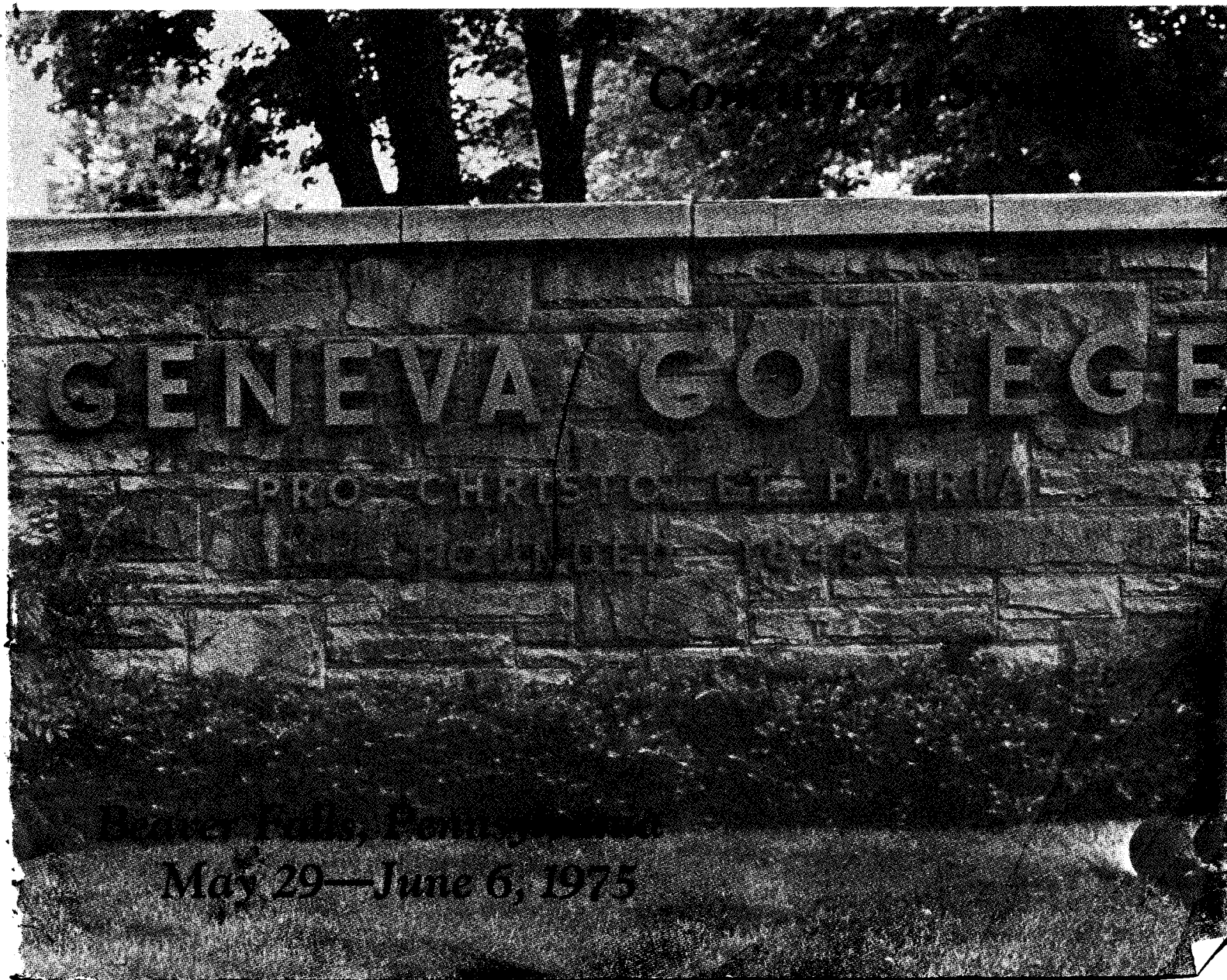


The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 44, NO. 7 — JULY, 1975



Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania
May 29—June 6, 1975

That R.P. Name

When the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod voted at Beaver Falls against union with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, one of the factors that contributed to the proposal's defeat was an overture submitted by the O. P. Presbytery of Philadelphia (see January 1975 issue of the *Guardian*). This petition had called for a dropping of the Reformed Presbyterian name for the merged church; and the *Guardian* had justified such a rejection on the grounds that "the RPCES itself does not promote Reformed Presbyterian principles as traditionally held."

The R. P. Synod's answer, however, negatively would be, "Nobody does." Even the more conservative Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the "Old Light" Covenanters) no longer prohibit voting—the cause of the denominational split back in 1833. They are debating the issue of closed communion at this very moment, and the Covenanter's classic refusal to pay taxes to the crown was given up some years prior to 1750.

Answering more positively, the RPCES would prefer to stress certain distinctive principles that underly the specific and changeable applications. The former should include covenanting; so the second ordination vow, that is taken by all RPCES elders and deacons, speaks of the Westminster Standards, "to the maintenance of which this church is bound before God by solemn obligations"—words that correspond to the pre-1965 "New Light" allegiance to "solemn covenant engagements."

For, contrary to rumors that surround it, the Reformed Presbyterian name does not mean "Reformed (Calvinistic) in doctrine and Presbyterian in polity." Neither does it mean "Reformed (reacting) against abuses in the post-1690 Presbyterian state church of Scotland." Rather, as documented by the Reformed Presbytery in 1743, it means a Presbyterian body devoted

to the Scottish Reformation of John Knox, the national covenants of 1638 and 1643, and the Westminster Standards that the latter directly produced.

Reformed Presbyterian principles go on to include a series of official affirmations which never came to focus in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. For example: (1) an express commitment to the "inerancy" of Scripture in *Reformation Principles Exhibited*, 1806 Declaration and Testimony, III, testimony #4); (2) an explicit openness to a "millennial state, in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (XXXIII:3)—an emphasis to the legitimacy of which most Orthodox Presbyterians now seem to want to speak; and (3) a striving for purity in the visible church (XXI:5, and testimony #4). Interestingly, it took 130 years before the Presbyterian Church of America (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) in 1936 moved to identify itself with this same Reformed Presbyterian distinctive of ecclesiastical separation.

Because of its continuing doctrines of this kind, today's RPCES takes issue with the Philadelphia overture and is happy to support its theological students, at both Westminster and Covenant seminaries, by scholarships drawn from the Lamb Fund. These would cease should it "relinquish the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church." Some may object that the RPCES fails to recognize such "Old Light" distinctives as The Covenant of 1871. But it should be remembered that Francis Lamb died in 1868, three years before this covenant was enunciated, and that in any event Lamb was "New Light"—he could not have believed that the Reformed Presbyterian principles included such of the older applications as the 1871 refusal to vote and the like.

Today's Reformed Presbyterians (ES) have no desire to minimize the varied elements of tradition involved in the proposed union. Other elements should be included in the uniting denomination's name, such as "Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Assembly," or "Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church." Either of these would also alleviate the concern of

the RPCNA brethren over a seeming arrogation of the simple Reformed Presbyterian Church name to ourselves.

But from the Philadelphia overture, and from the four-hour meeting of the joint fraternal relations committees that preceded the vote on the merger, one sensed an unwillingness on the part of the Orthodox Presbyterians to include the phrase "Reformed Presbyterian" (so precious to many) in the name at all. It is my prayer in the days of discussion that lie ahead, that we may discover we sensed this wrongly.

J. Barton Payne
Covenant Seminary, St. Louis

Write TV programmers now

Readers concerned with the increasing vulgarities on television, the excessive use of God's holy name, as well as words like "hell" and "damn," should make their protest now. I can attest to the fact that one letter, just one, has moved mountains at network headquarters in the past, and I speak as a full-time broadcaster.

Now that the filming season is beginning for next fall's season, no time would be better for a letter from concerned Christians. The protest should be directed to NBC, ABC, and CBS (in separate letters), all c/o Postmaster, Los Angeles, CA 90053. Envelopes should be labelled "PROGRAMMING."

The networks are not out to harm Christians; they permit these words in their programs because no one has told them any different. Your letter should point out that words like "hell" and "damn" are not just naughty words, but are peculiar to the Christian faith. If they receive a good number of letters reminding them that they are guests in our homes, that they have a responsibility to viewers and to the government *not* to offend, I am sure that with much prayer by the writers there will be a great turn-around in the nature of this language problem. If we let it slide, soon our Lord Jesus' name will be slandered. Now is the time to write before the cameras get rolling.

Bill Turkington
Leesburg, Virginia

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Orthodox Presbyterian Church Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

Concurrent Synods

Geneva College

Beaver Falls, Penna.

