

The Presbyterian Guardian

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A CHURCH IS
BORN



Mrs. Fred Malroy with sons
Jason, Eric, and Sean— in
descending order.

The Mission Valley Chapel
of Ronan, Montana



Presbyterian Piety

JOHN P. CLELLAND

This address was given at the opening exercises of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1939 and published in the November Guardian of that year. By request it is being republished now, in a slightly abridged form.

Webster defines piety as "habitual veneration or reverence for the Supreme Being, earnest devotion to the service of God, godliness, devoutness." In our own words we may define it as the Christian life we live, together with its qualities, characteristics, and attitudes.

It is worthwhile for us to discuss piety because it is so important. Christianity is a life as well as a doctrine; there can be no Christianity without piety. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Scripture abounds in exhortations to show forth in our lives the faith that is in our hearts.

Piety and doctrine

Our subject is not Christian piety, but Presbyterian piety. I chose this narrower theme because of my conviction that piety is very closely related to doctrine. We Presbyterians believe in certain distinctive and well-defined doctrines, and these doctrines should and must produce a type or brand of piety. "Truth is in order to goodness; and a great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness" (*Form of Government*, Orthodox Presbyterian Church).

Furthermore, the best doctrines will produce the best brand of Christian piety. If it is true, as we believe, that the doctrines of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches are the most scriptural, then we may expect to find the highest type of Christian life in those churches. Presbyterian piety ought to produce the finest flower of Christian character.

By this we do not mean to say that any absolute distinction can be drawn between Presbyterian piety and that of other Christians. All the children of God are pious and show forth piety. The old-fashioned Methodist saint, with his loud prayers and fervent amens, lived a life of Christian piety. Those who come from the midwest may have seen the influence of Lutheranism in the godly character of the members of Lutheran churches. We rejoice in the widespread Fundamentalist movement of our time, not only because through it the Word is preached, but also because of the fine type of Christian character that movement has produced.

Presbyterian piety is one of many kinds of Christian piety, and we Presbyterians are debtors to all our brethren. Do we not sing the Methodist Wesley and the Pietist Gerhard? And yet, with full recognition of other forms of Christian piety, we hold that Presbyterian piety is the best, because Presbyterian doctrine is the best. It is not perfect because only our blessed Lord has lived a sinless life. Our piety is

still stained by our sins.

Sometimes it is not the best because its professors have not lived up to their faith. And yet there has been a glorious Presbyterian piety lived out where the doctrines of the Reformed Faith have been faithfully taught. We find it in the Geneva of Calvin, among the German Reformed of the Palatinate, in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, in humble homes in Scotland and Ulster and here in America on the wild and rough frontier.

What is Presbyterian piety?

Presbyterian piety on its positive side is characterized first by *a sense of the majesty of God*. The Reformed creeds exalt the sovereignty of God. They set forth the awful holiness of God, his omnipotence, the unlimited scope of his decrees.

So, as he has been exalted in the creeds, God is reverenced in the lives of those who believe those creeds. The worship of Calvinistic churches has never been undignified or casual, but has possessed an austere quality, for were not men coming into the presence of the Triune God, Lord of heaven and earth? So our forefathers sang the Psalms of David: "To what retreat shall I repair, And find not Thy dread Presence there?" Is not this better than singing "I am happy, oh so happy"?

This sense of God's majesty is a noble quality and one much needed today, for our generation has humanized God, brought him down from his throne until he has almost become one of us. Men believe in a limited, finite God. It is well to remember that the God whom Isaiah saw in the temple was the Lord of Hosts and that the whole earth was full of his glory!

In the second place, Presbyterian piety has been characterized by *a high view of the law of God*. By what standard is man to live? The Presbyterian answer is "by the law of God," by his moral law revealed in the Scriptures. And so approximately forty questions of the Shorter Catechism are devoted to exposition of the Ten Commandments. From this comes a solemn view of the seriousness of sin and an acute sense of personal sinfulness.

Where the law of God is proclaimed as the norm of conduct, not only for salvation but also for obedience by those who have been saved, there you will have godly living. Those old Presbyterian worthies nurtured on the Shorter Catechism made no compromise with worldly standards. We have the evidence in the Scottish Sabbath, the strict morality of the Puritans, the rigid discipline of Presbyterian congregations on the undisciplined frontier, and the steadfastness with which Korean Presbyterians refused to bow at the shrines of an earthly ruler.

Presbyterian piety has not sought some mystical guidance, as do so many in our day. She does not so much as ask,

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"How can I be in the will of God?" as "What does the Bible say?" I know that this type of piety has been and is being attacked by ascetics. They claim it is carnal and wordly; but I am content to let the lives of these Presbyterian saints speak for themselves. They knew the law of God and, by God's grace, they sought to walk according to that law. Would that in this time of shifting moral standards we had more saints with this high view of the law of God!

A piety of constancy and depth

A third characteristic of Presbyterian piety, stemming from the second, is *a certain fidelity and steadiness*. All of us have our ups and downs in the Christian life. We are more faithful at some times than at others. This is especially true of those whose religion is highly emotional, who under stress of emotion rise to a high peak only to suffer a later disastrous relapse.

Presbyterian piety is less exposed to these spiritual fluctuations than are other types of piety. Rather, it is blessed with an even, conscientious performance of duties. The "Scotch conscience" is famous, and it is the product of Presbyterian piety. Not everyone who calls himself a Presbyterian possesses in any full measure this Presbyterian piety; but where this brand of piety has held sway, we find Christians who persistently use the means of grace and devote themselves to God's service. My own parents went to church as regularly as they went to work. Our churches are weak because they are filled with fitful and spasmodic Christians. Give us more of these old-fashioned steadfast Christians!

Again, Presbyterian piety has been characterized by *family religion*. Recently reading a biographical sketch in a county history book, I came across the following: "Mrs. Smith is a member of the Reformed Church. Mr. Smith is a Democrat." This lamentable state of affairs has been all too common in our churches, but where Presbyterian piety has taken full root even the father is a Christian and a priest in the home.

The Reformed churches, especially the Dutch, have emphasized the covenant theology with its family implications. An unscriptural individualism has been avoided and the Lord has blessed them by giving them Christian families and homes, homes where there are family prayers and the Scriptures and catechisms are taught. There has been a sad decline of such family religion in our day, even in our own churches. Nothing could more strengthen our corporate testimony than a revival of this characteristic of Presbyterian piety.

A final mark of Presbyterian piety is its *broad life-and world-view*, eschewing the narrowness too often found. The early American Presbyterians were quick to found schools and colleges, that their children might read and their ministers be educated men. One of the glories of the Christian Reformed Church is her Christian schools where her children may receive a consistently Christian education.

So also in politics, where the Reformed churches have been established, the principles of liberty and democracy have been propagated and defended. The Hollanders under William of Orange resisted the tyranny of the Spanish king; the Puritans overthrew the Stuarts in England; and Presbyterians played a leading part in the American Revolution. The Christian is to enter into all fields of human endeavor and develop them for the glory of God. All of life becomes religious; our piety cannot be narrowly confined, but must embrace every phase of life.

Errors to be avoided

I should not close without pointing out some of the shortcomings that have commonly come to expression among Presbyterians. These are not faults inherent in Presbyterian piety as based on sound doctrine; they are pitfalls that have beset Presbyterians in spite of their sound doctrine.

At times Presbyterians have been ascetic in their piety, with a tendency to hold that many good things in life are evil. This was true of the Puritans who seem to have gone beyond Scripture in the rigidity of their morality. In Scottish piety I feel there has been an excessive introspection; from a good emphasis on heart-searching, there developed an overemphasis on the subjective. However, we blithe and extroverted Americans seem to be in no danger of this shortcoming.

