

The Presbyteria

July

Assembly
at Work
Proclaiming
God Has No
The Holy
Trust



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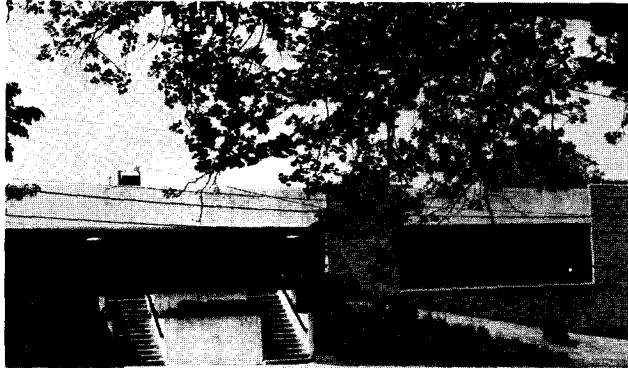
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New Subscription Rates

It has been found necessary to raise our subscription rates by 50 cents as of July 1, 1979. This means that individual subscriptions will cost \$4.75 and club subscriptions \$4.25.

From the Editor



Alexander Hall, Geneva College, site of the 46th OPC General Assembly.

In our July/August issue last year, we provided major coverage of the meeting in Grand Rapids of the five denominations involved in the National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches (CRC, OPC, RPCES, RPCNA, PCA). Each denomination held its synod or general assembly simultaneously in separate facilities on Calvin College and Seminary campus. The commissioners from the different churches enjoyed informal fellowship in the dining hall and dormitory rooms, as well as the more formal joint activities which were featured during the week (June 19-23). Plans are presently being made for a repetition of this occasion in 1982, if all denominations concerned will agree. It is hoped that more structured interchange between the churches will be possible next time around.

Meanwhile, the various NAPARC churches have reverted to meeting at different times and locations to discuss their denominational business. Since the majority of our readers are from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, we are devoting a large part of this month's *Guardian* to the meetings of the denomination's general assembly. We hope next month to provide briefer reports on the respective meetings of other NAPARC churches.

John J. Mitchell, who as editor of this magazine rendered such valuable service over a seven year period, takes up the pen again to provide his commentary on the 46th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. (Last year we gave him a rest!) A helpful feature of Mr. Mitchell's report is his explanatory comments on different assembly decisions, e.g. what it means to "approve of" the government, discipline and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

We are also publishing the sermon preached by the retiring moderator, the Rev. Larry D. Conard, Missionary-at-large of the Southern California presbytery. Basing his remarks on an exposition of Psalm 9, Mr. Conard exhorted the commissioners to greater faithfulness and zeal in proclaiming "what God has done."

The article by David W. King on "The Church's True Glory" will readily be seen to tie in with the other articles. Mr. King's concern is that the church not adapt its methods to those of the world in order to gain apparent success, but that she be willing to wait on the Lord for the true success which only he can give.

On a rather different, but not unrelated note, Lois Sibley reflects on the dangers of individuals and churches living within the confines of their "boxes."

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An Assembly at Work

John J. Mitchell

The 46th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was a working assembly. There were no big decisions to make, no vexed issues to debate, but the full gamut of the church's business was dealt with. In fact, the assembly, pressing to get away before the traffic of a Memorial Day weekend, managed to finish up a day earlier than planned.

For the third time (1975, 1976 and now 1979) the assembly met at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pa. Moreover, during its final session, the assembly determined to meet at Geneva again in 1980 (to convene at 8 p.m. on May 15).

Preference for Geneva

Why so? The campus is attractive—though the constant rumble of truck traffic can be distracting. The facilities are conveniently located—though the short distance from dormitory to dining hall is offset by the amount of climbing required to get around on the steep ridge above the Beaver River.

But the advantages of meeting on a campus are real and quite practical. With almost all the commissioners housed in nearby dormitories, it is possible to schedule longer working hours each day. There are classrooms available for committee meetings. The service in the dining hall was excellent, with more to eat than many really needed. And the warmly Christian friendliness of the college staff was deeply appreciated.

Geneva has the additional advantage of being located near the greatest number of commissioners. Travel costs are decidedly lower (\$21,000 this year compared

The Rev. John J. Mitchell is General Secretary of the Stewardship Committee in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

to \$27,000 in Grand Rapids last year). With all that in mind, it was simple to decide to return again next year.

Form of Government Amendments

A number of minor amendments to the new Form of Government had been before the presbyteries this past year. All of these had been adopted by the required majority and so were declared to be in effect (see *Minutes*, 45th G.A., pp. 127ff. for the complete list).

An amendment to the third ordination vow, requiring a two-thirds approval by the presbyteries, also required final action by this year's assembly. This easily passed, and that vow (wherever it occurs in the Form of Government) now reads:

"Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?"

The change was to add a reference to worship in addition to the former vow's mention of government and discipline. The vow as amended is clearly pointing to the official Standards of Government, Discipline, and Worship (the "Black Book" with the new Form of Government).

It may be appropriate here to comment on the significance of a vow to "approve" something. It has the force of those oaths of office that require a person to "approve of" the Constitution of the United States of America. This is not asking whether you happen to like that document's provisions. You may actually disapprove of some of them rather strongly. To "approve" it means you promise to conduct your official duties in full compliance with that document.

To "approve of the government, discipline, and worship" means that the individual being ordained promises to abide

by the provisions of those standards, whether he happens to like them or not. He can make such a promise and even have every intention of seeking some major change in the standards.

Election of Officers

For the ninth consecutive year, Mr. Richard A. Barker was elected as Stated Clerk. Mr. Barker is a ruling elder of Grace Church in Westfield, N.J. The Rev. Stephen L. Phillips served as Assistant Clerk, as he has done for six previous years.

The election of Moderator was the only one in which there were more than one nomination. Messrs. Thomas E. Tyson, Bernard J. Stonehouse, George E. Haney, and John S. Atwell were nominated. On the third ballot, Mr. Haney was elected. As the General Secretary and a former member of the Committee on Home Missions, Mr. Haney was the fifth moderator in a row to be "provided" by that committee.

Committees at Work

Having begun its business at 8 a.m. on Friday, May 18, the assembly had gotten itself organized and was able to recess at 11:15 that morning. From that time until Saturday at 1 p.m., the commissioners were engaged in various committee meetings.

These "Advisory Committees" are responsible to review all reports and other business to come before the assembly. The procedure guarantees that at least some adequate examination has been made of each report. These committees may simply concur in whatever recommendations are being proposed; or, if they think it wise, they may propose different recommendations for assembly action.

In general, this screening by committees results in the business being better handled. The full assembly, except where some issue has attracted widely different opinions, usually adopts the recommendations of its advisory committees with the confidence that this group of commissioners has done its homework on the business at hand.

Major Committee Reports

The agenda usually calls for the reports of the three major agencies of the church

as early as possible. The Committees on Foreign Missions, Christian Education, and Home Missions presented their reports in that order.