May 29—June 6, 1975

The highest judicatories of three conservative, Bible-believing Presbyterian bodies met concurrently on the campus of Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. The invitation to meet concurrently had been extended by the Synod of the RPCNA and their denominational college served as host.

The sessions began with the convening of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church on the evening of May 29, 1975 in the chapel of the college. (Next day the assembly moved to a lecture hall in the Science and Engineering Building.) The General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, convened the following evening, also in the chapel (where all their sessions were held). The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (the "Covenanters") began their sessions the next day in the McCartney Memorial Library.

Though there were no official joint meetings of the three bodies, there was much informal fellowship among the respective commissioners. Most of those attending were housed in the college dormitories and ate their meals together in the dining hall. Though a bit crowded at times, the delightful facilities of Geneva College were a major benefit to all.

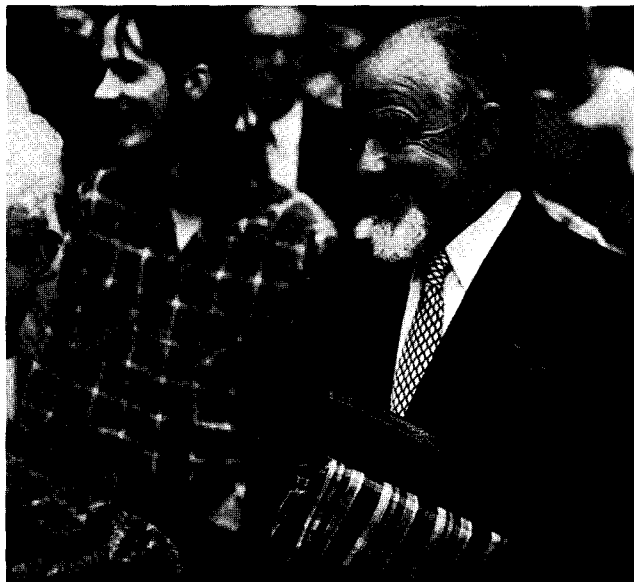
July, 1975

Schaeffer addresses joint worship service

Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer of L'Abri, Switzerland, and a commissioner to the RPCES Synod, presented the message at a joint worship service attended by nearly 2000 commissioners and visitors from nearby churches. The service was held in the college's field house.

Dr. Schaeffer emphasized the need for Bible-believing Christians to stand together against the increasing animosity toward biblical Christianity in the world of today. Cooperation should be among those who accept the Scriptures as God's infallible and inerrant Word. He particularly noted the growing threat of dictatorship by a technological elite devoted to secular humanism and determined to rule every aspect of human life.

The singing of Psalms without instrumental accompaniment was also a part of the joint worship service. Later that



Francis A. Schaeffer talking to friends after the evening worship service on June 3, 1975.

same evening many gathered in the nearby College Hill Church (RPCNA) for more of the same. Covenanters were impressed, particularly with the large number of strong male voices, and everyone found this communion in praise to God to be a delight to the soul.

Pre-Synodical Conference

With participants from all three churches, the RPCNA conducted a special conference on "The Biblical Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry" on May 28, 29, 1975. Thirteen papers were presented, ranging from background history of the three churches, through discussion of the teaching and ruling elders, the role of women in respect to church office, and to the evangelistic ministry of the church.

A paper by Professor Norman Shepherd of Westminster Seminary evoked considerable discussion. Entitled, "The Covenant Context for Evangelism," the paper emphasized the obligations of those baptized into covenant relation with God to grow up into full and mature covenant obedience.

[Cassette tapes of these addresses are available from Alan Wissner, 125 Watkins Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15202, at \$2.50 each postpaid or \$25.00 for all thirteen.]

OPC-RPCES Merger Proposal Fails

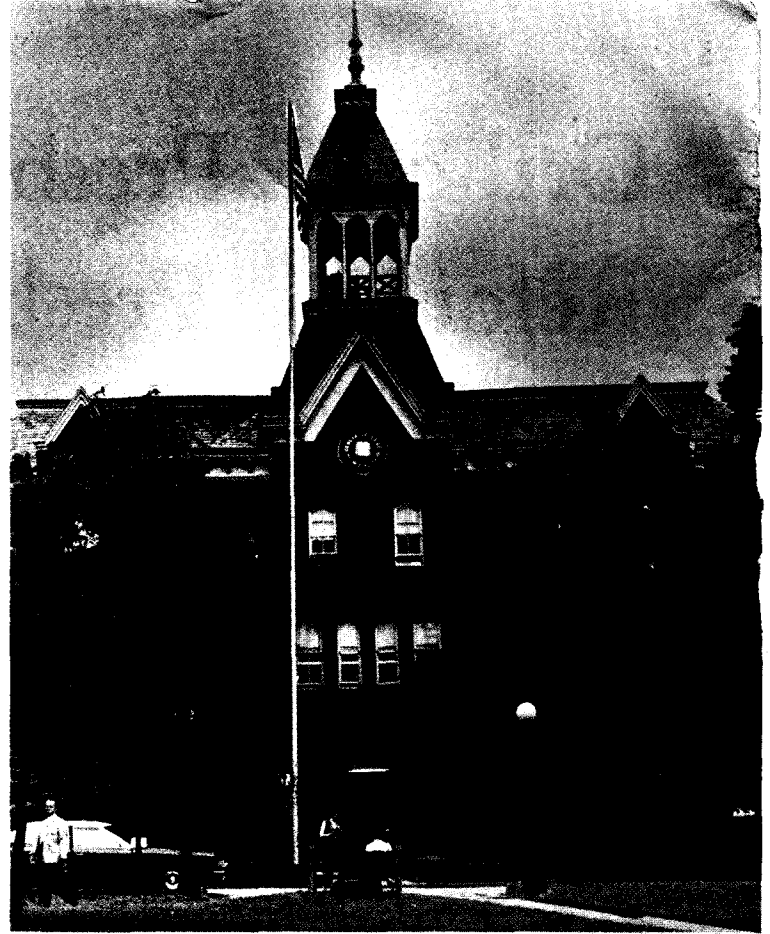
The question uppermost in the minds of many commissioners was the proposed merger of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. The proposal was presented to both groups for a simple "Yes" or "No" vote on whether to unite on the basis of a proposed Plan of Union. A two-thirds majority in both the OPC Assembly and the RPCES Synod was constitutionally required to send the proposal to the presbyteries for action. (Ratification would have required approval by two-thirds of the presbyteries and a second two-thirds majority in the 1976 Assembly and Synod; union could have been consummated in 1976.)

By mutual agreement, the actual vote on merger was scheduled for 4:15 p.m. on Wednesday, June 4. Much of the free time prior to that was spent in earnest discussion of the pros and cons of merger and of the likelihood of its approval. All in all, the situation generated a great deal of tension — to which the elements added their own measure of thunder and lightning, climaxed by a power failure in the evening after the vote was taken.

Both the OPC Assembly and the RPCES Synod voted on the merger proposal by secret ballot (though the OPs were also recorded later by name, each commissioner having signed his ballot). The results were not announced until the clerks of the respective bodies could exchange the tallies and then report simultaneously. The results:

OPC General Assembly: Affirmative—96; Negative—42 (required for approval: 92). *RPCES General Synod:* Affirmative—122; Negative—92 (required for approval: 143). Failure to achieve the two-thirds majority required in the RPCES Synod meant the merger had failed to pass.

After hearing the results, the OPC General Assembly addressed a letter to the RPCES General Synod expressing its desire "to seek to continue discussions with the RPCES with a view to effecting an eventual union." The Assembly directed its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to continue discussion with the corresponding Fraternal Relations Committee of the RPCES if that was



Old Main, where the opening worship service was held for the O. P. C. Assembly and in which the Synod of the R. P. C. E. S. held all its sessions.

authorized by the RPCES Synod.

After considering a proposal that would have sought another vote on merger in two years, the RPCES Synod determined to authorize its committee to continue the discussion without setting a time limit.

The debate preceding the formal vote itself began on Wednesday morning in both bodies and continued until the vote was taken that afternoon. Speeches on the proposal alternated between those favoring merger and those opposed — and this led many observers to suppose that the sentiment was nearly evenly divided. In the OPC Assembly, questions were raised about the propriety of the use of the Lamb Fund in the united church since the fund was established to promote "Reformed Presbyterian" principles. Concern was also expressed about the proposed name ("Reformed Presbyterian Church") and the difficulties between the respective presbyteries in northern California.

In the RPCES Synod, objections to the merger focused on areas where disagreement and tensions might arise in a united church. The California situation was cited as an example of such possible problems in the future. In both groups, those favoring union stressed biblical arguments to show that organizational unity should be sought where a spiritual unity in the truth of God exists.