The one great departure from true piety, to which Presbyterians have often been subject, is the lack of a warm and personal witness to others of Jesus Christ as Savior. Presbyterians have been liberal givers; they have a fine record of missionary interest, as witnessed by worldwide Presbyterian missions today. But somehow, there has frequently been a lack of personal witness.

The virtue of a dignified and austere faith may all too easily turn into the vice of a faith that is reserved and indifferent to those without. But the New Testament church grew because it was a witnessing church. The growing denominations of today, many of them fanatic and extreme, progress because of their unflagging evangelism. And we Presbyterians have a peculiar opportunity to combine both the doctrine and the witness of the Reformed faith, to combine the virtues of the old Presbyterian piety with a zeal for evangelism and soul-winning.

This is a non-doctrinal, anti-intellectual age, and it is our mission to proclaim the great scriptural doctrines of the Reformed Faith. But just because of our interest in doctrine, we are tempted to overlook and minimize the importance of the devotional life. Let us beware lest in our emphasis upon true doctrine we forget to nurture our souls upon the Word, lest we do not possess that union with the indwelling Christ. If we fail to keep our devotional life strong, then our piety is an aberration from true Presbyterian piety!

A noble heritage

We follow in a great tradition. We walk in the footsteps of Calvin, Knox, Edwards, Kuyper, Hodge, Thornwell, Warfield, and Machen—giants who fought for the Lord. We also follow in the footsteps of humble saints in the Rhine valley, by Netherland dikes, in Scottish villages, in crude American backwoods cabins, who walked humbly with their God and reared their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

They have labored, and we have entered into their labors. So I exhort you students to give yourselves to study, to learn the great truths of our faith, to sharpen your minds that they may become as two-edged swords in the service of the Lord. But withhold, I exhort you to follow after that scriptural holiness without which no man, not even a Presbyterian minister, shall so much as see the Lord.

The Rev. John P. Clelland is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Troy, Alabama, and a trustee of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.



Photos by Stephen Stukey

A Church is born

Another mission church has been born, and we want to tell you how God worked to bring the infant to life. We rejoice when a baby is born and bless God, and pray for the child to become an adult that brings joy to the heart of God.

Because no one knew of all the workings of God's Spirit in the lives of the others, each family will tell its own story. That way you can see how the Father does his will and works good for them that love him.

ROSEMARIE MALROY

In February 1971, it was hard moving to Ronan, Montana, leaving behind Christian friends in the Glenwood, Washington, Orthodox Presbyterian Chapel. My husband, a forester, had received a promotion and we now had a lovely new home. But I hadn't made many friends, let alone done much witnessing.

My friends in Glenwood said that God needed a Reformed witness in Montana. But what could I do? I had three small boys, and my husband didn't go to church. I wasn't making a very good Baptist, though I tried; and my sons were being taught things I didn't believe.

"Three sons," I would say to God. "You gave them to me, Lord. Please help me."

So many things troubled me. My nine-year-old had been told in Sunday school that it was very bad to

baptize babies. He had come in tears wanting to know if he would get to heaven. With these Christians I couldn't be of the same mind. Yet there were so few Christians I couldn't spare their fellowship.

The Lord's Promise

I set the new volume of Matthew Henry's Commentary on the table and opened the fresh pages. This had become a morning ritual since moving to Montana, and I had studied through the first volume in the year we had been here. First, I waited upon the Lord, praising him and praying for wisdom. Then I read the Scripture portion two times to understand it and wrote down what I felt God's Word was saying to me. After that I would read Matthew Henry. It was really something how God showed me specific sins that needed correcting and how often God used Matthew Henry though he was dead these many years!

But this morning I was discouraged. What was there in Joshua for me? Perhaps I should study the New Testament. But systematically, I opened to the book of Joshua and then I read:

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7).

Could God want me to possess this land for his kingdom? No, that was vain. How could I do anything like that? But Matthew Henry confirmed my thought: "For when God has work to do, He will either find or make instruments to carry it on."

"Arise, go over this Jordan!" Would I obey though I could see no way across? Would I be of good courage though I knew my total insufficiency? The answer was God's sufficiency. So I claimed the promise and waited for a miracle to divide the Jordan.

The Lord's "Spies"

Even the "spies" came on a beautiful spring day in 1972. My minister, the Rev. Albert G. Edwards, had come from Portland, Oregon, along with the Rev. Ronald J. McKenzie from Bothell, Washington. Mr. Edwards was to speak in the community on the importance of keeping

sex education out of the public schools. Such a remote topic from the urgent needs of the people; but God must have had a purpose in it.

In any case, they saw the lay of the land. They were saddened by the unbelief and ignorance of God's Word among the community and church leaders, and a hardness as if the zero winters had toughened men against the Son of heaven. Yet these "spies" did not shrink, but reported a land to be gained through faith and prayer. Before they left, they gave me hope.

"Pray for one Christian family of the same persuasion," I was told. "Remember the power of prayer when two or three come together. That will be the beginning of a church." So we prayed for this one Christian family and that God would start an Orthodox Presbyterian Church here.

And I looked and prayed for that Christian family God was going to send. "They must have young boys, please," I begged God. "And we must have a special love for one another so we can pray well," I insisted. Soon I had a long list of qualifications!

At first it was exciting, waiting for the Lord's answer. Every once in a while I would think, "There they are"—only to be disappointed. As summer became autumn, I was discouraged. Maybe I was foolish to think God would start a church here just because I wanted it. Yet in my heart I knew there was a need, and so I kept praying, hoping, and waiting.

The Lord's Answer

"Sit down and call them right now," my husband insisted on that December day in 1972. I sighed, "OK; but I'll just invite them for dessert."

My husband had come home to tell me about the Russells. We'd met them once months before, but only today my husband had seen Richard Russell. His wife was homesick for warm Louisiana, the snow was already fluttering, and it looked like a long cold winter. But the hardest part, he said, was getting to know the people.

We greeted them at the door. Pat was an attractive blond with a delightful southern accent. Richard was older with gray hair, a perfect gentleman. Their two lively boys, six and eight, bounced in to become fast friends with my seven- and nine-year-old. The adults more gently became acquainted.

Pat's eyes roved over our bookcase. "I've quite a few good Christian books," I mentioned to her. She withdrew a little, and murmured, "I don't agree with some of the teachings in the churches here. I think it is so important to realize that God chooses us, that we are unable to come to him until he reveals himself, and that we do not maintain our salvation by good works."

My eyes widened in astonishment. Already I felt a oneness with her and by the time they were to leave it was hard to part. Could it really be that God brought these Southern Presbyterians all the way from Louisiana because we had prayed? It was a humbling thought, and my heart sang with praise. The family had come!

But let the Russells continue the story:

PAT RUSSELL

God works in mysterious ways. I'd heard that all my life. But when I found myself in Montana I really began to believe it.

Since the article was written the Richard Russells have returned to Louisiana.

We had lived in the South all our lives. But in 1970 we had a desire to move, only we didn't know where. We prayed to God for guidance. In 1972 we visited some friends from Dallas who were moving to Montana and were convinced we should go too.

However, we were not convinced. That was in February. But by June we were sure the Lord would have us go and we put our house up for sale. The first person to see it bought it! Everything proceeded so smoothly we just couldn't get over it. We left New Orleans in mid-July.

It took time to get located, but we found a lovely home here and the Lord worked out all the details. We looked for a church and were rather concerned that there was no Presbyterian church in the area. But we knew that God had his children everywhere and we began a four-month visitation of local churches.