The Foreign Missions report was encouraging as it noted progress in sending new missionaries forth. The Donald G. Buchanans are on their way to join in the work in Egypt. The Calvin K. Cummings, Jr. family is expecting to go to Japan a few weeks later. (At a later point, the assembly approved granting an exception to some of the educational requirements for ordination in Mr. Cummings' case.)

The Christian Education report elicited the first extensive debate as it touched on the question of ministerial training and how best to provide it. For some time a special Committee on Ministerial Training has been functioning on a limited basis, and provided some significant services during the past year especially in the area of seeking contact with seminary students. Having just called the Rev. Roger W. Schmurr as full-time General Secretary, the Committee on Christian Education was suggesting that it assume the responsibility in this area of ministerial training.

After much discussion, the assembly finally determined to continue the special Committee on Ministerial Training but instructed it to work with the Committee on Christian Education to prepare a proposal for the future of this concern.

The Home Missions report noted its advances, especially in securing the Rev. John Fikkert as "denominational evangelist," a trouble-shooting and opportunity-seizing ministry for the church. This committee is also talking with several presbyteries about setting up missionaries-at-large, an approach with more flexibility than the traditional placing of a home missionary with one small nucleus of believers.

A New Church Publication

One major proposal before this year's assembly called for the establishing of a denominational magazine to serve the various interests of the church's agencies. A similar proposal only a few years ago lost decisively in spite of some strenuous argument in its support. This year, however, the assembly was ready for it and



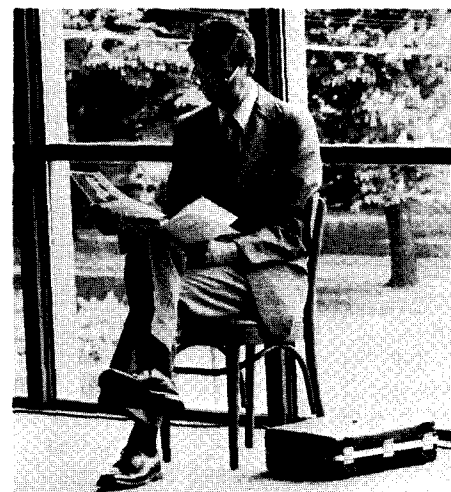
Benson Male (left) and Victor Altalbah discuss the situation in Lebanon.

the new publication should appear in January 1980.

The costs of such a venture will be provided in part from money now spent by various committees in their individual publications. The magazine is to go to each home address provided by the individual congregations. There will be no subscription price, but readers will be asked to contribute to it.

The new publication was assigned to the Committee on Christian Education and Mr. Schmurr will serve as its editor. Though the original proposal had not provided for it, the assembly determined to allow for "an exchange of views expressed in correspondence." Otherwise, the magazine will primarily be a news organ of the church's various activities and will include articles of an instructional and informative nature.

Concern over the effect of the new publication on the *Presbyterian Guardian* (whose readers and financial support come largely from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) led the assembly to urge some approach to the *Guardian's* trustees about possible cooperation. The appearance of the new magazine would almost certainly cut into the *Guardian's*



Moderator George E. Haney ponders the business of the day.

subscriptions, many of which are maintained by local church "club" arrangements.

Worldwide Outreach

In past years, the report of the Committee on Stewardship has often generated strong and lengthy debate. This committee has the responsibility of reviewing the budget requests of the Committees on Christian Education, Foreign Missions, and Home Missions, and then presenting

to the assembly a combined budget for all three. Since there is always more gospel outreach to be done than available funds to do it, and since each committee sees its own territory as a priority, there have been real tensions in trying to arrive at an agreed total figure.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church supports its gospel outreach on the denominational level through what is called "Worldwide Outreach." Contributions to it (undesignated contributions) are distributed to the three committees in proportion to their respective shares of the total Worldwide Outreach. Designated contributions go to the function for which they are designated (there being no "equalization" procedure). But if a committee, through designated and undesignated contributions attains 100 per cent of its assembly-approved goal, that committee no longer shares in the undesignated funds until the other committees also reach 100 percent.

This happens rather rarely, but did occur in 1978. Very late in the year, two large contributions were received designated for Foreign Missions. This put that committee well over the top (it actually received 111 percent of its approved goal.) The result was to increase the amount of undesignated funds going to the other two committees, so that Home Missions finally received 98 percent of its goal and Christian Education received 91 percent

The Committee on Stewardship was recommending a goal for Worldwide Outreach in 1980 totalling \$812,500 (compared to 1979's goal of \$750,000). This recommendation was duly moved, and when no one rose to debate the figures, it was adopted without any negative vote being voiced.

It should be noted that the goal does not really provide for any advance in the work. Inflation has been outrunning contributions to Worldwide Outreach for several years, though total giving in the denomination has kept well ahead of inflation. Apparently churches are giving more to other benevolent causes. (The actual increase in giving by churches in 1978 over 1977 was only 5 percent to Worldwide Outreach, though total benevolent giving was up by 22 percent.

Committee on Pensions

The Pension Plan for retired ministers has been far from adequate for some time. During June of 1978, churches were asked to give in a Founders' Day Offering to provide a fund to supplement the pensions. The net amount received, after some small expenses, was nearly \$55,000. From this fund, the Committee on Pensions is now sending an additional \$25 per month to each eligible recipient.

But the committee would like to do even better and proposed that the supplement fund be enlarged with a goal of \$300,000. This would be raised primarily by contributions, and churches were urged to give \$6 per communicant member each year until the goal is achieved.

Considerable discussion surrounded the question of just who would benefit from such a fund. At present, only those retirees included in the Pension Plan are benefitting from the 1978 offering, and the committee's future plans were only for those individuals. But since several

significant increase in financial support during 1978 as more churches contributed.

The committee noted that it now requires over \$1000 per month for aid to certain retired ministers in special need. It also reported having spent \$13,000 for the relief of Ugandan refugees. The committee requested the churches to provide \$5 per communicant member for its work this year.

An offer by the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee to provide a variety of services to the diaconal agencies of the NAPARC churches (the CRC, OPC, PCA, RPCES, RPCNA) was reported by the committee without recommendation. After considerable discussion, in which it was noted that the OPC committee was under instruction to study how to carry on diaconal work at large, and with concern expressed over some of the policies of the CRWRC itself, the assembly expressed its thanks for the CRWRC offer, but directed its own committee to "confer with the CRWRC with regard



Fathers and sons at the General Assembly. From left to right: Conard, Kiester, Lodge, Atwell, Cummings, Phillips.

ministers are not included in the plan, and many of them are equally in need, the Committee on Pensions was instructed to consider including such ministers in the benefits of the supplement fund and to report on this at next year's assembly.

Diaconal Ministries

The Committee on Diaconal Ministries serves as the means for the church to do the work of the deacons on the denominational level. This committee reported a

to the principles that underlie [its] work." Any acceptance of the CRWRC offer would have to await a report on that conference.