The effect of the vote was to kill the merger at this time. However, the decisions of both bodies to continue discussion and seek an eventual union means, in effect, that the proposed merger may yet come up for another vote. The delay itself was welcomed by many, both of those who voted

for merger and those who voted against it, since more time would allow some of the problems to be resolved. It will also allow differing judgments to be reconciled or enable everyone to see the extent of irreconcilable differences.

O. P. C. Assembly Actions

Despite the importance of the merger question and the intense interest generated by it, both judicatories had a full docket of the usual business. Some of the more significant actions of the OPC General Assembly are reported here.

Elections and Organization

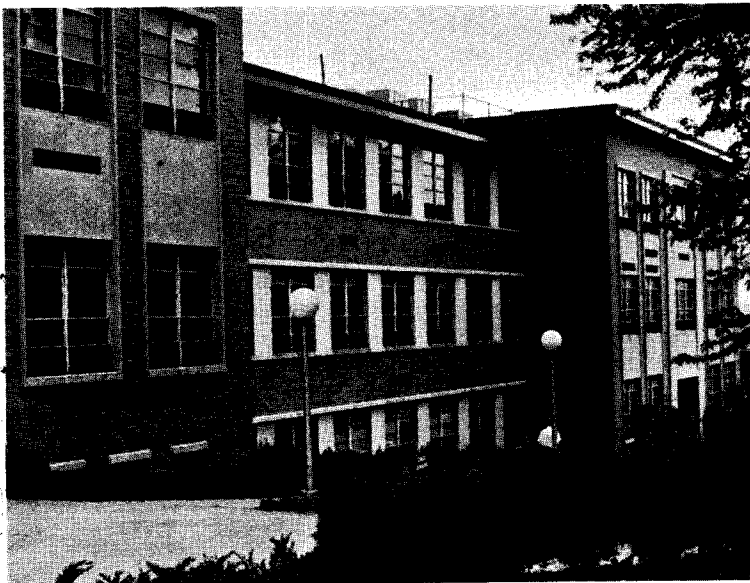
The Assembly convened on Thursday evening, May 29, and was led in worship by the Rev. Laurence N. Vail, moderator of the Forty-first (1974) General Assembly and pastor of Grace Church in Vienna, Virginia. Mr. Vail preached on "The Cup of Blessing," from 1 Corinthians 10:1-21, preparatory to the Lord's Supper that followed.

On Friday morning, the Assembly reconvened for its business docket. Over 140 commissioners were enrolled (out of a maximum 155 permitted); the proportion of ruling elders was again greater than in previous years before the introduction of the representative assembly.

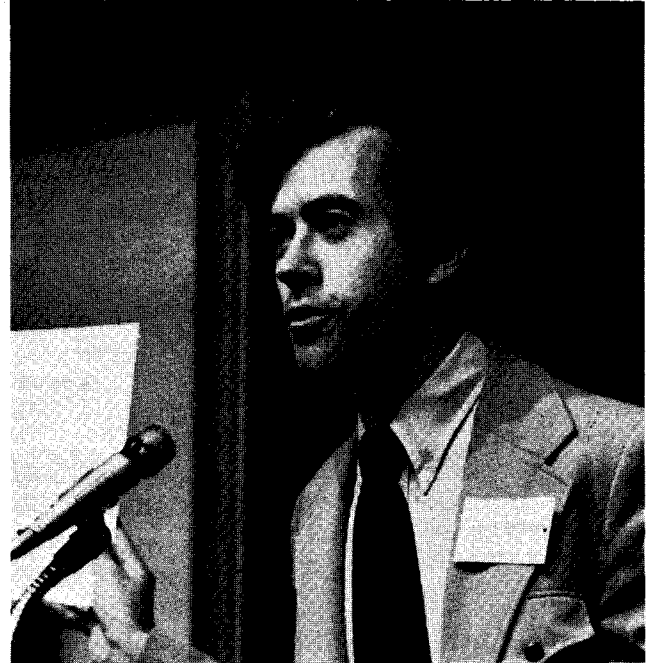
During an assembly it is customary for commissioners, particularly when beginning a formal speech, to open it with the familiar address, "Fathers and brethren." Several commissioners came to realize that this year they no longer had any "fathers" but only "brothers" or even "sons" in the Assembly. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church has clearly entered the second generation of its life, with still a strong "Old Guard" present, but an increasing majority of younger men most of whom "knew not Machen."

The "changing of the guard" first became apparent in 1970. And it has shown itself in the Assembly's tendency to chose able younger men to serve it. Several such younger men, both ministers and elders, were elected to major committees. And the Assembly turned to one of its youngest choices yet as moderator, electing the Rev. George R. Cottenden, pastor of the Good Shepherd Church in Neptune,

The Science and Engineering Building in which the 42nd General Assembly was held.



July, 1975



Moderator George R. Cottenden—trying to recall a name!

New Jersey. The moderator, despite an embarrassing (to him) and amusing (to everyone else) inability to recall the names of even his closest associates at times, proved more than competent to guide the Assembly through some extremely tense debate.

New Jersey, in fact, tended to dominate the Assembly as Mr. Richard A. Barker (ruling elder in Grace Church of Westfield) was reelected Stated Clerk, and the Rev. Stephen L. Phillips (pastor of the Stratford Church) served as Assistant Clerk. Though Mr. Edward A. Haug (another ruling elder from Grace Church, Westfield) asked to be relieved as Statistician, he was replaced by Mr. Rodney T. Jones (ruling elder of Grace Church in Trenton — New Jersey, that is).

The Assembly proceeded to deal with its business by referring all reports, overtures and communications to a series of Advisory Committees. Every commissioner was assigned to one of these, either as a member or to present one of the reports. This system, now in its third year, ensures that all reports have been carefully studied and frequently improves some of the recommendations being made to the Assembly.

Home and Foreign Missions

The reports of the Committees on Home Missions and Foreign Missions were the first two major considerations on the docket. Much of the discussion of these reports was focused on the financial difficulties of the committees in the face of increasing inflation and a fall-off in contributions. Both committees have had to make drastic reductions in expenditures which have hampered their efforts to proclaim the gospel.

In home missions, it seemed clear that most commissioners approved the effort to "decentralize" operations by encouraging presbyteries to assume greater responsibility for home mission effort within their bounds. The committee's goal of having a missionary- or evangelist-at-large in each presbytery also found favor. The Rev. Glenn T. Black began such service for the Presbytery of the Dakotas this year and the Rev. Robert H. Graham for the Presbytery of Southern California.

In furtherance of its goal of bringing home missions

Covenanters protest choice of name

During the concurrent synods at Geneva College, the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America addressed the following letter to the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod:

Fathers and Brethren:

We commend you for your sincere desire and effort to work for the visible oneness of the body of Christ. However, we wish, with deep fraternal regard, to protest the proposed name for the united church.

The basis for our protesting your use of the name, **REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, is as follows:

1. The new denomination does not accept the covenanting tradition which is the historical precedent for the name Reformed Presbyterian.

2. It is our conviction that it will lead to practical and legal confusion.

In Fraternal Bonds in Christ,
Bruce C. Stewart, Clerk of Synod

The OPC and RPC/ES inter-church relations committees were both instructed to meet and discuss this protest. In response, it was recommended to the OPC Assembly and RPC/ES Synod "that this joint committee attempt no modification of the Plan of Union with respect to the name at this time (only a few hours before

the vote on the merger was to be held) and that this committee propose a resolution for adoption by our respective General Synod and General Assembly informing the Synod of the RPC/NA that it is our intention to take account of their protest regarding the name, if and when the union is consummated."

This proposal was adopted by both bodies. Though union was not approved, the protest itself still stands. In addition to the protest of the Covenanters, there was also an overture from the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC making the same basic protest about the name. (Elsewhere in this issue is a letter from Dr. J. Barton Payne, professor at Covenant Seminary, defending the use of the name.)

under presbytery direction as far as possible, the Committee on Home Missions is planning to conduct a special seminar early in 1976 to which representatives of each presbytery will be invited. The committee, in cooperation with the Committee on Christian Education, is also developing a Bible study and evangelism program for women desiring to reach other women with the gospel; Mrs. Doris Fikkert has already begun work on the project.

The report of the Committee on Foreign Missions noted the appointment of four new missionaries: the Rev. Lendall H. Smith to Taiwan; the Rev. John S. Mason to Ethiopia; the Rev. W. Benson Male to Lebanon; and Miss Cornelia van Galen, R.N., to the hospital in Ghindra, Eritrea. Mr. Male's arrival in Lebanon initiates a new field of missionary service for the Committee; a strong nucleus of believers firmly committed to the Reformed faith provides a solid basis for outreach.

This committee also reported the addition of the Rev. Herbert S. Bird to its administrative staff on a half-time basis. His presence will permit a more intensive effort to obtain needed funds for the overall program and provide improved contact with the missionaries in the field.