We met some lovely people, some of whom surely belong to the Lord. But we could not find a church where we'd be spiritually fed in the way we needed. I met Rosemarie Malroy in one church, and it was obvious to me that she was different. But it was not God's time yet and we didn't get together then. Finally, when I was terribly homesick and low in spirit, it was our husbands who brought us together.

A New Beginning

After that first evening, Rosemarie and I began to meet once a week for prayer seeking spiritual strengthening. Whenever we got together, there would always surface the desire for the Lord to give us a church—one true to his Word.

We began to pray for one and continued praying for the next two months. One day we felt we just had to have an answer from the Lord. So we covenanted together to pray for one week straight—asking the Lord to show us what he would have us to do.

One morning as I was talking with the Lord, a thought popped into my mind—why not a tape ministry? We had been in a church several years earlier that had a very successful one. It used tapes of the pastor's sermons and had a fantastic outreach. So this is what I proposed to Rosemarie.

She in turn wrote to her pastor in Portland and he began to send us his sermons on tape. We met on Sunday afternoons to listen. Those tapes were like cool water after a hot desert. But instead of satisfying us, they only made us more conscious of the need for a sound church. We began to pray again, asking the Lord to send another Christian family to the area.

God does answer prayer! In a short while Mr. Edwards wrote to tell us of two Orthodox Presbyterian families, the Stukeys and the Hippmans, who had recently moved to Polson, Montana. And a young woman from Arlee called expressing interest in a Reformed work. So progressed God's plan as the Stukeys met with us on Sunday afternoons. How gracious is the Lord, who answers prayer and watches over his children! Praise the Lord!

And now the Stukeys pick up the story:

**Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Stukey with sons
Samuel, Stephen, and Andrew (l. to r.)**



DOROTHY STUKEY

Nineteen years as a district superintendent of schools in Colorado had left Dan Stukey wondering if there wasn't something better. Nineteen years of watching it grow from two hundred children to seventeen thousand, from eight grades to a program for everyone—as black hair became gray and a quick firm step slowed. It seemed the Lord was saying, "It's time to retire."

So Dan set out one morning in June 1972 to find a new place. A daughter in Montana turned his feet northward and he found himself in the Mission Valley north of Missoula. There God blessed us with a home in one of the most beautiful places on earth, a small community called Polson on the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi, surrounded by wooded mountains and fishing streams.

That it lacked a Reformed church seemed to be a missionary opportunity, and fifty miles to the north at Kalispell was a Bible Presbyterian Church. The Baptist pastor was a college friend of our pastor in Denver. So we found sweet Christian fellowship in both places, though fifty miles is very long on winter days and mountain roads. And we were barred from membership with the Baptists because we had not been immersed. But, after a lifetime of Reformed teaching, there is an insatiable appetite for more.

We had left two sons in Colorado taking courses at the community college. A daughter was away for her first year at Dordt. Only ten-year-old Andrew "ruled the roost" as the only chick left. But at Christmas all the family journeyed north and west to the new home.

Grandpa Hippman liked it so well that he bought a home in Polson. By April, the Hippmans and sons Sam and Stephen had moved. Both sons have jobs in the area. In May, daughter Sarah came home from college.

The telephone rang in July, and a Mrs. Rosemarie Malroy was calling from Ronan. We'll let the Kellams finish the story:

**The Rev. and Mrs. Harold S. Kellam
with Mark and Brian**



NAOMI KELLAM

Five years of ministry to a Bible Presbyterian congregation begins our thread in God's weaving together an Orthodox Presbyterian mission in Ronan. One Sunday in 1972 we greeted the Dan Stukeys, who had come fifty miles for spiritual food and fellowship. Our church in Kalispell was an oasis in a large area barren of sound, doctrinal preaching.

Friendship grew, and we learned of others in the Ronan area who longed for the Word and fellowship of Bible-believing Presbyterians. Then we saw God closing doors to our pastoral ministry in the Bible Presbyterian Church.

The Lord's Spirit was wonderfully revealed in our lives. Harold had long nurtured an interest in a teaching ministry. Now we felt perhaps God was freeing us to pursue the needed studies while our children were still preschool.

After much prayer and concern over leaving a precious flock shepherdless, we resigned from Kalispell and moved to Missoula so Harold could attend the University of Montana. He was accepted in the master's program in medieval history, a period rich in the study of church history.

Meanwhile, the group in Ronan had been listening to Mr. Edwards' tapes and were praying for a minister to locate nearby and begin the groundwork for a church. When they asked us to serve as pulpit supply, in God's providence we were able to accept.

Harold is able to go to school and still remain active in the ministry of the Word. We are thus able to fulfill each other's needs. How the Lord cares for the smallest needs of his children! So we pray with the Ronan folks for the establishment of a sound, Reformed testimony, separated from the apostasy and coldness of churches with forms of godliness but denying the power of God.

Some in the group are natives of the valley. Coming from spiritually dead churches, these believers are eager for Bible study, but leery of an organized church. The dangerous winter roads and distances had led several women and children to arrange a meeting place half way

(Continued on page 76.)

Letters

Choosing a "pro-life" hospital

Recently my wife and I were talking about doctors, babies, and abortions. A cousin of ours, a nurse, had been working in obstetrics at a community hospital where abortions were being performed. Her hospital had been ours for our first baby. One of the doctors involved had been ours then. But our cousin had transferred to a Roman Catholic hospital that refused to do abortions.

This discussion led us to call her, and then to call an organization named "Birthright." From them we learned that generally hospitals in our area do abortions or give abortion counseling. The exceptions to this policy were those hospitals connected with the Roman Catholic faith. So we asked ourselves, "What should we do if the Lord would give us the promise of another child?"

To us it appears that neither the Roman Catholic nor the non-Catholic hospitals are controlled by Bible-believing Christians. Yet our cousin felt that the birth of a child was a more welcome event at the Catholic hospital where she now works. She also said that the Catholic hospital did respect the Sixth Commandment — "Thou shalt not murder."

So we have decided to boycott obstetricians associated with hospitals that do abortions or give abortion counseling. We'd like to propose that other couples do the same.

Wilson L. Cummings
Philadelphia, Penna.

Sunday school busing ... two views

The December 1973 *Guardian* carried an article entitled, "A Sunday school bus ministry . . . hopelessly Unreformed, or hope for the Reformed?" The author, the Rev. Andrew E. Wikholm, headmaster of the Wilmington (Del.) Christian School, clearly thought busing children to Sunday school could be most hopeful in fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission.

I must say I was very disappointed. The article came nowhere near answering the question in the title. The tone

of the entire article is that the bus is the answer to the problems of the Reformed churches. Once Mr. Wikholm hints that there may be some problems, but he only hints when he suggests that we may have to make changes to bring the ministry into line with our doctrine. He does not, however, grapple with the question of whether we would be bringing the ministry into line with our doctrine or compromising our doctrine in order to bring it into line with the bus ministry.

I have heard more than one Reformed person refer to this question in terms of the morality involved: Is it morally right to run a Sunday school bus? I have many biases against such a "ministry," but I am not sure of any scriptural bases for these. I would appreciate it if one of the saints who knows, or at least has thought more on the matter than I, would try to deal with the question on the basis of God's revelation rather than assumptions. If there is no basis on God's Word to say one way or the other, then my preferences are as good as Mr. Wikholm's.

Edward S. Huntington
Norman, Oklahoma

The ideas Mr. Wikholm set forth are sound and can be very workable. I've been attending a church that averages about 500 bus riders each Sunday. It is a very well-organized way of going out to bring in little ones to hear the gospel message. And, I might add, some older people also ride the bus.

The people that I know who work in the bus ministry are people who truly love the Lord and are concerned about reaching people in the community for the Lord Jesus. They put in long hours of hard work, but they see many coming to hear the Good News.

