

The Weaker Brother: Study Committee

General Assembly Report: Editor

Pre-Assembly Conferences

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The Rev. Henry W. Coray, Moderator of the 35th Assembly, turns the rostrum over to the Rev. Arthur O. Olson of Bridgeton, N. J., chosen as Moderator of the 36th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which met in Westfield, N. J. in mid-May.

—photo by Fred Keesing of the Courier-News

The Weaker Brother

by a Study Committee

What we have said provides us with a basis for understanding the attitude that the mature Christian should have towards the immature or weaker brother. The mature Christian, expressing the new life in Christ, stands in the knowledge of the freedom which this new life has made possible (I Cor. 8:1). The immature Christian is unable as yet to have this freedom of conscience and action (I Cor. 8:7). What should be the attitude of the stronger towards the weaker?

In this relationship the principle we have uncovered remains in force. The foundational matters must come first. The use of one's freedom must be subordinated to the interests of the deeper religious relationships to God.

The Christian may not turn his gaze fixedly on his liberty, as if this liberty existed in its own right, and forget what has made this liberty possible and has given it its meaning. He may not forget that the Christian life is not the expression of this or that freedom but is the expression of communion in its deepest sense with God in obedience to his command that men love him with their entire being and love their neighbor as themselves. He may not forget what is the heart of the gospel message of redemption, which has as its purpose the restoration of fellowship with God.

Nature of Offense

For Paul again these foundational matters clearly took precedence over all others. For him, he said, all things were lawful. Nevertheless, if the exercise of his freedom meant that his brother would be offended, he would not exercise his freedom. If eating meats would make his brother offend, he would not eat meats so long as the world existed (I Cor. 8:13).

Considerable importance must be attached to the meaning of the word "offend." From what we have said above it is clear that it cannot refer simply to offending the sensibilities of others. The Christian may not allow his life to be ruled by whatever opinions others may have concerning what it should be. Denial of the liberty that the Christian has in the faith is a serious matter. An attack on the freedom which the gospel has made possible is in some measure an attack on the gospel itself.

For the Gospel's Sake

Various liberties are often brought into question by those who are very sure that they themselves are secure in the faith. Indeed, they are more sure of themselves than they are sure of the ones whose liberty they are bringing into question. Within the bounds of Christian courtesy and decorum, such brethren should be resisted. The Christian should not allow himself to have a bad conscience simply because of their objections. He should not simply accede to their wishes. Simple acquiescence is not a serious matter because of the freedoms themselves. In themselves they are of secondary importance. But the demands of those who would restrict the liberty of the Christian in Christ must be resisted insofar as they affect the gospel itself.

The situation is quite different with respect to the brother who is weak in the faith. Seeing another exercise his liberty will bring him into a position where his ultimate relationship to God is threatened. He cannot exercise such liberty in faith, and he is therefore in danger of sinning. In such a case the use of one's liberty must be made to serve the more fundamental needs of one's weaker brother. He

does not stand confidently in his relationship to God. His conscience is immature. To do even certain things which clearly fall within the scope of Christian freedom, things with respect to which the weaker brother is not yet free, is to tempt his conscience. To tempt him to perform things that he cannot yet do out of a clear conscience is to tempt him to sin, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

In both cases the same principle applies. The censorious brother who denies the liberty which the Christian has in Christ must be resisted because he simultaneously brings into question the gospel which makes these liberties possible. It is also for the sake of the gospel that the weaker brother, who stands in jeopardy because of the exercise of the liberty of his stronger brother, must be aided. The right of exercising one's liberty is nothing compared with the need to encourage and to sustain the faith of one's brother in Christ (I Cor. 8:8-9).

The Need to Instruct the Conscience

In spite of the fact that the exercise of freedom must be curtailed if that exercise makes a weaker brother offend, it is true nevertheless that there is even here a need to educate the conscience, in order that it might attain maturity.

When the church was threatened with Judaizing tendencies, the Council at Jerusalem reaffirmed the liberties which the Christian has in Christ. It recognized that there was no need to be circumcised in order to be a Christian. It commanded only that the Gentile Christians observe God's commandments respecting some sins which were especially characteristic of their pagan background and that they refrain from certain practices that would make it more difficult for them to mix in with those who had come out of Jewry (Acts 15:28-29).