Concern over the situation of the Rev. Arnold S. Kress was expressed in the Assembly. Mr. Kress returned from Japan for a special furlough last September that grew out of his experience in and defense of "speaking in tongues and prophecy." Mr. Kress has not been formally charged with any error and the situation remains undecided.

New departure for Christian Education

For the past fifteen years, the Committee on Christian Education has been engaged in what has turned out to be a million-dollar investment in Sunday school curriculum materials. But the cost of maintaining the program has outgrown the apparent ability of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The committee, therefore, has been greatly encouraged at the prospect of entering into a joint publications venture with the Presbyterian Church in America. The

joint venture would provide that church with a curriculum program of its own while rescuing the OPC's program from abandonment. Actually, it will require the full support of both churches to ensure the program's continuance. In anticipation of the new arrangement, the committee has already begun to rebuild its staff of writers with the employment of the Rev. Edward L. Volz to work on the Senior high materials that are now twelve years old.

The Assembly was asked to instruct the Committee on Christian Education to enter into the joint venture with the corresponding committee of the PCA. This resolution was approved and the Assembly went on to pass a motion of commendation of the committee's general secretary, the Rev. Robley J. Johnston.

The Assembly was also faced with several overtures and communications asking that the Committee on Christian Education be instructed to cease using quotations from *The Living Bible* in its Sunday school materials. (The committee has used several quotations from this paraphrase in its Junior curriculum, believing that these best communicated the truth of God's Word to children of that age.)

After a lengthy debate, the Assembly expressed its judgment that "it would be unwise for the Assembly to prescribe the use of any version, translation, or paraphrase of the Scriptures." It went on to urge the committee "to exercise extreme caution in quoting from any translation or paraphrase, . . . employing *The Living Bible* only when it judges that no suitable alternative can be found." In response, Mr. Johnston indicated that the committee would remove such quotations as rapidly as practicable.

Combined Budget for 1976

Since the financial needs of all three major committees have become increasingly acute, the report of the Committee on Stewardship evoked intense interest. This committee has the never easy task of examining the budget requests of the three committees and then recommending a combined budget to the General Assembly. Since it is obliged to take

account of what the churches may be expected to provide by way of support, its recommendation may prove a disappointment to many.

This was the case at the 1974 General Assembly, when an Advisory Committee "reluctantly" recommended approval of the proposed Combined Budget. Since 1974 saw contributions fall behind those of 1973 (only \$473,000 compared with \$499,000), the Committee on Stewardship presented a proposed Combined Budget for 1976 of \$615,000 out of a total of \$760,000 requested by the three committees.

Despite the clear realization that the proposed figures would mean a serious curtailment in the work of home and foreign missions and Christian education, the Assembly adopted the proposed Combined Budget as presented. Adoption of this reduced budget total in no way relieves the churches of the need to make every effort to provide the larger totals requested; the amounts originally requested (totalling \$760,000) represent very limited enlargements in the programs of gospel outreach.

The OPC's Combined Budget system is unique. It is neither a unified budget, with an equalization provision, nor is it totally dependent on designated giving (as is true in the RPCES and the PCA). Instead, the Combined Budget means that the General Assembly has a determinative voice in the actual budgets of the three committees rather than permitting or requiring them to develop their own support within the church independently. At the same time, all gifts designated to a particular committee are assigned to it. Gifts given to the Combined Budget (undesignated gifts) are shared in by all three committees according to their proportion of the total Combined Budget.

But once any committee receives 100% of its Assembly-approved budget, it no longer shares in the undesignated gifts. (This has actually happened only twice in the twelve-year history of the Combined Budget.) Such a committee continues to receive all gifts designated to it; but those gifts given to the Combined Budget are used to bring the other committees up to the approved budget total. The

system thus permits direct designation which is fully honored; it also encourages giving to the total approved work of all three committees through a single gift.

Other actions in connection with the Committee on Stewardship included requiring the three committees to include fuller information on their requested future budgets. The Assembly also determined to request the churches to supply information concerning their giving to home and foreign mission and Christian education works not financed through the denominational committees.

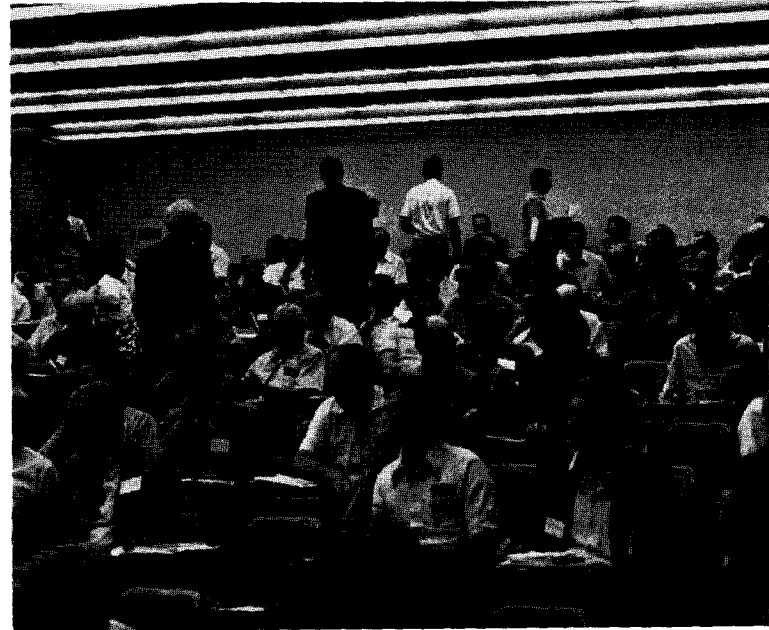
In its report, the committee indicated its plans to do more in the area of promoting principles of biblical stewardship through an initial presentation by its members or representatives before each presbytery. The Assembly also instructed the committee to publish bulletin inserts "providing news of the work of the church and its committees" if such a publication is found feasible.

Diaconal Ministries

Somewhat overshadowed by the larger committees on missions and Christian education, the program of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries has received more attention in recent years. In general, the committee seeks to serve the church's diaconal ministries of mercy in areas beyond the abilities of local boards of deacons.

To this end, the committee ministers various relief programs at home and abroad both on a continuing basis and as need arises. It also administers a fund for the relief of disabled and retired ministers needing financial help (an area of need the church must do more to meet in coming years).

After strenuous and lengthy debate both within the committee and on the floor of more than one assembly, the Fortieth General Assembly (in 1973) adopted the position that the official ministry of mercy has as its primary object "the household of faith" itself. As adopted by that Assembly, the mandate for this committee was to see its work in the light of Galatians 6:10. In its report to this year's Assembly, the committee sought to indicate how it under-





Debate was not limited to the Assembly. J. Adams replies to J. Kinnaird as L. Conard listens in.

stood that mandate.

The committee is requesting support at the rate of \$3.60 per communicant member for a total budget of \$26,100 in 1976. The Assembly approved this request.

Other Highlights

Perhaps the area of greatest interest and debate in addition to the foregoing was centered on the report of the *Committee on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. This committee presented a set of conclusions derived from its study of the biblical data relating to its subject. (See a copy of the report in the June issue of the *Guardian*.) The report was in answer to a request from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod for study materials on the subject.

The committee recommended adoption of its report by the Assembly. But the Assembly, without advance time to study the report, felt unable to adopt it as a whole, and determined only to transmit it to the RES. Concern was also expressed that the report did not include the background study and the committee was continued in order to complete the work.

The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, in addition to its work on the proposed Plan of Union of the OPC and the RPCES, also presented a recommendation to the Assembly calling for the establishment of *The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council* (NAPARC). As proposed, in consultation with representatives of the other churches to be involved, NAPARC would provide a means of mutual counsel and assistance for the following churches: Christian Reformed Church; Orthodox Presbyterian Church; Presbyterian Church in America; Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod; Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. The Assembly adopted the recommendation, making it the first of the churches to approve NAPARC. (In an action later that week, the Synod of the RPCES also adopted the proposal, but on a provisional, one-year basis; concern had been ex-

pressed over NAPARC's commitment to "the infallible Word of God" with no express mention of Scripture's inerrancy.)

A Committee on *Linguistic Revisions to the Westminster Standards* had been erected by an earlier assembly to propose, in conjunction with similar committees from both the Reformed Presbyterian bodies, revisions to the Westminster Standards that would remove archaic expression without changes in the meaning. This joint committee presented its work on Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Very strenuous debate began, with criticism directed against the new version on the ground that its changes did in fact make changes in the meaning. Though the Advisory Committee studying this report recommended that the revision of Chapter 1 be accepted as having avoided change in meaning, the Assembly instead merely continued the committee and urged that it proceed "with a view to its more carefully fulfilling its original mandate." A formal protest of even this much was presented to the Assembly.