Interchurch Relations

Though no major decision of relationships with other churches was before this assembly, several significant actions were taken. The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations recommended continuing consultations with the Pres-



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byterian Church in America and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, "with a plan of merger in view." The recommendation was readily adopted by the OP General Assembly; it is also to be voted on by the other two churches' highest courts.

The assembly also directed its committee to seek consultations with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the "Covenanters") with a view to possible merger (in addition to those with the PCA and RPCES). The feeling behind this action is that the RPCNA, though holding such "distinctive principles" as the exclusive use of the Psalms in public worship, was nevertheless a church with the same basic commitments to the Reformed faith, and one with which the OPC now enjoys good fellowship.

A recommendation to establish "ecclesiastical contact" with the Canadian Reformed Churches was adopted. These churches, sometimes known as the "Schilder" churches are the result of a division in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands during which Dr. Klaas Schilder was deposed. They have a view of the church that leads them to seek full "sister-church" intercommunion, which the OPC's relation to the Dutch denomination from which they separated is a barrier. Their willingness to enter into something less full indicates their desire for genuine fellowship with the OPC.

"Ecclesiastical fellowship" with the newly organized Korean American Presbyterian Church was also approved. This group contains members drawn from both the Korean Presbyterian denominations with which the OPC now has relationships.

Concern over developments in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church led to lengthy discussion. The ARPC has been engaged in an ongoing debate over the inerrancy of Scripture, particularly with regard to the views of faculty members who teach in the denomination's Erskine College and Seminary. In light of this continuing tension with the ARPC, the assembly, "being informed of the severe struggles in the ARPC over the question of the nature of Scripture, expresses, as a church having ecclesi-

astical fellowship with the ARPC, its brotherly concern that the church be able to achieve the wholehearted accord for which you are struggling on that doctrine so basic to the Christian faith and fellowship, and assures you that we have prayed and will continue to pray for you in your efforts." (Because of this struggle, the ARPC has suspended its application to NAPARC.)

Finally, NAPARC itself recommended that all five churches meet again in Grand Rapids in 1982 at Calvin College and Seminary. The recommendation as adopted by the assembly also provided that plans be made for more opportunity for joint seminars and the like than was possible at the five-church gathering at Calvin in 1978.

Reformed Ecumenical Synod

Membership of the OPC in the RES continues to be a source of concern to many. This membership in an international organization of Reformed bodies gives opportunity for fellowship with like-minded people throughout the world. But it is also involving the OPC in some relations that appear dubious to certain observers, and also in some rather steep expense.

The Committee on RES Matters, composed of the delegates sent to the last RES meeting in South Africa in 1976, presented a lengthy report much of which was an attempt to speak to some of the objections. One particular area of concern is the fact that three RES member churches are also members of the World Council of Churches. This is in spite of rather strong declarations of the RES itself against such WCC membership. In effect, the committee pointed out that all three churches are involved in continuing debate and discussion on the subject.

One of the three is the large Dutch church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. This church has also been engaged in doctrinal controversy. Its efforts at discipline have been questioned by some observers, but clearly the church is trying to deal with its problems. On this question also, the final action is not yet in as they continue to work on the problems.

After a thorough discussion of these and related concerns, the assembly determined

"that membership in the RES be continued, and that the Committee on RES Matters be requested to do what they can to see that a general secretary [for the RES] is elected who most accurately reflects the view of Scripture consistent with our own."

The assembly then repeated an action it had taken in previous years to urge the PCA and RPCES to consider seeking membership in the RES. The idea is, of course, to strengthen the RES by addition of these churches with their unambiguous stand on Scripture.

Committee on Race

In answer to a request of the RES, a Committee on Race was established in 1972. Its first report appears in the Minutes of the 41st General Assembly. The initial concern grew out of the problems of race as they involved the RES member churches particularly in South Africa. But each RES member church was urged to study the problems in its own situation.

Not much has been done with the report since it first appeared. In 1977, the assembly erected a new Committee on Race to draw up a report for the RES on what the OPC had done in the area of biblical race relations. This new committee's report was presented to this year's assembly.

Almost immediately it became clear that the assembly would have difficulty in dealing with the report and especially with its recommendations. Part of the problem was in the report's rather strongly worded statements and the clear suggestion of collective guilt in race relations. After a lengthy discussion and attempt to work on the recommendations, the assembly finally referred these back to the committee for reconsideration and report next year.

The Chaplains Commission

An attempt to provide a joint "Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel," to serve the OPC, PCA, and RPCES, was presented to the assembly. Though a previous assembly had named OP representatives to the PRCCMP, and expected some proposal for formally organizing the body, it was confronted with a commission already incorporated.

After extended debate, mostly concerned with how best to handle the matter, the assembly finally determined not to approve the PRCCMP's proposed constitution, to dissociate itself from the incorporation itself, and to inform the PCA and RPCES of these actions. Clearly the assembly felt the PRCCMP had run ahead of any proper authorization.

Dealing With a Complaint

The only judicial matter before this year's assembly was a complaint against the Presbytery of Philadelphia. This grew out of the presentation of charges of error in doctrine against a member of that presbytery first presented early in 1978. Because the charges were based on a written document that the author (and the person against whom the charges were being brought) clearly stated to be for purposes of discussion only and not made available to the public, the presbytery had decided it had no right to proceed to consider the charges until the author released the document.

The complaint was against this decision of the presbytery, which in effect cut off any further dealing with the charges of error themselves. The arguments to find this action of the presbytery wrong were fully aired before the assembly. And though there was some obvious concern by various commissioners to go beyond the narrow question of the complaint to the underlying doctrinal questions, the assembly managed to deny the complaint by a substantial majority.

(It should be noted that the doctrinal questions are being dealt with by the Presbytery of Philadelphia. They have come before the presbytery, not as judicial charges, but as a question of doctrine presented by the individual himself. The presbytery has been meeting over several sessions and has not concluded its consideration of the doctrinal issues involved.)

Other Actions

Two overtures calling for the erection of special committees were turned down. (In both cases, the problem of cost for such committees was undoubtedly a factor in the decision.) For one of the overtures, asking for consideration of a new denominational name, the assembly in-

stead urged the presbyteries to study the matter and make some report next year.

After several years' work, a proposed new Book of Discipline is to be presented to next year's assembly. A separate committee on the Directory for Worship was also erected, by an unusual balloting by geographical areas.

Concern over the General Assembly's Budget Fund (which pays for all the various expenses of the assembly except that of travel by the commissioners) led to the adoption of stricter control over the fund and to a greatly increased request for next year (\$4 per communicant instead of the past year's \$3).

In the last action on business before the assembly, the Committee on Christian Education was authorized to reprint the Standards of Government, Discipline, and Worship (the "Black Book" now being out of print). This may come in a loose-leaf binder to allow for the revisions to the Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship that are still to come.

The assembly had determined at the beginning of its sessions to adjourn at 3 p.m. on Thursday, May 24. It actually managed to quit at 3:52 that day.