Inconsistency Rebuked

In his defense of his apostleship to the Galatian church, the apostle Paul refers to a subsequent incident in Antioch, where he rebuked Peter to his face for hypocrisy in the exercise of his Christian liberty. Before certain

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The right of exercising one's liberty is nothing compared with the need to encourage and to sustain the faith of one's brother in Christ.

Thirty-fifth General Assembly

THE EDITOR

A total of 160 commissioners (including alternates) gathered in Westfield, New Jersey in mid-May to make the 35th General Assembly by far the best attended in the history of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Although all 47 items on the four-day docket were dealt with, the several matters in connection with the church's relationship to other denominations provoked some of the liveliest and most extended debate.

One major item that has been before the church for two decades may be nearing its resolution. Before adjourning the Assembly determined to add two extra days to the 36th General Assembly scheduled for Knox Church of Silver Spring, Maryland, in anticipation of acting upon the final draft of a proposed revision to the Form of Government. If approved, it would be sent down to the presbyteries for their action, and this could mean a final approval of the long-awaited revision at the 37th Assembly in 1970.

The hospitality of Grace Church was such as to elicit a poetic outburst by elder De Jonge in the closing minutes on Friday along with a more formal resolution of gratitude. Every imaginable detail was provided for in the face of the unprecedented attendance. Commissioners will not soon forget the gracious and ever-smiling registrar, Judy (Mrs. Fred) Griffin—and through her we too pay tribute to one and all, including our hosts in Westfield and in the homes of neighboring churches in north Jersey.

One may not omit reference to the delicious buffet lunches and coffee-time snacks served in the downstairs assembly room of Grace Church. On three evenings commissioners in groups of ten to fifteen dined in the homes of members and friends of the congregation in Westfield — and the meals were not for weight watchers. On Wednesday about 275 delegates and visitors enjoyed a chicken banquet at the Westwood Inn. The program with its lighter touches—includ-

ing some Cor(n)ay humor—made for a refreshing change of pace at the half-way point of the business sessions. That afternoon the ladies who were present met at the manse for tea in honor of Mrs. Hunt.

Many of the commissioners arrived in time for a pre-assembly worship service on Monday evening at which Dr. Van Til spoke on "Joshua's Appeal for Covenant Consciousness." The choir under the direction of Fred Griffin sang "Great God of Wonders."

TUESDAY, MAY 14

At nine o'clock Tuesday morning the moderator of the previous Assembly, the Rev. Henry Coray, led a brief service of worship, speaking from the text in Isaiah 54:2: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes."

The roll call, when completed, showed an even 160, including 104 ministers, although a fair number of commissioners were present for only one day. The maximum number of votes cast on any one ballot was about 130. The 1967 Assembly at Long Beach, with a total of 128 commissioners (including 12 alternates) had 41 sessions represented (the highest ever) while this year there were 39 sessions represented plus 17 alternates among the elder-commissioners.

As might be expected, the Presbytery of New Jersey had the best attendance of elders (13 sessions and ten alternates) besides 18 ministers. Nearby Philadelphia Presbytery, while having a larger number of ministers, 22, was represented by only nine sessions (with seven alternates).

Other presbyteries showed attendances as follows: Dakotas, nine ministers and one elder; New York and New England, 13 ministers and five elders; Ohio, five ministers and three elders; South, six ministers and two elders; Southern California, 13 ministers and three elders; West Coast, nine ministers and two elders; and

Wisconsin, nine ministers and two elders.

Enrolled as corresponding members, the following fraternal delegates brought greetings during the course of the meetings: the Rev. Clarence Boomsma of the Christian Reformed Church; the Rev. John Zinkand of the Reformed Church in the U.S. (Classis Eureka); the Rev. John McMillan of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (Covenanter); and the Rev. Kenneth Horner, Jr. of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Officers

After brief reports by the stated clerk, Mr. Johnston, and the statistician, Mr. Haug, the latter was re-elected. Mr. Mitchell, the only nominee, was declared elected to the office of stated clerk. Nominated for moderator were Messrs. Marston, Olson, Ellis, Edwards, and Black. On the second ballot Mr. Olson, pastor of Calvary Church of Bridgeton, N. J., was elected with 65 out of 112 votes cast.