The Committee on *Revisions to the Form of Government* reported that it was nearly done in its work and expected to have its proposed new version available later this summer. This would mean that decisive action could be started at the 1976 General Assembly. Meanwhile, the proposed *Revisions to the Book of Discipline and the Directory for Worship* remain with a new committee of review which was instructed to consider further suggestions.

The recommendation of the Committee on Date, Place and Travel to hold the *Forty-third (1976) General Assembly* at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain (not in conjunction with the Synod of the RPCES), was not adopted. After discussion of various alternates, the Assembly left the decision to the Moderator and Stated Clerk in consultation with the committee.

The Forty-second General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was dissolved at 4:27 p.m. on Thursday, June 5, as the moderator pronounced the benediction. It was an important assembly, especially because of the merger question. Whether it was an "historic" one, history alone will reveal. That it was one earnestly desirous of full obedience to God's Word was evident to all who observed it. May the Lord and King of the church bless the decisions taken and use them to his Name's glory.

R. P. C. E. S. Synod Actions

The 153rd General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, convened on Friday evening, May 30, 1975. The moderator of the preceding synod, the Rev. Samuel S. Ward presided at the worship service, preaching from Exodus 32 on the importance of intercessory prayer. The service included the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

After the worship service, the synod proceeded to the election of a moderator. As with the OPC General Assembly, the Synod chose a young moderator, the Rev. Paul H. Alexander, pastor of the Huntsville, Alabama Church. The Rev. Lynden H. Stewart was chosen as vice moderator. The Rev. Paul Gilchrist served as Stated Clerk, with the Rev. William Wolfgang as assistant clerk. All the elections of officers were completed on that first evening.

The RPCES Synod does not use the Advisory Committee system employed by the OPC Assembly, though it does

make use of some Standing (i.e., temporary) Committees during the Synod. On the other hand, the Synod follows a docket that places various items of business on a time schedule, thus creating constant pressure on Synod to get its work done in the times permitted.

"Guide to Proportionate Giving"

The RPCES Synod has a permanent Administrative Committee carrying out various responsibilities for the Synod's business between annual meetings. Among other things, it is responsible to recommend a "Guide to Proportionate Giving" to the churches for their consideration in supporting Synod's various agencies. The recommended guide, determined by totalling the various requests from the agencies and determining the percentage share of each one, was approved by Synod as follows:

	Needed	Percentage	Amt/member
Christian Training Inc.	\$ 55,000	3.4	\$ 3.32
Covenant College	269,000	16.5	16.09
Covenant Theolog. Sem.	375.00	23.1	22.53
Board of Home Missions	40,000	2.5	2.44
Nat'l Presby. Missions	180,000	11.1	10.83
World Presby. Missions	690,000	42.4	41.36
Synod Treasury	16,500	1.2	1.00
	\$1,625,500	100.2	\$97.57

The Synod Treasury corresponds to the OPC General Assembly Budget Fund and is used for various Synod expenses, particularly in connection with the clerical costs and production of minutes. The RPCES has no Travel Fund for commissioners. The Board of Home Missions is engaged in various "specialized ministries," whereas NPM performs functions similar to the OPC's Committee on Home Missions. CTI has been largely a service agency in areas of Christian education and has only a limited publications function.

The biggest difference between these figures and those of the OPC's Combined Budget are the presence of Covenant College and Seminary. It is also interesting to note that the percentage assigned to WPM is nearly identical to that assigned to the OPC's Committee on Foreign Missions in the Combined Budget (42.0%).

The RPCES Synod also has a permanent Nominating Committee to propose slates of nominees for the various agencies of the Synod. Other nominations from the floor of Synod are permitted. In the OPC Assembly, all nominations are from the floor.

Covenant Seminary and College

The report of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis featured the successful completion of fund-raising for a new library-study center, expected to be available at the beginning of 1976. The new building is to be named the J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. Library. The Seminary also reports an expected increase in enrollment for the 1975-76 academic year, and rejoices that it is in a position to steer promising students toward a ministry in the RPCES.

Financial needs of the seminary have forced some curtailment of programs. A very large part of the support needed comes from RPCES congregations and individuals. The seminary report laid special emphasis on the need for regular monthly support by the churches.

The report of Covenant College rejoiced in the expectation that its accreditation will be reaffirmed. Plans for



Three moderators: Paul Alexander (R.P.C.E.S.), George Cottenden (O.P.C.), and Clark Copeland (R.P.C.N.A.).

the construction of a new chapel are under way. Faculty changes include an enlarged emphasis in economics and business administration. The college also has urgent financial needs, though a large portion of its budget is met through student tuition and fees; approximately 10% of its educational and general budget is met through government grants.

Form of Government amendments

To an outside observer, it was striking to note the number of proposed amendments to the Form of Government and, to a lesser extent, the Book of Discipline. A continuing committee is constantly studying these standards, and many of the proposed changes were simply referred to it for further study and refinement. At the same time, several proposals were approved and sent to the presbyteries for action.

The OPC General Assembly has had a special committee (actually several over the years) engaged in a thorough revision of the Form of Government that has taken over twenty years. That committee's proposed revision is expected in 1976. Meanwhile, the Assembly has been reticent about approving changes, preferring to live with its present form rather than attempt piece-meal amendment.

Among the changes approved by the RPCES Synod, and subject to approval by the presbyteries, were several mainly designed to clarify existing provisions. It did add one section providing for a required period of time sufficient for training nominees for ruling elder and deacon before their election. In a related report, recommendations concerning ministers laboring in non-ministerial activities were strenuously debated. The proposed changes, as sent down to the presbyteries, would permit a presbytery to place a minister on inactive status and free him to take up membership and possible office in a local congregation, if he is not exercising a recognized ministerial function; he could later be restored to active service without reordination if called to a recognized ministerial function.

Study on abortion

A special Study Committee on Abortion had reported to the 1974 Synod with a lengthy study of the biblical teachings and current thinking on this subject. That report had under-

gone further study, and various changes were presented to this year's Synod. In its study, the committee had sought to avoid drawing conclusions beyond the warrant of the biblical data; the result, in the judgment of some commissioners, was that it had not gone as far as it might.

Nevertheless, the basic conclusion of the committee was that abortion, except to save the life of a mother, is in violation of the sixth commandment. After lengthy debate and reconsideration, the following substitute statement was adopted:

"Believing that the Scriptures clearly affirm the sanctity of the life of man, the image of God, and condemn its wanton or arbitrary destruction, we affirm that voluntary abortion, except in the defense of the physical life of the mother when such is clearly threatened by the presence of the fetus, is a violation of the principles involved in the sixth commandment."

The study committee was continued in order to enlarge its study in such areas as "post-conceptive contraception" [sic], the woman's rights over her body, inter-uterine devices, population control, etc.

Other Synod actions

Among the various functions carried on by the RPCES Synod are those committed to its *Archivist*. This church has been more concerned to preserve its historical records than has the OPC (though the General Assembly did hear a plea for similar activity presented by its recently appointed Historian, Dr. D. Clair Davis). The RPCES expects to house its archives in the soon-to-be-completed library building at Covenant Seminary. Appeal was made for sessions and presbyteries to make use of the facilities for the preservation and research use of their records.

Requests for *changes in the bounds of presbyteries* were also approved by the Synod. The sprawling Midwestern Presbytery was divided to form a new Midwestern, including Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, eastern Nebraska, and northern Illinois. The Illiana Presbytery will include southern Illinois and southern Indiana. The Michigan-Northern Indiana will include the areas given in its name. Pittsburgh Presbytery, meanwhile, was allowed to add part of the province of Ontario, Canada, in order to take oversight of a mission in Kitchener, Ontario. The Southern Presbytery was similarly permitted to add the area around New Orleans in order to take oversight of home mission works there.

A lengthy study paper on "Biblical Bounds and Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Separation" was presented. This study of *ecclesiastical separation* was quite detailed, even providing examples of how its suggested guidelines would work in practice. All in all, it was a most comprehensive study; we hope to provide a more detailed report on it in a later issue of the *Guardian*.

Another lengthy study report concerned "*Demonic Activity*," and an equally lengthy one dealt with the "*Amsterdam Philosophy*" of the AACS. Both of these reports warrant a fuller examination, and the *Guardian* plans to look at them more closely in the future. A briefer study report on "*The Role of Women in the Church*" called for permitting women full equality in the office of deacon or on various boards, but recognized that Scripture forbids women to serve in the authoritative teaching or ruling offices; this subject too will see further examination in the future.



Waiting in chow line—good for fellowship and humility.