I do think that some churches go overboard on the promotional aspect. It isn't scriptural to get children to come to Sunday school by bribing them with a piece of bubblegum or candy. But it surely is a golden opportunity to witness to families and, in short, to evangelize the whole community.

I fear the Orthodox Presbyterian churches have not been doing all they could to reach out into the harvest fields. Laborers are few, no doubt; but now is the acceptable day of salvation. I pray that more people will burn with a zeal to tell others about Jesus and to try starting a bus ministry in their church.

The Presbyterian Guardian

EDITOR
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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

Reformed theology and dispensational fundamentalism are far apart on certain doctrines. But I do believe some of the Reformed churches can learn something from the fervor and enthusiasm these fundamentalists have for carrying out the Great Commission. There is "hope for the Reformed." Let's trust God to supply the grace and means for us to fulfill that commission so long as the Lord taries.

Mrs. Barbara S. Hintz
Marietta, Ohio

Merger at expense of doctrine

The movement toward merger of the Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian churches has proceeded at the expense of doctrine.

Our committee in the OPC finds its "mandate" in preparing a plan that could be accepted by both churches, rather than in seeking to resolve conflicting views. As a result doctrinal differences have been set aside in order to achieve union.

Example: "eschatological freedom" is assumed. Yet the position of Dr. J. Barton Payne, as reviewed in the February *Guardian*, goes beyond the eschatology of the Bible into dispensationalism.

Example: "apologetical freedom" is assumed. Our OPC committee has in effect agreed to this, by rejecting two different formal requests that they deal with the doctrines involved. These are not just the methods whereby we teach doctrine but the doctrines themselves: the difference between God's knowledge and the creature's knowledge; the need for regeneration before the truth can be properly understood; the free offer of the gospel.

Union should be deferred until doctrinal differences can be thoroughly canvassed.

Arthur W. Kuschke, Jr.
Dresher, Penna.

Shall We Remarry?

3. The "Christian Liberty" issue

In the first two of this series of articles, we were looking at the issues that brought on the divorce in the Presbyterian Church of America (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) in 1937. Now we turn to consider the third and final issue that led to that separation. We are considering all of these issues in the light of the proposed merger with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Overtures on the Christian life

The third issue concerned the controversy over the Christian's life and conduct. Without doubt, this issue had the greatest potential for disruption. It arose because of false rumors and misrepresentations about the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary. It had been falsely reported that the faculty encouraged the students to drink alcoholic beverages.

So explosive was the issue that during the preliminary business of the 1937 General Assembly, Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. (moderator of the preceding assembly and president of Wheaton College) openly declared his intention to withdraw from the new church if the Assembly did not take what he considered to be the only proper action.

Action was being sought by means of overtures from various presbyteries concerning the question of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Three overtures urged that total abstinence be adopted as the official position of the denomination. The argument was that, for this generation, the use of wine—no matter how moderate—was always wrong.

But the General Assembly concluded that these overtures went beyond the teaching of Scripture. For that reason they were rejected. The Assembly eventually passed a motion that referred the church and the world to the Westminster Standards (Confession of Faith, XX, 2, 3; Larger Catechism questions 136 and 139).

These confessional statements teach the liberty of each believer's conscience under God, but strongly condemn sin in the name of Christian liberty. They exhort to lives of holiness and righteousness before God. After the Assembly passed this motion, Dr. Buswell stated that he was "regretfully moving toward the exit."

In reflecting on this action of the Third General Assembly regarding the Christian life, the Rev. Robert S. Marsden wrote:

The minority, apart from seeking a declaration concerning eschatological freedom, pressed hard for a declaration against the beverage use of alcohol. The majority in the church made it clear that they opposed all forms of intemperance and that which would lead to intemperance. Yet they felt that loyalty to Christ

DAVID L. NEILANDS

forbade their adopting rules or giving advice which went beyond the Word of God. They held dear the Biblical doctrine of the adequacy of Scripture to reveal not only what man is to believe concerning God but also what duty God requires of man. They maintained that to add man-made rules to the Scripture was as harmful as to subtract from the Scripture.

—*The First Ten Years [of the OPC]*, p. 6.

"Christian Liberty" today

But the question now is: Does the RPC/ES consider Christian liberty as an issue in the church today? To answer that question we refer to two official actions of that Synod which show that indeed it still is an issue.

The 1965 Merger. In 1965 the Evangelical Presbyterian Synod (the former Bible Presbyterian Synod, and descendant from the group that separated from the OPC in 1937) consummated a union with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod. The year previously the EP Synod has passed certain resolutions (see *Minutes*, pp. 14, 15), in anticipation of the union.

The third resolution warns against the sin of gambling. There was a realization on the part of those who drew up the resolutions that they might be construed as trying to bind the conscience of men beyond the demands of Scripture. Therefore, they added the eighth paragraph as follows:

Be it resolved that we warn against the harmful effects on the body caused by the use of tobacco, and the influence its use may have on the young, and that we oppose the liquor traffic and the traffic in harmful drugs.

There are eight paragraphs dealing with resolutions on the Christian Life and Testimony. We shall refer to only three of these resolutions.

The second one is as follows:

We acknowledge that we are speaking in the area of the application of Scriptural principles to Christian living. In such application we recognize that sincere Christians differ. These resolutions therefore are passed with the knowledge that they do not constitute an attempt to legislate.

Note the serious error set forth here. The resolution quoted above is a warning against certain harmful effects which may have an influence on the young, together with a warning against liquor and harmful drugs. Yet the resolution referring to gambling does deal with a real sin.

Confusion has arisen in these resolutions because the authors tried to associate things that are not in themselves

sinful—things on which “sincere Christians differ”—with things that are in themselves sinful, and on which we are not granted the liberty of differing, despite the implication of the eighth paragraph. Is this not typical of the error men fall into when they make pronouncements that are not in faithful accordance to God’s Word?

In view of the above it would appear that in 1965 the issue of Christian liberty was very much alive in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

1968 and proposed merger. In preparing for the Basis of Union with the OPC, the annual Synod of the RPC/ES took certain actions in 1968 (see *Minutes*, pp. 41-43). It adopted a twelve-paragraph statement relating to the proposed OP-RP union containing “A Statement of Our Present Position.” Only two portions are discussed here.

In paragraph three, the last sentence reads:

We regret the unfortunate division in the Presbyterian Church of America which occurred in 1937.

Is it really sufficient to say “we regret” this “unfortunate division”? Doesn’t such a tragedy call for a much stronger statement? It certainly appears to show a weakness in the realm of church polity, a lack of understanding of corporate responsibility, reflecting a low view of Christ’s church.

Then in paragraph ten the “Statement” says:

We emphasize the command of God regarding the proper care of the body in the face of the harmful narcotic drugs, alcoholic beverages and tobacco. We warn against the insidious dangers of enslavement to the use of these things in virtue of their habit forming properties.

It does not appear that the RPC/ES has changed its position on the issue of Christian liberty. There also appears to be a weakness in the warning itself. Are those items mentioned always harmful? Are they always habit-forming? If this were true would not the church also have to warn against the use of certain types of cough syrup that contain either drugs or alcohol?

After considering the statements of both 1964 and 1968 we can only conclude that the Synod would have been better served by the reiteration of the Confession of Faith, XX, 2, 3 and Larger Catechism questions 136 and 139 as was done by the 1937 Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America.

A voice from inside

In its July-August 1970 issue, the *Guardian* reprinted an editorial by the editor of *Mandate*, official organ of the RPC/ES. The editor deals with three issues before that church in consideration of the proposed merger. Under the heading “HONEST” he writes of the problem of the “more separated” life as follows:

Example: the inescapable sense of Pharisaism associated with our determination to preserve our image as “more separated” in personal living when there is so little hard evidence to back up that image. Our church has produced a strong statement on holy living, which—if it were adhered to—would make us look saintly by any standard. *But that is apparently not adequate for some who want a more subjective standard* [emphasis added].