A Sad Sequel

Though most of the commissioners had made other travel arrangements to take advantage of the early adjournment, and thus to avoid the weekend traffic, a few did not leave until the next day.

One of those was the Rev. Edwards E. Elliott, pastor of the congregation in Garden Grove, Ca. He was on a flight out of Pittsburgh for Chicago that was running late. But his connecting flight to Los Angeles waited an extra fifteen minutes for the Pittsburgh plane; Mr. Elliott made his connection.

That flight was on the plane that crashed and burned, killing all on board in the worst domestic air accident in history. Clearly the sovereign Lord of creation wanted this faithful servant at home with himself.

Proclaim What God Has Done

Larry D. Conard

Isaiah says, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isa. 52:7) Isaiah makes this proclamation to the people and he is proclaiming it to us also. When you hear those words of Isaiah, does it not call out within you the fervor, the desire to say, "I must go forth. I must be those feet upon the mountain which have come to proclaim peace, to bring good tidings, to proclaim salvation, to say, 'Our God reigns.'"

We are the ordained leaders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained to rule and to teach. Ordained as those on the mountains shouting out the whole counsel of God. And I believe this is our real heart's desire, all of us, that we might shout out the good tidings, the whole counsel of God.

While I was at seminary, I remember hearing the criticism that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is a theologically sound church but it is evangelistically weak. I, for one, don't like that charge. I don't like it at all. I recoiled at the time I heard the charge and I challenged the one who made it to look at the whole picture. Some of our churches were evangelistically strong. But in some ways, it's sad to say, we are evangelistically weak. All we have to do is look at the statistics of the agenda for the 1979 General Assembly. Those statistics cry out as a witness against us. Just a couple of examples: we have 170 churches and chapels and in the last year there were only 260 new

professions of faith. And it's really there that we find out whether we are growing evangelistically. Our major growth has been in reaffirmations and transfers. We have had a little over four reaffirmations and transfers per church in the last year, but only one and one-half new converts per church. That really is a very sad statistic. Overall, the statistics tell us that we have actually grown only 1.7 percent each of the last three years.

We desire as a church to send out missionaries to other lands to proclaim the gospel of saving grace, to proclaim the whole counsel of God. And we need to do that. We want to do that. But we need to be a growing church here at home in order to send out missionaries to others.

I've heard it said, and I've said it myself, that the pastor's major task is to teach the people of God to minister unto one another. Ephesians 4:11, 12 is used to prove this. It is true, we are to be training people to minister one to another. We have that task. But there have been times when members of the congregation have come to me and asked, "Pastor, why don't we grow? Why doesn't the Orthodox Presbyterian Church grow? Not just here in our community, but why don't we grow nationwide? Why aren't new people coming into the church? We have the truth. We have the whole counsel of God. We have the biblical truth that God has given to us. God has been very gracious to us, to enable us to understand that truth, but why don't we grow?" I am sure you have heard the same questions. The excuse that has been given by some is that Reformed doctrine is too difficult to understand, too hard to accept. You have to be an intellectual to be able to grasp the biblical doctrines of faith. Do you really believe that? If you really believe that then you don't believe the Con-

fession of Faith as it tells us in Chapter I, section 7:

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

You see it tells us that the learned and the unlearned can understand. Just a couple of weeks ago I was told by a man who has been working in the inner-city that it is easier for the lower socio-economic community to accept and believe the biblical doctrines than the various speculative doctrines that are being presented in so many evangelical churches. They're ready to accept and receive what God says in his Word. To accept it as truth. To believe it and understand it.

Why, then aren't we growing? Why haven't we really grown? I mean *really* grown. We have made some increase, but not really grown. Since my time as Missionary-at-large in the Presbytery of Southern California I've become convinced that the answer is that we are not proclaiming what God has done. At least not to the extent that God's Word says for us to do, declares for us to do, really commands for us to do. Such as that which is expressed in Psalm 9.

You've heard of *Evangelism Explosion* and probably used it in your congregations. You have heard of other evangelistic programs, some which you might have used. But, beloved, I really don't like the term "evangelism" anymore. It's been Americanized and diluted to where we understand "evangelism equals program." I don't believe that evangelism really should be a program. Not as it is used in Scripture. The term we should be using is "Proclamation." Proclamation isn't a program. Proclamation is life! Please look at Psalm 9. By the way, this isn't the only psalm that suggests this to us. There are many psalms, over 40, which talk about proclamation, using the terms "declare, tell, proclaim, or sing." The prophets

This is the text of the sermon preached by the Rev. Larry Conard retiring Moderator at the opening of the 46th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The sermon text is Psalm 9.

Isaiah and Jeremiah as well as other prophets speak about proclaiming the Word of God. Proclaiming, as Psalm 9 says, what God has done. In the New Testament we also hear the word "proclaim"—to be proclaimers and to train God's people to be proclaimers of what God has done.

Church Leaders Proclaim God's Word

Look with me more closely at Psalm 9 to see what God says we are to be doing in the area of proclaiming what he has done. In the first two verses you'll find that we, the leaders of the church of Jesus Christ, have the responsibility to be proclaimers. We must be personally committed to proclaim what God has done. David was a leader of Israel. But he didn't leave the proclaiming up to the people. He didn't even leave it up to the prophets and priests of his day. For as you see in verses 1 and 2, he says, "I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High." You see, he commits himself right away to be a proclaimer of what

Teaching Positions

Make application immediately for openings this fall at Faith Christian School. Applicants should have an understanding of and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and application of that commitment and understanding through a Biblical World & Life View as it relates to true God centered education. The openings are for a first grade teacher and a second & third grade combined classroom teacher. This is an opportunity to be involved in a growing Day School where Christ is Lord. Make inquiries to: William C. Lanier, Faith Christian School, 4100 Ronnaki Road, Anniston, AL 36201.

Peninsula Christian School has an opening for a third-fourth grade teacher or possibly a departmentalized sharing of third-fourth and fifth-seventh with an emphasis in Math, Science and Social Studies. Anyone of Reformed faith with a strong commitment to Christian education may apply. For information write to Peninsula Christian School, 22507 S. Figueroa St., Carson, Ca. 90745.

Contacts in Arizona

Families of Reformed faith convictions who are moving to the Prescott, Arizona area will find like minds and fellowship with the Prescott Presbyterian Church in America. Providing a full ministry of preaching and teaching in the Reformed Faith. Write Pastor Charles E. Turner, P.O. Box 248, Prescott, AZ 86302. Ph. (602) 778-2538.

God has done. We, the teaching and ruling elders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church must be committed to be proclaimers of what God has done.