General impressions

All in all, this observer found the deliberations of the General Synod to be sufficiently different in manner from those of the OPC General Assembly to make it quite interesting to sit and listen. Though there is a degree of informality in procedure not found in the Assembly, even so the Synod found itself snarled in parliamentary rules more than once. Both the moderator and vice-moderator showed a fine competence in guiding the debate. Speakers in the Synod were required to line up at various microphones and be recognized there before speaking. This ensured that speeches could be heard, and imposed a degree of order that OP assemblies often lack. On the other hand, there was a degree of freedom in modifying various motions without formal amendment that often saved the Synod time — a practice commended by *Robert's Rules of Order* but not used as frequently in OP assemblies as it might be.

This observer was also impressed by the caliber of younger men in the Synod, and especially by several faculty members from Covenant College and Seminary. Their commitment to the Reformed faith and appeal to the authoritative teachings of Scripture were especially noticeable. If the OPC and RPCES do ever merge, the resulting united assembly should gain strength from both groups.

As these two churches continue their separate existence in parallel paths, may the Lord himself continue to bless them both in their obedient zeal to do his work while the day lasts.

— John J. Mitchell

R. P. C. N. A. Synod

A report on actions of the Synod of the Covenanters, also meeting concurrently at Geneva College, was not available at press time. We hope to have it in the August/September issue. This was an important synod for the Covenanters, dealing with such basic issues as its traditional practice of closed communion (i.e., limited to members of the RPCNA only).

The Merger Vote—What Did It Mean?

As the time for voting on the proposed merger of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod drew near, the atmosphere at Geneva College grew increasingly tense. Very few dared the role of prophet, and those who did readily admitted they were guessing at the outcome.

Many Reformed Presbyterians guessed that the Orthodox Presbyterians would turn the proposal down; most Orthodox Presbyterians were aware of a large number of commissioners who had given no clue as to their sentiments in advance.

But when the results were announced late in the afternoon of June 4, the tension dissolved into confusion as everyone tried to assess the significance of the voting.

The OPC "Image"

Most commissioners and observers present at Geneva College agreed that the vote of the OPC General Assembly would do much to ease the reputation of Orthodox Presbyterians as being aloof and cool. That in itself may help to make a later vote on merger easier for those Reformed Presbyterians who have been concerned on just this point.

Coupled with the OPC General Assembly's approval of a joint publications venture with the Presbyterian Church in America, the favorable vote on merger should demonstrate the church's willingness to work and even unite with those of like faith.

At the same time, it seems right to suggest that the RP vote, with nearly 57% of the commissioners favoring union, does not damage that church's "image" before the world. It is only fair to note that many OP commissioners, including many who voted for merger, were greatly relieved to learn that the RP Synod had failed to approve it.

Time for Reflection

Under the circumstances, with both bodies favoring union by a clear majority and both instructing their respective committees to continue discussion on it, the failure to pass it this year does give breathing space. Many who voted against merger did so, not because they opposed it in principle, but because it seemed to

them premature. Now there is time to think about the problems, seek answers to some of them, and also get better acquainted across existing denominational lines.

Even the few days together at Geneva College were helpful to many in getting a better view of the "other side." More than one commissioner found himself agreeing wholeheartedly with the views and outlook of a brother commissioner from the other denomination. Much of the reluctance about a merger is due simply to ignorance and a fear of the unknown. There are also unresolved problems.

Time for Improvement

The development of the Proposed Plan of Union, despite the years it has taken to reach a vote on its merits, has often seemed to outrun the troops. The proposed name of the united church—"Reformed Presbyterian Church"—was determined by the joint committee only after the conclusion of the 1974 Assembly and Synod meetings. No opportunity for formal reaction to this feature was possible.

In any event, the failure to approve the merger this year and the express desire to continue to seek it does allow time for improvement in the Plan itself. But this means that now is the time to seek such changes as seem needed.

The Basic Difference

It still remains to ask why the vote went the way it did. If the reader will bear in mind that the outcome was not all that different in terms of the actual vote in each group, it may be helpful to suggest what did seem to be a basic difference between the two groups.

The debate in the OPC General

Assembly tended, not always but usually, to focus on the biblical principles involved: Did the Word of God require us to seek organizational unity as well as spiritual unity? What differences in doctrine or practice—to the degree that there were any—would preclude organizational unity?

On the other hand, the debate in the RPC/ES General Synod tended, not always or even most of the time, to focus more often on the practical problems involved: Would a merger mean years of bickering and dissension? Would a merger advance or retard the work of God's kingdom? Would brethren differing in various areas of understanding be able to work together?

To this observer, at least, there was a discernible difference, not in any area of basic doctrine but in the area of approach to so basic a matter as possible union. And so what if there is such a difference between the two churches? Is it the sort of difference that should preclude visible unity in one church? Or is it the sort of difference that would make a united church stronger than either body now is separately? A few years of further discussion and preparation should enable both churches eventually to reach a decision that is honoring to God.

—John J. Mitchell

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P. O. Box 5-53, Kaohsiung,
Taiwan, Republic of China
(Use hyphen in "5-53".)

—MEET JOHN CALVIN—

Biography, Psalms, catechism, Reformed doctrine, activities workbook for children, grades 4-6. \$4.00; 34 pp. 10 or more, 10% discount. Jean Shaw, 911 Clayworth Dr., Ballwin, MO 63011.

BULLETIN — *Kidnapped*, by Karl and Debbie Dortzbach is off the press and should be available in bookstores. It is the story of Debbie's abduction by a "liberation" group in Ethiopia and God's care over her. The book is published by Harper & Row in hardback, 177 pp., \$5.95. It can be ordered from Great Commission Publications, 7401 Old York Rd., Philadelphia, PA 19126.

The Presbyterian Guardian

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Faith-Promise Giving

a biblical and confessional look

CHARLES R. YOUNG, III

By his very nature (depraved), a man desires to get as much as he can with the least amount of effort in the shortest amount of time. This is true whether he seeks greater provisions for himself or for those he deems worthy.

The results of such a very real economic principle are clearly seen in our nation. We are overextended and cannot receive the economic compliment from God, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And the reason the United States may not be so addressed by God is that the people who are called by God's name are among the chief offenders. Unbiblical economic practices have also affected the institutional church.

A particular fault among church people is the so-called Faith Promise Principle of giving, particularly as espoused by Dr. Norm Lewis. [Some churches do promote "Faith-Promise Giving" but without the objectionable features being discussed here.] In seeking to set forth a biblical and confessional critique of this error, the present writer would remind his readers that he is not an opponent of missions, but ardently supports the spread of the gospel as our Lord commanded. However, assurance of God's blessing on labors to that end may only properly belong to those who are obedient to God's rule of faith and practice — the Scriptures.

What is the "Promise"?

A detailed examination of the materials produced by Dr. Lewis and disseminated by those enamoured of the "Faith Promise Principle" would show that the "faith," "promising," and "giving" of this principle are not found to be defined in fully biblical language. The aspect of "promising" interests us more than the others. In this connection we would refer you to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 22, "Of Lawful Oaths and Vows."

With that confessional background

in view, the question is, "Does a faith promise lie in the same category as oaths and vows?" The answer is "Yes." "A vow is simply a promise made to God" (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p. 315, where he is dealing with the third commandment's forbidding us to take the name of the Lord in vain). A vow does carry with it certain conditions of an oath, since it is "of the like nature with a promissory oath" (Confession, XXII, 5).

We may summarize from Hodge as follows:

- A. The person making the vow is to be
 1. competent for such a task (with maturity, intelligence, etc.),
 2. acting worshipfully (solemnly, with deliberation), and
 3. acting voluntarily.
- B. The object of the vow is to be something
 1. lawful in itself,
 2. acceptable to God, and
 3. within the power of the person vowing.
- C. The vow is to be with sincere purpose, i.e., the promise made "in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation. . . . It binds to performance, although to a man's hurt" (Confession, XXII, 4, 5).

Dr. Lewis' definition

With the Confession and this outline before us, the definition of a faith promise given by Dr. Lewis may be examined. He states this in his pamphlet, "Provocative Questions." "In a group situation (Acts 20:7) each person is invited to write on a card which he signs the amount he will trust God to enable him to give each week (I Cor. 16:2) for one year for the church's outreach for Christ beyond local limits (Acts 1:8)."

This definition is broad enough to conform to each of the conditions of a

lawful vow and is in some sense understood to be such by Dr. Lewis, for in the same pamphlet he makes reference to the warning in Ecclesiastes 5:4 concerning the making of a vow.