This is a highly significant statement by one we must

assume has his hand on the pulse of his church. He is saying very clearly that there is a different point of view in the two churches over this question of holy living. But he says far more. Even their “strong statement on holy living” is not sufficient for some. There are some in the RPC/ES who want “a more subjective standard.”

The essence of subjectivism is to look away from God and his objective Word to the self. Self becomes the center. Self dictates what is truth and righteousness. Self adds unto and replaces the Word of God as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Thus for the third time we have returned to the issues that were at stake in 1937. Again, we are being asked now to accept what we rejected then.

Time for decision

It has been the purpose of these articles to show that a direct relationship still exists between the divorce of 1937 and the present. Sufficient evidence has been presented to prove that the three issues causing the divorce are still prevalent.

Even the proposed Plan of Union acknowledges a division when it states: “We do not claim to have achieved unanimity of opinion on all the issues that led to that division.” Surely this is a confession that the two churches do have differences and they have not yet come to an agreement as to the teaching of Scripture on these important issues.

In the introductory article of this series it was suggested that we look at the evidence with a view to answering some most pressing questions: Can the parties involved live together in love, peace, and harmony? Can there be a true reconciliation? From the evidence it would appear that there are deep-seated and seemingly irreconcilable differences that still separate us. In fact, they are precisely the same differences that originally divided us.

As we conclude, I find myself asking two important questions: In the light of the evidence, why do the two churches want to unite? Inasmuch as the differences that led to the original divorce are still present, if an organic union is consummated now would it not lead to another divorce?

This is the concluding article in the series by “Scotty” Neiland. We appreciate the time and research he has undertaken in preparing these articles, and believe the questions he raises need our serious consideration.

We had hoped also to have a third article from the Rev. Edward L. Kellogg whose first two articles confronted us with Scripture’s teaching concerning the necessity for Christian unity not only in spirit but in outward visible fellowship. But Mr. Kellogg recently suffered a severe stroke that precluded his completing the third article. He is recovering from the attack and doctors say he should suffer no permanent disability from it.

The first two sections of the proposed Plan of Union of the OPC and RPC/ES—containing a preamble reciting past history and a testimony of present beliefs together with the proposed constitutional standards for a united church—are to be considered by the highest judicatories of the two churches in May. The question is whether to “approve” these sections as a satisfactory basis for the proposed merger. Other sections in the Plan will also be discussed, but they will not be presented this year for definitive action.

Masons and Church Membership— an editorial comment

An agitated question

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is officially on record as holding that Masonic Lodge membership is incompatible with church membership. (See the accompanying report adopted by the 1973 General Assembly.)

Despite this "official position," there are Masons in church membership and church office within the OPC. How can this be? I do not know the answer to that; but the situation exists and it is causing problems.

Recently it came to the boil with the ordination of a Mason as elder in a congregation of the Presbytery of Ohio. (It was this situation that brought forth the report at the 1973 Assembly.) Another group, organizing itself as a church, felt obliged to withdraw from the OPC when it learned of the denomination's "position." A third congregation, with candidates for office who are Masons, was told by its presbytery that any man might be ordained who could honestly give affirmative answer to the ordination vows.

On the other hand, there are those who feel that Masonic membership is so clearly inconsistent with Christian commitment that the two are mutually exclusive. There is within one presbytery a move to overture the General Assembly to alter the Church's constitution so as to bar all Masons from membership. Others are concerned because the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, has never adopted any clear statement on the matter (though how that proves much about their practice as compared with Orthodox Presbyterians' is hard to say!).

Clearing away confusion

How do we get at this matter and bring some resolution to the agitation? One thing we need to do is forget this idea of solving it by way of edicts from the Assembly. To make Masonic membership per se an offense sufficient to bar a person from church membership is to elevate a judgment of men to a par with the Word of God. And, while we're at it, why not bar Communist party members? or those who voted for McGovern? or for Nixon?

No way! One of the great principles

of Presbyterianism has been the concept that a man is "innocent until proved guilty," and the guilt must be shown to be that from the Word of God. This principle is crucial and most important in preserving the freedom of individual conscience and obedience to the Lord. It was precisely the refusal to be truly Presbyterian at this point that led the old Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. to force Dr. Machen and others out of its fellowship. No, only the Word of God is the rule of faith and practice.

So the OPC *Book of Discipline* (and most others in Presbyterian churches) insists that "an offense is anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of the church which is contrary to the Word of God" (1:2). May the King of the church preserve us from the tyranny of man-made predetermined guilt, even in so difficult a matter as that of Masonic membership.

Confronting the issue

Over the years Orthodox Presbyterians have struggled with this question in various ways. Pastors and sessions have confronted Masons forthrightly, convincing many of them of the inconsistency of professing faith in Christ alone while maintaining loyalty to the Lodge with its vows and advocacy of what can rightly be viewed as a false, works-righteousness religion. Many Masons have left the Lodge as a result. Other Masons, to be sure, have left the church instead.

But, still other Masons are still in the church and even in church office. There are, in other words, Masons who have not been persuaded by what the General Assembly has said. They just are not convinced that Lodge membership really is inconsistent with a genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

What should be done? We could, of course, forget the whole thing and turn our attention to other matters. But that would mean, depending on your viewpoint, that either (1) Masonry after all is an innocent social fraternity which a Christian may freely join, or (2) the church is abandoning Masons to a sinful situation even while failing to warn others of the danger. That sort of tension can only be destructive of the

peace and unity of the church, and even its purity as well.

The discipline "bugaboo"

What really is needed now is recourse to the discipline of the church. And though resolutions of General Assemblies are a form of discipline, I am not suggesting that we need any more of that. On the contrary, the question can only find a resolution in the processes of judicial discipline.

Sadly, for churches that profess to believe that discipline is one of the "marks" of the church, we all seem to be strangely reluctant to make any use of it. Even to mention judicial procedures is to suggest that someone is "out to get" someone else.

This ought not to be. At the same time, it is understandable to some degree. Partly because judicial process has been used so seldom, and usually only for very major questions of heresy or immorality, we've come to think of it as a last resort. Partly too, the awesome and legalistic safeguards spelled out in the *Book of Discipline* scare off all but the "ecclesiastical lawyer" types. But judicial discipline was never meant solely for use against serious heretics, and its legal terminology is intended and quite necessary to protect the rights of all parties involved.

Let's all just take a deep breath, relax our tense muscles, and consider this whole thing. We have a situation in the church where some people are fully persuaded that others are, knowingly or not, involved in a serious sin. Either this is so, or it is not. But the only way to resolve such an agitated question is to employ a tool of judicial process.

What discipline requires

Very simply, to begin a judicial process requires two things—or rather, two persons. Conceivably, a Mason in good standing in the church might bring judicial charges against anyone who has openly taught that Lodge membership is a sin, and charge the alleged offender with false witness against an innocent social fraternity. More likely, it will be the person convinced of Masonry's incompatibility with Christian faith who will bring charges against a Mason for

Concerning ordination of members of secret societies

The following report of a temporary advisory committee to the Fortieth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was adopted by the Assembly as its answer to a request for advice about ordaining Masons, or other members of secret societies, in the church.

The Presbytery of Ohio has overruled the Fortieth General Assembly "to give specific counsel to the presbyteries regarding the ordination of members of secret societies as Elders and/or Deacons in member churches of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, to provide clearer direction toward uniform practice to maintain the peace and purity of the Church."