The word "praise" in this first verse is referring to the worship of God, where the wonders of God are rehearsed through praise by the reading or singing of his Word. A prime example of this is when David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. You'll find this in the first book of Chronicles, the 16th chapter. Before David brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem he did a lot of instructing and preparing the people. In the 15th chapter and before, you'll find that David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem so badly that he was willing to bring it in any way he could just to get it into the capital city. David had a new cart built and an ox was to pull the cart. The cart tipped and a young man reached out to keep it still and when he touched the ark he was struck dead right there. David was very distressed by this, and he left the ark there and went to see what God's Word required. That's a lesson for us in how we're to worship God. We're not to worship God out of the excitement of our hearts, out of emotion, but out of instruction. We worship God according to what he has taught us in his holy Word. David not only found out what God required, but he went on to prepare a worship service to celebrate the entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into the city of Jerusalem. It was a tremendous service! You'll find that in the 15th and 16th chapters. Let's begin reading at Chapter 15, verse 25:

So David and the elders of Israel and the commanders of units of a thousand went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom, with rejoicing. Because God had helped the Levites who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed. Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the singers, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs. David also wore a linen ephod.

Now go down to chapter 16, verse 1:

They brought the Ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God. After David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman. He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the Ark of the Lord, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel.

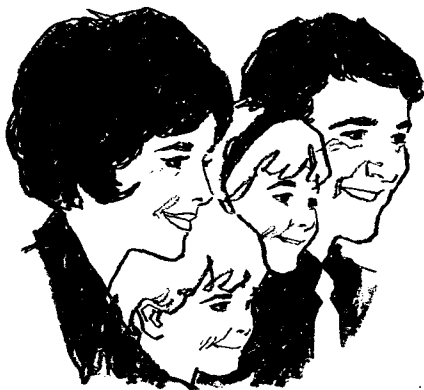
Then go down to verse 6:

... and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the Ark of the Covenant of God. That day David first committed to Asaph and his associates this psalm of thanks to the Lord.

That psalm which is contained here is also found in Psalms 96 and 105. What we find is that David gave the people instruction for worship. He placed choirs along with those who were instructed to play their instruments upon the walls of Jerusalem to sing and play this psalm as the Ark of the Covenant was coming in to that city. And as he brought it in, remember the excitement, how he danced before the Ark of the Covenant as it entered into the city. This was a joyous time, a great time of worship unto God. Yes, David was first committed to be a proclaimer of what God had done.

Beloved, it is our responsibility to lead God's people into worship by praise and thanksgiving. What we find in the actions of David in Psalm 9 springs from an attitude of heart. I think that's vitally important. We must show a right attitude. We're the ones who are to give the example to the flock and they're to follow the example. A lot of times our attitude can turn in the wrong direction and go stale, can't it? When week after week, month after month with the same routine it can begin to be a drudgery. But God says it is to be exciting to bring the people of God to worship. And it can be if we have meditated upon the Word of God through the week. Not just in the preparing of the message, but also in the spending of time in our closet with the

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Lord and his Word. When we do meditate upon God's Word, thinking about what he has done in the past — not just for us, but for all his people — what he is doing now for us and his people, and what he has promised to do in the future, then it is easier for us to proclaim this to his people with an attitude of joy and exultation. And that's what David is talking about when he says, "I will be glad and rejoice."

Proclaim God's Word Among the Nations

But it isn't only to the congregation of God's people that we are to declare or be proclaimers of what God has done; it is also among the nations. See verse 11: "Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done." Jesus said the same thing. He has told us in the Great Commission to disciple all nations. Really, when we disciple all nations, we are doing it by proclaiming what God has done. Isn't that right? When we disciple the children of God, we are telling them of what God has done. What God has done in the past, what God has done in the last few years as far as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is concerned. Proclaim the faithfulness of God. We also proclaim his mercy. His mercy in what he has done to save us from his wrath which is to come upon those who do not know his name, upon those who do not seek him:

He will judge the world in righteousness; he will govern the peoples with justice. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you. (verses 8-10)

What blessed promises God gives us there. Our proclamation is that God is a righteous judge and he will judge the world in righteousness. You know, this is one of the most difficult areas of theology for people to understand. For it is here that they begin to look at God only as a judge, and not as a righteous God. They do not understand that man deserves nothing, save death, because of his sinfulness, because of his depravity. They can't see God's mercy as it is expressed

in verse 13:

Lord, see how my enemies persecute me. Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death.

The Christian has the assurance that even the gates of death hold no threat for him, for it is God who is the lifter-up. He has conquered the gates of death, the gates of hell, the gates of eternal destruction, through his Son, Jesus Christ. He has delivered us from the gates of death and they no longer have a hold on us. It is difficult, you see, for people to look at God in this righteous judgeship. They cannot understand because they look through the eyes of the natural man, rather than the eyes of one born of the Spirit. And that's why we need his Word, and need to be proclaimers of his Word. Beloved, we must declare what God has done because none of us deserve eternal life. None of us deserve a relationship with Christ. None of us deserve that great mercy which God has shed upon us. It is only in his mercy that he has chosen us to be his. He has separated us as a people for his own.

The Apostle Paul was very faithful in declaring to the Ephesians what God has done. In Acts chapter 20, he called the Ephesian elders out to say good-bye to them. Remember how he said clearly to them in verse 19:

I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you, but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

God's People Proclaim His Word

Fathers and Brothers, it is not only our task to be proclaimers of what God has done but we must motivate our congregations to be proclaimers of what God has done. Again, I refer to verse 11:

Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.

This is an imperative. He says, "YOU" proclaim. "You be proclaimers," is what

he is crying out to the children of Israel. You sing praises to the Lord enthroned in Zion and you proclaim what he has done among the nations. So often our people are not proclaimers of what God has done because they are fearful that they will say the wrong thing. I think sometimes they feel because the Reformed faith teaches that God is sovereign and he is the one who does the electing, God is the one who brings people into his kingdom. Therefore, they hesitate to tell people to repent and believe what God has done. But, you know, you really never see that kind of hesitation in the Scriptures. You see the opposite. What you find in the Scriptures is that God's people are confessing people, proclaiming what God has done in their lives, just as David does in this psalm. David doesn't say who this enemy is when he says,

My enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before you. For you have upheld my right and my cause.

But, can't you see him speaking of Goliath and the time he went out with just his sling and stones. Yes, there are many giants against the church of Jesus Christ even today. We need to understand. We need to proclaim what God has done. Because God reigns! !

The Rev. Benson Male said, "If we as pastors live and the people unto whom we minister live as God proclaims in his Word that we are to live, then others will be won to Jesus Christ through our lives." I agree with that. And isn't that it? "Lifestyle." We talk about having a biblical world and life view. What is this lifestyle? This lifestyle begins with believing that God is sovereign. That he rules all things and all areas of our lives. That God controls all of our life. Whatever that work or vocation we chose to do, we are to be working in it as unto the Lord. Even in it we are to glorify God. Even if it's out digging ditches and getting filthy dirty doing it.