Even so, the "Faith Promise Principle" is *by design* an umbrella for both biblically acceptable and unacceptable practices. Dr. Lewis contends in *Faith Promise: Facts, Not Fantasies* that one must not be "narrower than the Bible in defining Faith Promise. Must its sole source be totally unexpected income? No. Let Faith Promise include trusting God for expected income as well as that to be provided in answer to prayer alone (Heb. 11:1). Only the praying believer can learn what God will ask of his faith (Gen. 22:2-10; Dan. 3:16-21; Heb. 11)."

On the other hand, Dr. Lewis understands "Faith Promise" to be much narrower than the umbrella he raises. "Making a Faith Promise involves trusting God each week for an amount one does not have" (*Faith Promise for World Witness*, p. 64). Earlier he drew the boundary of the definition of his Principle quite clearly when he wrote that the promise "includes income one expects to receive, plus additional income to be supplied through faith and prayer alone. . . . We dare not fail to teach Christians to develop the muscles of faith. The weekly amount one sets prayerfully must be enough to encourage faith's exercise. Otherwise it is a Faith Promise in name only" (*ibid.*, pp. 34f.).

The error of Faith Promise

Though the umbrella definition is sufficiently broad to be found conformable to the Scriptures and our confessional understanding of them, the more narrow — and admittedly more basic — understanding of what "Faith Promise" means is sin. To promise God something that is clearly outside our present or foreseen ability is sin. "No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or

what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he hath no promise of ability from God" (Confession, XXII, 7; emphasis added).

The crux of the issue revolves around the understanding of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. If you take verse 3 of chapter 8 alone — "For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability" (NIV) — some warrant for the principle of promising to God something beyond one's present or foreseen ability might be entertained. But neither the text, nor the context, allows such error.

Paul had for some months been carrying out one of his special tasks to remember the poor in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:10). He had written the Corinthian church earlier concerning a collection for the poor (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) and they had responded with great willingness to give (2 Corinthians 8:10, 11; 9:2). However, the zeal of the Corinthians had decreased in the past year and Paul was concerned (2 Cor. 9:3-5) after he had spoken so highly of their zeal to the Macedonians and others (9:2). Having used the Corinthians' example to encourage the Macedonians to give, Paul is now using the Macedonian example to humble and motivate the Corinthians.

Paul did, however, recognize and record a major difference in the giving of the two churches. The Macedonians had to beg Paul to receive their gift because they had given beyond their ability. "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able (*dunamin*) and even beyond their ability (*dunamin*)" (2 Corinthians 8:3, NIV).

The Macedonians had not done some sort of spiritual hocus pocus and produced by faith and prayer some additional unexpected income. Paul clearly states that their giving *by the grace of God* (and he was convinced of this or he would not have accepted their gift) included a portion of their own livelihood, though they were in extreme poverty. Because of the poverty they had already given until it hurt, but they also gave until they were numb with pain. Historical records confirm the dire economic conditions of Macedonia at this time, as con-

trasted to the wealth of Achaia with Corinth its capital.

Two kinds of ability

Paul expected a gift from the Corinthians because of the nature of their expressed willingness (2 Cor. 8:8, 10-12) and their known ability (*echein*) (verses 11, 12). Paul used two entirely different words to express the ability to give. The word used to describe the Macedonian ability (*dunamin*) conveys the sense of wealth as down to the dynamic (same Greek root), vital, powerful, necessary wealth for the very maintenance of life. They reached to the minimum of their livelihood, and therefore their gift was alive with the power of grace and thankfulness unto God. Little wonder that Paul was led to consider the great gift of Jesus himself (2 Cor. 8:9), the painful depth of his own sacrifice for the poor.

Now addressing the Corinthians, Paul speaks of a quite different type of giving. He does not expect them to give as the Macedonians did. The Corinthians could give more without reaching nearly so deeply or dearly (verse 13). The word for ability that Paul uses now (*echein*) has the basic sense of possession, of ownership. The Corinthians had the means in hand to give without endangering their livelihood.

So Paul's approach was different. He challenged the Corinthians by comparing their earnestness with the Macedonian example, but he also called them to complete or fulfill what had been agreed upon the year before. "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12, NIV; cf. 9:1-5). Paul held them to their word.

Comparing 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 with 2 Corinthians 8:10-12, 24, and 9:1-5, a case could be made that something very similar to the broad umbrella definition of "Faith Promise" did occur. But the giving that Paul refers to never had reference to that which was not in the control of the giver, contrary to Dr. Lewis' view.

The narrower definition of "Faith Promise" — agreeing to give God a certain amount of income that one does not actually have in hand or prudently foresee as coming — is really a sin because no biblical promise has been made at all, but rather a testing of God has been instituted.

Even the more general definition of a "Faith Promise" meets the conditions of a vow binding unto God and the church. God honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm 15:3). Such is the man of biblical faith who makes a biblical promise in faith. However, Dr. Lewis denies that his "Faith Promise" is "a legal and obligatory contract" (*Faith Promise for World Witness*, p. 36).

In "Provocative Questions" he writes, "What about unpaid Faith Promises? The matter is between each giver and God (Ecc. 5:4); no dunning letter are sent. When the set time ends, any unpaid Faith Promises are written off." But by definition the "Faith Promise" is made to God and the church (to reach or exceed a certain goal with the promises tabulated at the end), preferably on a card with the signature of the one promising (cf. *Handbook: Faith Promise for World Witness*, pp. 67-70).

Biblically and confessionally understood, a vow of fully binding character has been made. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest" (Ecclesiastes 5:4). Such irresponsible teaching as that of Dr. Lewis may not be tolerated when the Scriptures are so clear.

What about an alternative program of financial support for world missions? The real question is much deeper than it would appear. The real question has to do more with what the church is, what its purpose is, and how it is to achieve its purpose — each of these being biblically understood. One may not cut world missions off from any other activity of the church and fund it in some novel way. When the meaning of the church in its various internal relationships has been adequately studied and set forth, then biblical stewardship in all its ramifications will have its proper place. A careful and prayerful study and preaching of the Book of Malachi, 1 Corinthians 12 and 13, and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, should produce its fruit for the sustenance of the body of Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Rev. Mr. Young is the pastor of the Courtland, Alabama, Presbyterian Church in America. This article grows out of a study made for his presbytery.

Genesis 2:22

Dear Sarah:

In April you wrote and told "Upset" that his parents had to be the ones that knew what was best for him.

Of course, "Upset" ought to mind his elders. But there are two things that might make it easier for him to bear it.

We know that the wicked become the enemies of those in their own house, and that when you do what God wants you to do your own parents can become your enemies. If Christian parents aren't *perfect* there's no reason why they shouldn't be colored a little by *this* sin too. They may be hoping that "Upset" will ascend to the head of the choir while God is going to make him a clamraker.

The second thing is what Hebrews 12:10 tells us about family life: "for they truly chastened us after their own pleasure; but he [God] for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

These parents were disciplining their children according to their own pleasure. This discipline is contrasted with God's discipline that proceeds from his wisdom and according to the children's profit. This isn't to say that the discipline of parents can't be for the profit of the children. In fact (as Gotthard has made a commonplace), the discipline of God is often by means of the father and mother.

But actually, human parents, even Christian ones, don't always know what is best for the child. "Upset" should understand that even despite the sometimes ignorance of his parents, God has asked him to obey them. In this situation too all things will work together for the good of Christian children.

—Uncle John, in Ethiopia

Dear Uncle John:

Beautiful!

—Sarah.

While the Floor Dries

BARBARA BLIETZ

After four days of illness, I decided to disinfect the house. (I wonder if other mothers do that when a germ leaves?) Out came the bucket and ammonia cleaner for the floors. Just the clean smell did wonders for my morale.

Just then the doorbell rang. It was Lisa, the neighbor girl. She brought over a big bag of doughnuts and wanted to know how I was feeling. Lisa's family is the newest in the neighborhood. We were very glad to have someone so close to our Susan in age, and when she had come bursting through the door announcing that Lisa's family loved the Lord, we were all overjoyed. It was really an answer to our prayers.

Growing up and out of church

While I scrubbed away at the floors I thought about church, particularly about our responsibilities with the young people. I thought about all the different ways that the kids expressed and digested what they received. I thought about how it has seemed always to be the least likely candidates who rise up out of the group to express their faith in Christ.

Then I thought about all those dreary things I keep reading about teenagers who leave the church to find their own way. The gist of these articles is that after they've experimented a bit with freedom, many will return. I guess the bright side was supposed to include our

blessings as they go.

Thoughts that presuppose failure infuriate me. I just can't buy that philosophy. Surely, that isn't what Christ meant regarding the prodigal son or when he spoke about our victory.

But, as I look around, that does seem to be the fact. Many young people do leave their churches to find their freedom. I cannot dismiss myself from my responsibility in so important an area. I find I must question this present trend. It seems to me that if there were any place where a teen might be able to learn how to be free, it ought to be in the church—not in the world, where mankind is bound by sin!