The nature of secret societies, and in particular of the Masonic Lodge, has been the subject of two extensive reports prepared for earlier General Assemblies. A report presented to the Ninth General Assembly [1942] concluded "that Masonry is a religious institution and as such is definitely anti-Christian" (*Minutes*, p. 59.) An overture was presented to the Thirteenth General Assembly [1946] stipulating the procedures to be followed with a church member or applicant for church membership who is a member of the Masonic Lodge. The stipulations included the provision that an "applicant will be received into the Church only on condition that he renounce his affiliation with Masonry." A church member "shall either renounce his affiliation with Masonry or be subjected to the discipline of the Church" (*Minutes*, p. 5).

This overture was referred to a study committee which reported to the Seventeenth General Assembly [1950]. The report endorsed the conclusions of the earlier report, contending that "membership in the Masonic fraternity is inconsistent with Christianity." It argued, however, against amending the consti-

tution of the Church to bar Masons from membership (p. 24f.). Our Book of Discipline defines an offense simply as "anything in the doctrine or practice of a member of the church which is contrary to the Word of God" (I:2). The report commended the exercise of discipline on this simple Scriptural basis rather than by attempting to elaborate a catalogue of sins. While favoring in general the procedure outlined in the overture, and agreeing that admission to church membership should be conditioned upon resignation from the Masonic order, it nevertheless insisted upon dealing with individual cases upon the basis of the Word of God rather than through the application of a church rule. It recommended that the report be sent down to presbyteries and sessions for serious study. The assembly did so, and further urged the sessions and presbyteries to apply in their instruction and discipline the approach recommended in the report. In further considerations of this matter subsequent Assemblies have again endorsed this approach. (Twenty-fifth Assembly *Minutes*, pp. 6, 112; Thirty-first Assembly *Minutes*, pp. 7, 120f.). In these reports and actions no specific attention has been given to the holding of office by members of secret societies, but the reports and actions surely apply at this level. The instruction and discipline commended would apply with heightened force and the approach through discipline rather than by general rules would also be applicable.

A consistent approach has been followed by our Assemblies, namely, that the Word of God must be applied to individuals according to a Scriptural discipline rather than by the adoption of fixed rules to cover all cases.

With the overture of the Presbytery of Ohio there was submitted to the Assembly an extensive record of actions and reports centering about the ordina-

tion, in a recently received church of the Presbytery, of a ruling elder who is a Mason. The record includes a complaint and its disposition together with reports related to it. No formal action is immediately pending, but the Presbytery, in the meeting that approved the overture, (special meeting of January 30, 1973), addressed a strong admonition and plea to the elder concerned to resign from the Masonic order.

In view of the concern expressed by the Presbytery with respect to a particular individual and in view of the admonition that has already been addressed to him, it is not appropriate at this time for the General Assembly to express itself in the abstract on the matter. It is a sound principle of Presbyterian law that the Assembly will not ordinarily decide questions *in them*. To quote from a deliverance in 1822 often reaffirmed: "it does not appear that the Constitution ever designed that the General Assembly should take up abstract cases and decide on them, especially when the object appears to be to bring those decisions to bear on particular individuals not judicially before the Assembly" (*The Presbyterian Digest*, 1898, p. 279).

In view of this proper caution with regard to *in them* deliverances (so that the discipline of the church should not be prejudged) and in view of the approach endorsed by previous assemblies, it is the judgment of this committee [Advisory Committee No. 12 of the Fortieth General Assembly] that no specific counsel should be given by this assembly in response to this overture.

Your committee therefore recommends that the Assembly take no action on this overture except to make the text of this report available to the Presbytery of Ohio through the clerk of the Presbytery.

—*Adopted by the Fortieth General Assembly [1973]*

giving allegiance to a false religion.

Actually, the second situation would be easier to see through to a clear conclusion. To bring charges against a person, in this case a Mason, requires a great deal more than charging him with the obvious fact that he is a Lodge

member. The whole point of the judicial process is to establish whether such a person is actually guilty of an offense against the Word of God.

To be sure, this demands a great deal of both the persons involved. It requires the person bringing the charges to make

them clear and specific, to point directly to the doctrine or life of the person being charged, and to show that aspects of his doctrine and life are clearly contrary to Scripture. It is not enough at all to say that Masonry is a false reli-

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from page 75.)

gion, and *ergo*, all Masons are guilty of false religion. It is required instead to prove that a particular person, who is free to defend himself openly and from the Word of God, is guilty of false religion or practices contrary to Scripture.

A judicial process can only be directed toward individuals, not against a class such as the Masons. Does the individual—who happens to be a Mason—hold an anti-Christian belief? Does he believe that all Masons, whatever their relation to Christ, go to the great Lodge above when they die (as the Masonic burial service suggests)? Does his involvement in the Lodge constitute an offense in practice that is contrary to Scripture?

The results of discipline

The goal of judicial discipline is "to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of his church and to reclaim the offender." Suppose, then, that such a judicial process has been brought to a conclusion, and the person charged has been found guilty of an offense against the Scripture (either of false witness against Masons, or of allegiance to a false religion). What then? What should be done to accomplish the goal?

It all depends. It depends on the circumstances, the seriousness of the of-

fense, the threat or lack of it to the church, and the honor of Christ's name within the church and before the world, and quite importantly, the concern for the individual himself. One reason we may be so hesitant about judicial process is that we fail to note the variety and appropriateness of what it may do.

If a man has generated all sorts of turmoil in the church because of a belligerent pressing of his opinions, and if those opinions are found to be contrary to Scripture, then discipline should be fairly severe. This is for the sake of Christ, the sake of the church, and the sake of a strong enough warning to persuade the individual of his error.

On the other hand, the individual may be found guilty of an offense against the Scripture, but it may be under circumstances that cause little disturbance to the church or to Christ's good name in that place. In that case, and particularly if the individual has a willingness to be submissive to Christ's undershepherds in the church, it may be necessary to do no more than admonish him gently.

Judicial discipline in the church has no legislated sentences that must come forth automatically for everyone found guilty of this or that offense. On the contrary, the courts of Christ's church are free, nay they are bound, to administer discipline in Christ's name and as Christ himself would have administered

it. And that, thanks be to God, involves mercy, love, gentleness, kindness, and deep concern for the eternal welfare of the individual involved.

What does all this add up to? Simply this: It's high to "put up or shut up" on this matter of Masonry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Since to "shut up" could well mean to allow a festering problem to grow worse, it means that the time has come to employ the real benefits available to us in the judicial processes of the church.

To any Mason reading this comment, the appeal is similar: Isn't it time for some Mason to stand up, to make it clear to all his brothers and sisters in Christ that Lodge membership is not inconsistent with genuine Christian faith, and so relieve his fellow Masons from a cloud? Or, if you're not really convinced of this, isn't it time to give the matter of your Lodge connection some further thought and prayerful attention to God's Word?

But whatever we do, let's give up the idea that we can solve it by any resolution in presbytery or General Assembly. Right or wrong—and that is precisely what judicial process is supposed to determine—the question of Lodge membership is a question that involves the doctrine and practice of an individual. The only right way to deal with it is individually, case by case, in the judicatories of Christ's church.

—John J. Mitchell

A Church Is Born

(Continued from page 70.)

between our home and Ronan for informal Sunday Bible study. We leave Missoula in time for an 8:15 a.m. service in Arlee, and then on to Ronan for 10:00 Sunday school

Mission Valley Sunday School children

and worship afterward. This vast, sparsely populated area can really keep a "circuit rider" moving!

The Spirit has led us all to much joy and some discouragement also. We have been visited by other ministers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church who encouraged us in many ways with refreshing fellowship and spiritual growth.