After Paul preached and taught in Ephesus for over two years we are told that:

many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the

scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way, the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power (Acts 19:19-20). A drachma was about a day's wage. Fifty thousand days' wages were burned in this fire. But they were willing to give it up. You see, they were proclaiming, not with their mouths in this instance necessarily, but with their lives. They had a new lifestyle. And that lifestyle affected their community. Maybe our people are not being taught the lifestyle we profess. Lives should be changing in our community, in our churches, so that the community itself is affected. Remember, though, that it is not only a changed lifestyle that is to serve to proclaim to the people of our community, but God says that we are to proclaim vocally. We are to proclaim through confession. Remember what Romans 10:9, 10 says:

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

We are to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's very significant, because there are those who would say that one can believe in Jesus as their Savior, but do not have to accept him as their Lord at the same time. But it is not until one confesses that Jesus is Lord of their life does he believe that Jesus is his Savior. Confessing that Jesus is Lord, means obedience and obedience is expressed in faith, in belief in what God has done. And, then, because it is in our hearts and minds and our lives and the lives of our people, we may then express it vocally with joy and enthusiasm. An example is found in John 4, the woman at the well. Jesus taught her who he is, bringing her to faith and an understanding of who he is. Before she could show that her life had been changed by Jesus Christ, she proclaimed with her mouth that Jesus was the Christ, (verse 29). As a result of her vocal testimony her proclamation of what Jesus had done,

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him, (verse 39).

So it's not just a lifestyle that proclaims

what God has done, but it is also being vocal about what God has done.

The Home Missions Committee has hired the Rev. John Fikkert as Missionary-at-large for our denomination. I praise the Lord for that, because John Fikkert can be very bold in the Lord. He's very bold in proclaiming what God has done. He does it in so many different and unique ways. One story I heard of his expressing what God has done was when he was in the barber shop getting his hair cut. He had just got out of the chair and was getting ready to leave when a fellow who was climbing into the chair used the name of Jesus Christ in vain. John turned, and with a smile on his face and love in his heart, said, "Isn't that a great name. Do you know what that name means? Isn't that a fantastic name, because it tells us what God has done for us? The life, death of Jesus Christ was for lost mankind." John was able to proclaim to that man in the chair, who had denied the Christ, who that Christ is. Beloved, we need boldness. And I see the need for boldness more and more as I go from church to church. We need to challenge our people to boldness. We want them to go out and proclaim, don't we? That's really the idea. We want them to go forth in their communities and we want them to go to their relatives and friends and neighbors to tell of the wonderful grace of Jesus. We want them to be inviting others to our fellowship, so that they may devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, so that they will no longer be tossed here and there by every wave and wind of teaching, and most of all so that they may join with us in praise to the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord. We proclaim the praises of what God has done. We not only do it to the nations and to the people, but as it is expressed in this first verse, unto the Lord. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

Yes, Fathers and Brothers, as David of old was committed to be a proclaimer of the Most High God, so we, the servants of the Most High God, must be committed to be proclaimers. Just as David called upon Israel to be proclaimers, we too, must call upon the people of God in our congregations to be proclaimers with their voices and with their lives.

News & Views

Edwards E. Elliott

Among the 275 people who plunged to their death aboard an American Airlines DC-10 near Chicago on Friday, May 25 in the worst domestic air disaster in history was the Rev. Edwards E. Elliott, pastor of Garden Grove Orthodox Presbyterian Church in California. He was returning home from the meetings of his denomination's General Assembly in Beaver Falls, Pa.

In an earlier article (see "An Assembly at Work") John J. Mitchell describes the remarkable circumstances which led to Mr. Elliott's being on that plane. It seemed very clear that his work was done, and that the Lord was calling his servant home. Mr. Elliott had been making plans for retirement, had drawn up a will only a few months before and had even held a family reunion before leaving for the General Assembly.

Edwards Eugene Elliott was born May 5, 1914 to missionary parents in Changsha, Hunan province, China. He came to the United States at the age of three. He attended Wheaton Academy, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, majored in Greek at Wheaton College ('39) and received a Bachelor of Divinity from Westminster Theological Seminary in 1942. While at Wheaton College, he chose to become a member of the newly formed Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Elliott pastored the St. Andrews Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Baltimore, Md. from 1942 to 1959. During this time, he helped to develop the Christian Education Committee of the denomination. While there he met and married, in 1944, Miss Doris Harrison. The Elliott's two older children, Ned and Nancy, were born in Baltimore.

From 1950 to 1956 Mr. Elliott pastored the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church of San Francisco. During this time he helped to start the Brentwood Orthodox Presbyterian Church of South San Francisco. From 1956 he was pastor of the Garden Grove church. Throughout the course of his ministry there, the church showed steady growth of membership. The facilities have been expanded three times. Mr.

Elliott also served on the boards of Peninsula Christian School and Salem Home for the Handicapped.

A memorial service for Mr. Elliott was held on May 30, 1979. The Rev. Robert Newsom, pastor of Cerritos Valley Orthodox Presbyterian Church, preached the sermon. A memorial fund has been established through Garden Grove Church with gifts going to Covenant College and Westminster Seminary.

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Jubilee Commencement at Westminster

There was standing room only as almost 1200 people packed Chelton Baptist Church in Jarrettsville, Pa. for the 50th annual commencement exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, May 30, 1979. A record 133 graduates from four degree programs received a total of 135 diplomas (two men graduated twice each). The Doctor of Ministry degree was awarded to two men, with the largest number of graduates receiving the Master of Divinity.

The Rev. Edward L. Kellogg, associate pastor of Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Leesburg, Va. gave the commencement address on the subject, "Hewn from the Rock." Recalling the men who formed Westminster Seminary 50 years ago, Mr. Kellogg reminded the graduates of the truths for which the seminary stands. He charged the faculty not to permit academic pride or scholarly originality to interfere with their commitment to the biblical doctrines handed down by the founding fathers of Westminster.

After the conferring of degrees, Dr. Edmund P. Clowney, President of the seminary, urged the graduates to be ever "ready to give an answer . . . (for) the hope that is in (them)" (1 Pet. 3:15). Light refreshments were served in the Fellowship Hall at the conclusion of the exercises.

The commencement exercises were preceded by an 11 a.m. brunch organized jointly by the Alumnus Association and the Women's Auxiliary. It was held at the Holiday Inn in Fort Washington, Pa.

Westminster graduates from the thirties to the seventies were present to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones. Tributes were delivered to founding faculty members who are no longer living. Current faculty members who have served the seminary for 25 years or more were also honored.

Reformed Bible Institute

The 1979 Reformed Bible Institute will be held at Ocean City, N.J. through the months of July and August. From July 9-20 Dr. John H. Skilton will teach a course on II Peter. Dr. Skilton is Dean of the Reformed Bible Institute of the Delaware Valley. He is also a lecturer in New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary.

The second course, from July 23-August 3 will be offered by Dr. Raymond B. Dillard, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary. He will teach a course on "Studies in the Historical Geography of Palestine." The final course (August 6-17) is to be on "The Bible and Archaeology" and will be taught by Dr. Milton C. Fisher, President, Academic Dean and Professor of Old Testament at the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.