Where to find freedom

What makes our teens look at the church as a chain, and the world as their chance for freedom? Isn't there something quite backward about such a notion? Isn't there something not being said, or done, or understood, that could turn these ideas around? Is there any way to help our young people find their freedom within the embrace of the church?

A reactive thought that comes to me is that perhaps we, the leadership within the church, look upon church responsibilities as something we *have to do* rather than as something we are *freed to do*. Perhaps we're so duty bound that the joy of Christ is hidden.

If that is true, I can easily see how

a teen might reject our lifestyle until he has exhausted other resources. In the world, after all, he can do just about anything he wants.

I've always been amazed at how much better I like the clothes I purchase if I try them on first. I'm equally amazed at how many rejects sit abandoned in my closets!

Is the church a place where our teens can try on Christ? Is it a place where they can examine Christian opportunities to see what God would have them to do?

Perhaps in part it is. But perhaps to the extent that it isn't, we need to reevaluate our maturity in Christ and ask ourselves if we as leaders of the church are bound to duty, or freed to obey.

Expressing freedom in Christ

Maybe we all ought to pull out a few of those long dusty dreams and hopes that we originally began to see when we became Christians. Is there, after all, not something more we each could learn? Surely we have not all arrived.

Maybe if we were to express our freedom, too, to do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13), then just maybe we could turn the tide so our young people could find their freedom within the church. (I am not advocating license to do anything and everything, but only those things that are ours through Christ.) I speak of that freedom which is ours because sin no longer has dominion (Romans 6:12).

Above all, a teen, in his search for life's meaning, seems to be looking for a way to give expression to what is inside and trying to grow. The world can provide that opportunity by allowing our teens to express sin. Only the church can provide a teen with the place where he can express his longing and hunger after God.

The more that is expressed within the church, the less our teens will find a need to flow with the world.

My floors were finished and the doughnuts were a kind of bright distraction. I'm glad Lisa felt free to bring them over.

Mrs. Dwayne Blietz is youth sponsor and senior high Sunday school teacher in the Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Hanover Park, Illinois.

Honey with a pinch of salt

JEAN SHAW

The Sears carpet-man stopped by yesterday. He spread out his sample book and told me how durable Sears carpet is. Did you know that Sears laid carpet outside and inside Grand Central Station in New York City and left it there for six months? When they took it up and cleaned it, it was just like new! In fact, that carpet looked *so* good that the advertising agency said they couldn't tell people about it — nobody would believe them.

The sample book had a hundred colors and the salesman told me if I didn't find the color I wanted he'd have one made up. And then he described the special way Sears lays its carpets and the guarantee. I never saw such an enthusiastic salesman.

"You must really like your work," I told him as he whipped out his measuring tape. "Oh, I do," he replied. "I know there's not another company in St. Louis that offers the product we do!"

Enthusiasm sells

It sells a lot of carpets. Enthusiasm sells a lot of religion too, judging from the growth of the Mormons, Pentecostals, and Baptists. Baptists especially have a reputation for being enthusiastic.

Presbyterians, unfortunately, do not. Sing "Wonderful Grace of Jesus" with a little verve and the song leader will invariably say, "Well, well, for a minute there I thought you were all Baptists!" If we sing "A Mighty Fortress Is our God" with a little verve, he never says we sound like Lutherans. I guess they aren't enthusiastic either.

Baptists are commended for their friendliness to visitors, their jocularity at church suppers, their zeal in visitation, and their lively youth groups. Presbyterians are commended for — well, they prefer an educated ministry. To the world at large we are known as a rather cold lot.

Granted, our image of being stern

and reserved is due partly to a bias against our doctrine. The discipline of the Reformed faith, as expressed by John Calvin (red flag!), is not very popular with today's free-wheeling American. But the coolness attributed to Presbyterians is, in large measure, deserved. We have not displayed the warmth that draws lonely, uncertain people into our midst. I'm not a student of church history, so I don't know where we got the idea that catechism and coffeecake can't be mixed, or that it's illegal to hug somebody inside the church building. We certainly can't blame Calvin, whose concern for people prompted him to feed and house every refugee that came through Geneva!

Know the product

Maybe we aren't enthusiastic because we don't really know our product. Maybe we're not convinced ours *is* the best doctrine in the world. Maybe we're not personally acquainted with Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Jesus is Questions 36 through 57 all right; but is he the love that prompts us, even forces us, to love others with openness and without apology?

What do you think would happen if we Presbyterians went around telling everybody what a great product we had? What if we said we had a fantastic minister, wonderful members, and a great Sunday School? What if the Baptist minister in town told his church they should sing like the Presbyterians?

All because we love our Savior! Our Presbyterian church would have as much traffic as Grand Central Station, and the trustees would have to order new carpet.

Thanks, Jean, for giving us a needling where we need it! Surely we have the best doctrines — they're the most biblical; and we have the best Savior of all — the only Name given whereby we must be saved.

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On Choosing DEATH

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The suicide agreement of Dr. and Mrs. Henry P. Van Dusen, aged and famed as religious leaders, can well illustrate the death-outlook that conditions the minds of many cultured as well as uncultured persons in today's world.

Dr. Van Dusen always wanted to be known as a man of peace. He was a founder of the National Council of Churches and a president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. He favored and uttered statements that, if acted upon, would have resulted in the total disarmament of this country.

Typical of the disarmament sentiment in the 1930s is a statement in a report to the old Federal Council of Churches:

"If Japan is deprived of some of her bombing planes by a United States government embargo [on scrap iron shipments], she is being coerced and threatened, not by a disinterested third party, but by a nation which has mobilized its weapons of violence in practice for making war upon her."

Japan used those planes to attack Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The peace of the cemetery

Men of peace can achieve disarmament — but it can turn out to be a peace with dishonor, a peace resembling that of the cemetery. And it usually is advocated as a result of a dream-theology that refuses to come to grips with the law of sin and death.

There is such a law, and as surely as you fail to discern the true character of sin, the peace you arrive at will be the peace of the grave. It is liberal optimism about human nature, an optimism shared by Dr. Van Dusen,

that has led our State Department down the path of attempted compromise with the Beast, just as it led Dr. Van Dusen to attempt his own euthanasia.

When Dr. Van Dusen entered the ministry, back in the 1920s, his examination for licensure was temporarily stalled by his outright denial of a portion of the gospel; he denied the truth of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ. And as surely as you deny the counsel of God, you deny life. Death is abolished only in terms of the gospel of the Son of God.

At that moment of testing, young Van Dusen enlisted the help of a powerful friend named John Foster Dulles. Dulles was well prepared to fight the issue through the courts of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. It proved, however, to be a trial, not so much of the soundness of young Van Dusen, or of the superior legal ability of Mr. Dulles, but of the entire denomination.

To be sure, the presbytery in licensing Van Dusen, was ignoring the recently enacted directives of the General Assembly that insisted on candidates' agreeing to such "essentials" as Christ's virgin birth. But the defiant stance of that presbytery eventually became the settled stance of the whole denomination.

The toleration of liberalism by that church would allow Dr. Van Dusen to go to the top, but would consign to outer darkness such defenders of the Christian faith as Dr. J. Gresham Machen, who later was to be used of God in the founding of what is now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (now the United Presbyterian Church,

U.S.A.), by its exaltation of liberalism chose death.

The embracing of death

John Foster Dulles also wanted to be known as a man of peace. It was with great reluctance that he assumed the posture of a man of war. In fact, he once made a speech on the subject of the use of the weapons of violence. "I know it is wrong," he said, "but what else can you do?" Dulles became the Secretary of State during the Eisenhower administration.

There came the dark day of take-over in North Viet Nam, with the slaughter and beheading of thousands of upright people, with many others fleeing southward to escape. At that point, John Foster Dulles spoke darkly of "massive retaliation," implying the possibility of a short-cut to peace in Viet Nam by using the big bomb.

But was he really ready to take this route? The enemy knew that neither he nor his country would do any such thing. This land was compromised by liberalism and its built-in view of the essential goodness of human nature.

It was said, for example, by Harry Truman at Potsdam that all Stalin needed was to be exposed to such beneficent service institutions as the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions, and "good old Joe" would be a changed man.

But nothing other than the gospel of Jesus Christ can change human hearts. Nothing but the gospel has a realistic view of human nature — "Ye must be born again." And nothing but a realistic view of human nature will do a nation any good in a world of sin, a world now desperately crying, "Who is able to make war with the beast?" (Revelation 13:4).

Embracing liberalism is tantamount to embracing death. The death-agreement of the Van Dusens is the result of an outlook that, sadly, is shared by our entire culture.

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