Plans are underway to organize the Ronan group as a mission chapel of the (Orthodox Presbyterian) Presbytery of the Northwest. The group is also making its tapes available to others. Neighbors who normally won't go to church might listen to a sermon over a cup of coffee. These sermons are on cassettes, and Stephen Stukey will send you one for an initial cost of \$1.50. When you return that one, the rest are free except for postage. Write him:

Stephen Stukey, Rt. 1, Box 36, Polson, MT 59860

The people of the Mission Valley Chapel hope their story will encourage others to "possess" the land, however dreary it may seem. Offering the tapes is one way they want to help. (The *Guardian* will provide further information in coming issues on other tapes sources with Reformed preaching available.)



Prophecy Conference at Westminster

On April 4 and 5, the Westminster Seminary Student Association held a Millenium-Prophecy Conference. It was well-attended and attracted considerable interest. Perhaps much of that interest was generated by the lectures given by two men who have played prominent roles in the discussion of eschatology during consideration of the proposed merger of the Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian churches, Dr. J. Barton Payne of Covenant Seminary in St. Louis and Professor Norman Shepherd of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

Payne carefully made known that a premillennial view of our Lord's return did not demand that one accept problems inherent to dispensationalism. Instead, he argued, premillennialism is a view not only in harmony with, but demanded by covenant theology. Although representing the premil view, Payne stressed the usefulness of being flexible enough, if not to admit the truths of the post- and amillennial positions, at least to note their historical presence in Presbyterianism and therefore to allow for all three views to be presently accepted.

Shepherd's central thrust was in his

emphasis on the primacy of perspective in one's eschatological view. Concern for a timetable of coming events is not of as much importance. One should note that the church has been given a commission, one that God would see fulfilled. Furthermore, the church has all the resources necessary to fulfill that commission: Christ, the Spirit, and the Word. Coupling these resources with all of the glorious promises of Scripture, the Christian should have a perspective of victory.

Dr. Philip E. Hughes spoke from an amillennial position, noting that the church was not a failure but even now is accomplishing God's commission. Arguing from Hebrews 11, he suggested that our perspective should be one of victory, but on an eternal rather than on a temporal basis.

Dr. D. Clair Davis placed all of the lectures in the context of the history of millennial views held by the church. The conference concluded with a panel discussion moderated by Dr. O. Palmer Robertson.

(*Ed. note:* We are grateful to Roy L. Kerns, a student at Westminster, for this report.)

Bicentennial for Reformed Presbyterians

This year of 1974 marks the 200th anniversary of the first national organization of Reformed Presbyterians in America. The original Reformed Presbytery was organized at Paxtang, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1774. On May 25 and 26, 1974, a series of bicentennial observances is being celebrated at this place.

The bicentennial services are being held in conjunction with the general synod meetings of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, at nearby Elizabethtown, May 24-30. Sharing in the services are the sister "Covenanter" bodies, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the "Old Light" RPs since the division of 1833) and the Associate Presbyterians (who merged with the RPC/NA in 1969).

The celebrations begin at Paxtang on Saturday, May 25, at the Paxton United Presbyterian Church. Here is buried elder William Brown whose journey to Scotland and Ireland in 1773 was successful in bringing two

ministers back to assist the pioneer pastor, John Cuthbertson. An historical marker is to be dedicated and the assembled delegates will be led in a public reaffirmation of Reformed Presbyterian principles.

Services the next day will center on Quarryville and Octorara area, and in the afternoon an outdoor "conventicle" will be held, following the pattern of the Scottish Covenanters who met in the fields during the times of persecution in the seventeenth century.

Four publications are scheduled for release during the bicentennial: *The History behind the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, by George P. Hutchinson; *America's Reformed Presbyterian Bicentennial*, by J. Barton Payne; and a children's book, *Long Ago: The Early Years of the R.P.C., 1560-1688*, by Mrs. J. Wyatt George. In addition, the first issue of Covenant Seminary's theological review, *Presbyterian*, will be available.

(*Ed. note:* We are indebted to Dr. Payne for this informative report.)

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The Elders of the Church toward functioning elders

We commonly think of a distinction between active and inactive elders: an *active* elder is serving as a member of a session; an *inactive* elder is one not serving on a session. Yet I have known elders not on any session who are very active elders indeed, and I have known many session members who are quite inactive.

The "inactive" session member

I do not wish to make a case for technically calling non-session members "active elders." In fact, I do not believe that any man whom the Holy Spirit has made a bishop (elder) has any right to *be* inactive by his own choice. He may be a true elder and become inactive by reason of age or infirmity. But that cannot be regarded as a matter of his own choice!

Or an elder may find it necessary to move from one congregation to another. In such a case he must wait on the Lord for the new congregation to see in him the gifts of office and thrust him once more into the active eldership in this new congregation. But waiting for God's people to choose him cannot be construed as a matter of willful inactivity either.

But the tragedy of inactivity is seen when a man with proven gifts, with the call of God and the concurrence of a congregation of Christ, is placed on the session, yet fails to use his gifts in the service of the Head of the church. Were I in this man's place, I would be conscious of standing in jeopardy of the Lord when he said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (Luke 9:62). Paul, whom Christ called to the apostolic office, said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

So let the man called and confirmed in the office of elder likewise say, "Woe is unto me if I do not shepherd Christ's flock." There is no place in Christ's church for a non-functioning elder if he has it within him to do the work of the elder, nothing hindering him. These are strong words that I shall attempt to justify in what follows.

The undershepherd's labor

First, let us review what the elder's work is. It is the work

The elder who rules for Jesus is also under the rule of Jesus. Men who sit in the seat of Christ in ruling over the church must know what it means to be "under the law to Christ."

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

of teaching and rule as an undershepherd of Christ—not rule alone or teaching alone, but both in integration and balance. If an elder sits on session and does no more than that part of his task, he is not a fully functioning elder. Such an elder cannot possibly have the "feel" for the flock over which he is supposed to rule.

We have an excellent insight into this from Acts 6:4. The apostles had their hands full in dealing with the problems of the church at that time. Then came the complaint from certain widows alleging neglect in material ministrations. The complaint appeared to be just. But what should the apostles do? What they did was to choose seven men to serve ("be deacons") in this ministry, "but we (the apostles) will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." These apostles were elders extraordinary. If they must be primarily engaged in prayer and the Word, how much more should this be so of the permanent rulers in the church?

So too in Hebrews 13:17 where the believers were admonished to obey those who had the rule over them. And the reason for this submission is that the elders "watch for your souls, as they that must give account." To watch over the souls of men, being accountable to the chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), is a solemn and arduous labor.

When Paul says (1 Timothy 5:17) to give "double honor" to those who rule well, "especially they who labour in the word and doctrine (teaching)," he is *not* excluding teaching from the work of ruling. It is not that some elders rule while others also teach. But already in 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, Paul has combined aptness to teach and rule as the duties of an elder.

We are therefore to interpret the words "labour in the word and doctrine" with the emphasis on *labour*. Some elders, among those who rule well, are called to give themselves so fully to the office of teaching that they are especially to receive that support necessary for them to be "free from worldly care and avocations." But "word and doctrine" are tied to the need to "rule well" as complementary parts of the official work of the elder.

We can summarize the function of the elder's office as a deep involvement for the flock of Christ, calling for much watching and prayer, wherein every elder is accountable to the chief Shepherd for the feeding, leading, and disciplining of the souls committed to his care.