All sessions will be held Monday through Friday, mornings only, at Central Ocean City Union Chapel, 32nd and Central Avenues, Ocean City, N.J. Certificates will be awarded upon successful completion of each two-week course of study. The courses can be applied as elective credit in the two-year evening curriculum conducted by The Reformed Bible Institute of the Delaware Valley. All of high school age or older are cordially invited to attend.

The Reformed Bible Institute is sponsored by Ocean City Orthodox Presbyterian Chapel in cooperation with the Reformed Bible Institute of The Delaware Valley and Central Ocean City Union Chapel. The registration fee is \$5 per family per course. Further information may be obtained from Mrs. Ruth Patterson, 609 12th Street, Ocean City, N.J. 08226. Phone: (609) 399-7971.

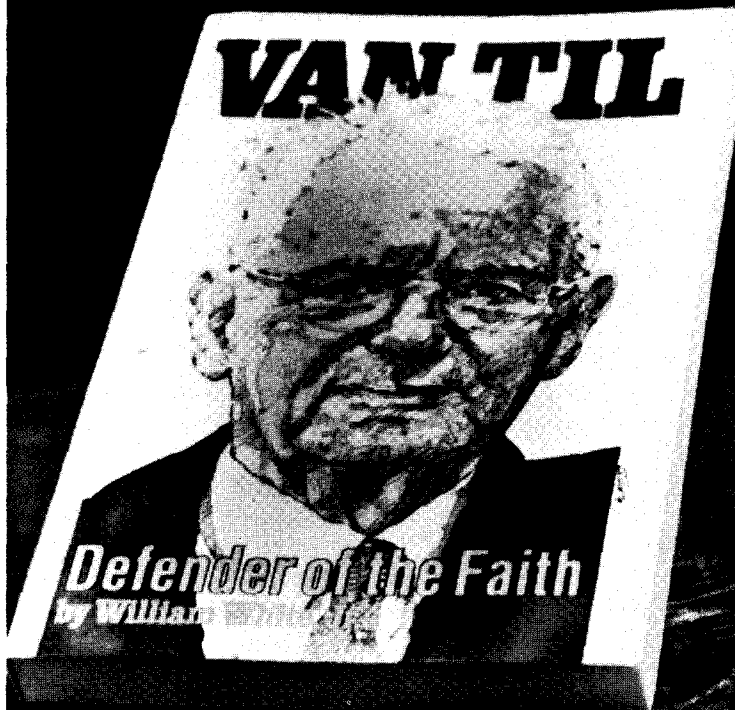
... which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."—Luke 21:15

These words apply well to Cornelius Van Til, called by some the father of modern apologetics. From his Indiana boyhood as a newly arrived immigrant, through his careers at Princeton and Westminster Theological Seminaries, to his present retirement, Van Til's life has been devoted to spreading the truth of the Scriptures.

Van Til: Defender of the Faith, by William White, Jr., is the authorized biography of this great man of American theology. The author, who has known Van Til for years, portrays the private "Kees" Van Til as well as the public Dr. Van Til, tracing his life as it paralleled his developing thought.

It was Van Til's presuppositional approach—the idea that apologists must begin by assuming the truth of the Scriptures—that caused a quiet revolution in the way Christian doctrine is now defended. All serious students of Christianity owe it to themselves to read this revealing biography of Cornelius Van Til, Defender of the Faith.

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The Church's True Glory

David W. King

Time and *Newsweek* discovered "born again Christians" when one ran for the presidency of the United States. Since then evangelicals have been generally seized with visions of conquest—perhaps as much for the sake of public vindication as for the honor of Christ. How utterly delightful, after years—decades—of sub-cultural and scorned existence to emerge as the molders of mainstream America. What stars in our crown: sports greats, revolutionaries (tamed), successful business men, government officials, notorious crooks, popular entertainers and a President. The mind-set here is foreign to the outlook of Christ and the apostles. We are being seduced.

The youth pastor of a fast-growing suburban church which mounts a super-sophisticated youth program at tremendous expense, said of the high-schoolers it seeks to reach: "They've always thought of Jesus Christ as a loser; we want to present him as a winner."

Christ, to be sure, is a "winner." The gospel proclaims an eschatology of victory and glory. It announces the resurrection triumph of Christ over sin, Satan, and death. It reveals the reigning glory of Christ as King enthroned at the Father's right hand, ruling the universe and directing history. It points to the future unveiling of his majesty when he comes to judge and his kingdom fills a new heaven and earth.

But the victory of Christ has nothing in common with the victories the world exalts. What communion has the glory of Christ with the glory of the executive suite, the suburban ranch house, super-bowl glamour, or the glitter and noise of

the latest rock star? We betray the true glory of Christ when we endeavor to convey it to the world in terms of the world's values and aspirations.

***What communion has the
glory of Christ with the glory
of the executive suite,
the suburban ranch house,
super-bowl glamour, or the
glitter and noise of the latest
rock star?***

The King of glory himself came in humiliation as a servant. He did this for our redemption. He did it also as a model for our lives and ministry (Mark 10:43-45). We are called to follow in the footsteps of his suffering (1 Pet. 2:21). His dying is the pattern for our living (John 12:24-26, Phil. 2:5-9), his glory—a glory the world cannot possibly understand (1 Cor. 2:6, 8)—is the glory of his shame and humiliation on the cross. The Servant-King calls us to follow his path to risen glory: the route of self-denial, humility, suffering (Mark 8:31-9:1, Acts 14:22). "Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

The ministry of the Apostle Paul, following the pattern of Christ's, is our pattern for ministry. "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us." "Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." (Phil. 3:17, 1 Cor. 11:1). And what is Paul's example? He refuses to appeal to the world with superiority of speech or wisdom, that the power of God may be evident in his ministry and

in those who believe through it (1 Cor. 2:1-5). The weapons of his warfare are not the weapons of the flesh, but the weapons of righteousness and truth, made powerful by the Spirit for casting down fortresses of unbelief (2 Cor. 10:3-5, 6:7). Despising and discarding every ground for boasting in his flesh, Paul desires only to gain Christ, to be found in him clothed in a divine righteousness, and to know him, the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death (Phil. 3:8-10). Paul's ministry displays the mind of the Suffering Servant (Phil. 2:5-9).

Is there any glory in such humiliation? Certainly the glory is invisible to eyes that cannot see. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight, or (in other words) to walk with heavenly vision:

We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:18)

The glory is all in Christ. He is the image of the invisible God; from his face shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). The glory that belongs to Christ is our glory and the glory of the church because we also belong to Christ. And this glory which is ours in Christ must be glory enough for us or we will find ourselves betraying him:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form, and in union with Christ you possess his fullness who is the head over every power and authority. (Col. 2:8-10)

Therefore, says Paul, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as slaves for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). Proclaiming Christ is spiritual warfare; and Satan endeavors to blind men's eyes to the glory of the One we preach. But we may not resort to Satan's tactics of deception in order to beat him at his game.

