do we see him any more?

That man cannot be seen with the eye of a UPI camera. He can only be seen with the eye of faith. Only the eye that is single to the glory of God can see behind the pathetic facade of sinners. Every face Paul saw in the market was the face of the heart-rending vision. Never mind that they try to cut off the hands extended to offer help. That is just one of the pitiful symptoms of their great need.

## The picture before us

We have candidates for the foreign mission field. Praise the Lord for this! We have men determined to dare impossible hardships because they too have seen the pathetic picture—not the one published in *Time*, but the one seen by Paul. We have men who can see the sinners who need to turn and trust in Christ because they are in jeopardy of spending eternity in hell if they do not.

It is right to spend money feeding starving people in Africa, digging a new well for a dying village. But whoever drinks that water shall surely thirst again. These people need to know the gift of God, and they need to come to Jesus for water that quenches forever.

Is it right, then, for you and me to send some \$25,000 in food and help to these starving human beings in Africa? Of course. But is it right to do all that and then tell our missionary candidates we just don't have enough money to send them forth?

Which picture do you see? By God's enabling we must view the world's needs with a perspective that sees eternity ahead.

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*Both this brief exhortation from the pastor of the Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, in Wilmington, Delaware, and the report of Karl Dortzbach on pages 13-15, were unsolicited manuscripts. Neither knew the other had written. We leave it to you to use your spiritual vision in response.*