It remains for the next (and last) article in this series to detail more fully the division of labor within the office. Just

now, it seems wise to list some of the specific functions in which all elders need to be actively engaged. It goes without saying that the degree of involvement may vary widely. This is implied in 1 Timothy 5:17. Still, *every* elder, it seems to me, needs to be engaged in every one of these three basic functions of office:

1. Teaching

This stands at the head of the list. I do not advocate that ruling elders ought to take to the pulpit at the first opportunity. Those with gifts for the public proclamation of the Word should do this on appropriate occasions. But most elders are not so gifted, and so have no call to official preaching of the Word.

Apart from official preaching in the pulpit, all elders can be and ought to be involved in the pastor's ministry of the Word. The elders are to listen, sitting before the preacher in the same position as the rest of the flock. They are to pray that the Word from his lips may have free course and be glorified with the Spirit's blessing, advising the pastor both positively and negatively—always constructively—with that end in view.

Then too, the elders need to be often in the homes of the congregation, exhorting on the basis of that same preached Word and directly admonishing from the Word as needed. Add to this the opportunities an elder has to minister the Word of life to those outside, confuting the gainsayers both within and without. It should be easily apparent that the ministry of every elder is, to a very significant extent, a teaching ministry.

2. Praying

Prayer is also primary to the elder's calling. Every believer ought to care for the souls of his fellow believers, but elders have it committed unto them by the Lord himself to watch for men's souls. This responsibility must not lie lightly on his conscience. But he needs to go many times to a brother or sister, unbidden, to warn of sin and the danger of falling into sin. Does he dare undertake such a solemn task without first having wrestled in prayer for that brother or sister? Apart from prayer, where will he get that authority which is recognizable in a true man of God?

Indeed, how are the members of the flock—especially the lambs—to know their elders as men who love them in Christ, unless they can discern in the elder's voice and demeanor that he truly loves them? Here is the secret of functioning eldership—elders who are preeminently men of prayer. And I should add that elders need to pray together, especially to pray with their pastor for the seal of God upon his ministry and for the needs of the flock.

3. Ruling

The pinnacle of the elder's labor is that of rule. But I must say that if ruling is looked upon as all, or nearly all, there is to being an elder, then such a man will *not* rule well. In fact, he as yet knows nothing truly about rule in the church of Christ.

The session is a sitting of the members of a court of Jesus Christ. They are judges "in Israel." And the biblical concept of judging includes far more than the judicial function, as in disciplining offenders. It also includes the executive function—wearing a crown for King Jesus! Elders need to grasp this concept which our Presbyterian heritage has passed on to us.

Now the elder who rules for Jesus is also under the rule of

Elders function in the highest sense when they sit as courtiers of the King of kings. But they begin their labors, not in session, but over the open Bible in earnest study.

Jesus, even as every worthy jurist is a man of the law and, even more than others, a man under the law. Men who sit in the seat of Christ in ruling over the church must know what it means to be "under the law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21). In making decisions, an elder has no liberty to follow his own inclinations, but is bound by the Word of God. So, when matters come before a session of worthy men, involving issues of doctrine or life, these men will be so fully men of the Word that they will speak from God's Word with one voice. True, in administrative matters there will be differences of opinion—though even here unanimity of heart. But in the great subject of the application of the gospel to the life and witness of the church, the elders will be as one before both God and men. Thus will they bear rule in the house of God.

So it comes to this: Functioning elders do indeed function in the highest sense when they sit as courtiers of the King of kings—whether on sessional, presbyterial, or synodical levels. This is indeed the pinnacle of their labors. Yet they do not begin their labors in session. They begin them over the open Bible in earnest study; on their knees praying for the saints; among their people laboring, exhorting, encouraging, comforting, ministering to the flock over whom God has made them bishops. Only from there are they ready to move up to sit in the seat of Christ to judge the flock according to the Word of Christ that lives and abides forever.

Questions for pondering:

1. If we accept the premise that an elder may not voluntarily cease to function as an elder, what justification can we advance for the common, American practice of term eldership?
2. Does not the demanding nature of the elder's function, as advanced in this article, throw a strain on those gifted men called to serve even while they must follow such other demanding professions as that of medicine or law?
3. Are we not in danger of frightening off some potentially useful servants of Christ when we so strongly emphasize the demands of the eldership on a man?
4. In view of the elder's responsibility to support and advise with the pastor in his preaching, what do you think of the old-time practice in some Reformed congregations of the elders sitting in a body, separate from the rest of the congregation?
5. What are the best ways for elders to share the prayer burden with their pastor? Meeting with him just before the worship service? on Saturday evenings? What other answers would you suggest?

As indicated in the article above, this is the next-to-the-last in this series on the nature and work of the elder in his office. These articles have been a help and blessing to many. We are particularly pleased to announce that the whole series is to be published in book form for a greater usefulness in the church of Christ. (Details on the publication will be given in the near future.)

The Presbyterian Guardian

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Here & There

Harriman, Tenn. — Mr. Stephen Voorwinkle was ordained to the gospel ministry by the Presbytery of the South (OPC) on May 5. A native of Australia, Mr. Voorwinkle expects to return there to be the pastor of the Reformed Church in Sydney. He has been serving as assistant to the pastor in the West Hills Church in Harriman.

Ocala, Fla. — The Rev. John H. Thompson, Jr. has accepted the call of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church here to be their pastor. Installation is scheduled for July 10.

Miami, Fla. — The Galloway Orthodox Presbyterian Church has called Mr. James Workman to be its new pastor. Mr. Workman is a senior at Reformed Theological Seminary and his ordination is set for June 19.

Bancroft, S. D. — Mr. Edward A. Eppinger was ordained as pastor of the Murdock Memorial Church here and of Manchester (S.D.) Orthodox Presbyterian Church at a service held on April 17.

Macon, Ga. — The 500 member Vineville Presbyterian Church (NPC) has been sued for its property by a 56-member minority group loyal to the PCUS. It is expected that this will be an important test case designed to overturn earlier Georgia decisions favoring withdrawing congregations.

Burlington, N. C. — Five congregations in the Tar Heel State have met to organize the Carolina Presbytery of the National Presbyterian Church. These churches are all located in the Piedmont area. Other NPC congregations are to be found in the western counties, and home mission efforts in Charlotte are under way.

Hamill, S. D. — Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church has called Mr. Allen P. Moran, Jr., to be its pastor. A graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary and recently licensed by the Presbytery of the Dakotas, he is serving in Hamill as stated supply.

Omaha, Neb. — The Rev. Reginald Voorhees is resigning after more than twenty-nine years of service as pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church here. He served previously as pastor in West Pittston, Pa. The resignation is effective on July 1.

Manteca, Calif. — The Rev. Robert H. Graham is serving the Orthodox Presbyterian Church here as stated supply. The church meets in the American Legion Hall at 220 E. Yosemite Ave.

Bartlesville, Okla. — The Westminster Orthodox Presbyterian Church has called the Rev. Dennis J. Prutow to be its pastor. Mr. Prutow, a former military chaplain, is serving as supply until his reception by presbytery.

Sunnyvale, Calif. — A distressing situation confronts the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church here. The congregation had called the Rev. Lawrence G. Andres, former pastor of Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church in Quarryville, Pa. Though Mr. Andres had passed parts of his examinations before the presbytery and had moved his family to Sunnyvale, the presbytery now finds itself unable to approve the remaining portions. A complaint against the presbytery's refusal to receive Mr. Andres is being forwarded to General Assembly.

Comment: It seems unwise indeed for a man to move into a new post without reasonably strong assurance he will be found acceptable by the presbytery. Such a move puts extreme pressure on a presbytery besides all the grief that can arise on account of a hasty action.

Green Bay, Wisc. — Mr. John Fikkert was ordained as a missionary-at-large for the Presbytery of the Midwest (OPC), on March 30. Mr. Fikkert is presently serving with the Green Bay Orthodox Presbyterian Chapel.

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