Beholding with unveiled faces the

The Rev. David W. King is pastor of Christ Reformed Chapel (Orthodox Presbyterian) in Alliance, Oh.

glory of the Lord as in a mirror . . . we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (2 Cor. 3: 18-4:2)

Despite "fighting without and fear within," Paul is satisfied in having Christ and beholding his glory. What treasure! And yet "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Why? "So that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves."

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. (2 Cor. 4:7-10)

Paul is telling us not simply that his and the other apostles' trials were inevitable in the conflict with a certain culture at a given time and place. Rather, humiliation is required, weakness is demanded—that no one may boast in man, and that the transcendent glory of God may be seen. The sufferings of Christ and the apostles sets the pattern for the church in this age (John 15:18-21). The glory of the kingdom is hidden now from all except those who are given eyes to see it. Now is the time for judgment to begin with the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). Not now the glory of Solomon's kingdom, but rather the tents of Abraham are our model of faith. Scripture holds before us father Abraham "who looked for a city whose builder and maker is God," and Moses "who chose to endure ill treatment with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." We are called "outside the camp" to Christ, "bearing his reproach, for we have here no lasting city, but are seeking one to come." We are called to be a pilgrim church (Heb. 11:8-10; 13:16; 24:27; 13:13, 14).

Therefore we not only betray the glory of Christ but also the true honor of his

Instead of catering to the materialism and man-centered values of our consumer "fun city," we must use the gospel to challenge that whole style of life.

people when we build churches on "great" men and parade "superstars" before the world as models of new life in Christ. The glory of the church and her right to be heard are in no way based on her ability to make an impression on the world in terms of the world's standards of success.

For consider your call, brethren, not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God. (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

When God does bring the wise, the mighty, the rich to himself, it is by the humbling route of repentance. God humbles the proud. He divests Zacchaeus of all he had formerly lived to gain. He sends proud Saul out of Damascus in a basket by night. The gospel of the kingdom is the gospel of the poor (Luke 4:18, 2:50-55, 6:20-26).

The pastor of a large evangelical church near us drives a new Cadillac and wears expensive clothes. No expense was spared in building their new church building. The people work hard to support such extravagance. Why? Because their church and their pastor's life-style are their own symbols of success. That's their message to the community: our Jesus is a "winner." On the cover of *People* magazine Robert Schuller gazes fondly at a scale model of his glass cathedral, convinced that with such an attraction thousands who otherwise would have no interest will attend services and hear his upbeat gospel. What rubbish. Yes, even treason against the King and

his kingdom. Instead of catering to the materialism and man-centered values of our consumer "fun city," we must use the gospel to challenge that whole style of life. Christ does not want status symbols—he has status at the Father's right hand. And affluent suburbia does not need Jesus grafted onto its life-style. It needs to repent.

Would Satan seek to seduce our churches from a path of humiliation with exciting programs of worldly appeal that promise success? He sought so to seduce our Lord. "Cursed smallness! What must we do to grow? How can the world believe our message about the glorious sovereign God when we are so small?" How indeed! By the only means God has ever employed: by the Holy Spirit granting conviction and faith when the folly of the cross is proclaimed. The sum of the matter is this: the glory of Christ is the feast and riches and satisfaction of his people, though it is utterly at odds with the glory sought and understood by this world. Because of this, the pattern of Christ's humiliation—the biblical pattern for our lives, ministries, and churches—is utterly at odds with the world's formula for success. We may not promote Christ's glory with the world's methods. We must proclaim Christ's glory while seeking to manifest it in conformity to his servant-image through deeds of love, convinced with Paul that "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes."

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Boxes

Lois Sibley

Irma Bombeck makes me laugh. So often her column reflects what happened to me with my kids, and I have to laugh. It's like scratching an itch that you knew you had but couldn't quite reach. Suddenly she says it right and you laugh and find relief.

Not long ago she had a column on boxes: saving them, using them again, which was wonderful for me because I come from a long line of box savers myself. My grandmother saved boxes, my mother saved boxes, I save boxes, my daughters save boxes, a real family tradition. Boxes are so neat: the different shapes, sizes, colors. I love boxes.

All except the kind of box people try to put you into. Those I hate. Know what I mean? People have a way of boxing each other up all tied with a ribbon. And they do so quickly, based on what a person may say today, tomorrow or last week.

Think about it. Children in the school yard include or exclude each other from the games and fun based on how they look or how they talk or act. Any kid who doesn't fit is put into a lonely, little

box to sit and watch on the edges of the group.

Students in the dorm know all the different kinds and shapes of boxes and quickly categorize each other. Some are busy making new kinds of boxes and trying them on for size.

New neighbors move in and the resident natives, in talking with them, learn about their past, their present interests and they box them in while they decide how friendly they want to be with the newcomers.

Churches must like boxes. They use them so much. There are boxes for different denominations and boxes for different cultures within a denomination. There are boxes up and down the ladders of church authority, from the person in the pew up to the bishop, the stated clerk or the pope; they all have a special box they must fit into. People raise their eyebrows and wonder if a humble boxholder decides to break out and be different. What? Not fit his box? Surely, a grave error this, perhaps even a sin to jump out of your box and not be as you are expected to be.

Once in a box, it's difficult for a person to break out into another shape or size or color. But the fighters keep on trying. Some refuse to be boxed at all. And that's another kind of box. Because the others in the group know the one who doesn't like the fit or shape of his box and they watch as he keeps trying to break out. They watch and wonder about such a person: is he really one of us? Does he belong? Should he join another group? Would he be happier somewhere else? Why does he stay with us but refuse to sit quietly in the lovely box we have made for him? The key words there are "we have made for him." Sociology majors

could get into a whole big study here on how and why the group influences/determines who a person is and how he acts. Who sets up the boxes and who pushes people in and out of them. How do boxes control the quality and quantity of justice in society? Do they? See? Start thinking about a little box you are being forced into and soon you begin thinking about world problems and how you can affect them.

With so many kinds of boxes, why must we stay in the same old one all day, or all life? Let's play musical boxes, move around, dare to be different, try a different box. Today a neat, square, white box from Tiffany's, tomorrow a beat up, many colored old tin cookie box. Why not?

When people expect me to act a certain way, say a certain thing, dress up or down, be what they think I should be, according to which box they think I fit, I smile and take great pleasure in jumping in and out of different kinds of boxes. There are so many choices; so many fun things to learn and to do; so many ways to serve both the Lord and other people, without compromising your principles, from different boxes. It's no fun to stay in the same old one. Why don't you try to break out of yours for an hour or two? Or a day or two? Or maybe a lifetime, or forever. What kind of box fits you? Is it comfy? Or does it pinch? Or would you rather save that one for another day, and try a new one today? You may feel better if you do. And you may be able to serve better: your family, your friends, your community, whoever the Lord has put you near, from some other box. Try it. And let me know how it works for you. Personally, I've been having fun saving and changing boxes for years.

Mrs. Lois Sibley is a writer living in Derry, NH