On the whole the moderator kept things moving without depriving any who wished to speak (and many did) of that privilege. More than once he was able to forestall additional remarks and bring a matter to a vote when it appeared that minds were made up. Perhaps only once was he mistaken on a voice vote when a "division" was called for. Mr. Olson asked for an occasional assist, when an inevitable snag developed, from Mr. Eckardt, who happened to be seated near the front and became sort of an "unofficial parliamentarian" — a task that might well be made more definite. A measure of the moderator's success is found in that adjournment came a couple of hours short of the allotted time, although on Thursday some predicted sessions might run into Saturday. It is clear that a deadline helps!

The only nominee for assistant clerk, elder Elder, was elected.

At this juncture the Travel Fund Committee gave a preliminary report through Mr. Malcor, and elder Neel was named to serve during the Assembly in the absence of elder Milard. At a later point the committee reported a total available of \$10,172.22 (to which some 90 churches had contributed) and a recommendation to pay 73 commissioners at the rate of 4.2 cents per mile was carried. A balance of \$580 remains in the fund.

Six overtures and 21 communications were presented and on motion those requiring action were referred to appropriate committees. In due course the moderator appointed the following temporary committees to serve during the 35th Assembly:

Overtures and Communications — Ellis, Black, Eyres, Willis, elder Young. Presbyterial Records—Elliott, Fikkert, Hall, Tavares, elders Penkoff and Wahl. Date and Place of 36th Assembly—Haney and Rockey. Standing Committee Records — Edwards, Ediger, Davies, D. Stanton, elders McCullough and Osborn. Administrative Matters — Dunn, D. Parker, Poundstone, Vining, elder Partington. Necrology — Ahlfeldt and Adams.

Disposition of significant matters will be noted as reports are mentioned.

Standing Committees

The Committee on Christian Education was the first of the standing committees to report. (None of the reports was read orally, since all had appeared in the Agenda circulated prior to the Assembly.) A recommendation that the Assembly elect a Committee on Revision of the Hymnal was adopted. From among ten nominees these men were elected on the first ballot: elders Viss, Neel, Penn; Oliver and Miller.

The following were elected to the Committee on Christian Education, class of 1971: Clowney, Miller, Nicholas, elders Brown and Viss; also Breisch to the class of 1969 to fill the term of the late Dr. E. J. Young.

Mr. D. Parker presented the report of the liaison representative to the World Home Bible League, and two recommendations were adopted, commending the League to the churches for prayer and financial support, and encouraging local congregations to utilize its program of Bible distribution and to invite its representatives



Clerks John Mitchell and Kingsley Elder

where possible to tell of its work in the churches.

After lunch Mr. Kellogg, calling attention to the fact that the Christian Education Committee gives a modest subsidy to the *Presbyterian Guardian*, spoke with some feeling in dissent from an article by Mr. Breisch in the March issue. Alleging that it contained teaching "the very opposite of that for which Machen stood" and that much of it "strikes at the very heart of what the OPC stands for," he noted several points of disagreement in what he regarded as a tendency toward "social activism" akin to civil disobedience and the "social gospel" of the modernists. Insisting that he was not opposed to the magazine, he pled for more "control and direction so that its message is more in accord with our position."

Mr. Piper wondered if we should accept without further discussion the previous speaker's evaluation of the article. Mr. Sibley expressed gratitude for a periodical dealing with current issues of much concern, saying it was "vital to encourage articles at either end of the spectrum, as the *Guardian* has done, whether or not we agree with the practical solutions." Mr. Marston was concerned as to whether such an article "represents the gospel's true application."

A motion to ask the committee to protest to the editorial board of the magazine was laid on the table.

In connection with the report of the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension there was a bit of discussion as to the problems and possible expense of any proposed inner city work that might be undertaken,

since such a possibility was mentioned. Elected to the committee, class of 1971, were Adams, DeVelde, D. Parker, elders Lind and Pappas.

Shortly after Mr. Galbraith reported informally on Foreign Mission activities since December 31, 1967, the time came for recess for the day. Tuesday evening was left open for meetings of the various committees.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

Devotions at 8:25 each morning preceded the start of business at 8:45. Mr. Urban led on Wednesday with a study from Genesis 50; Mr. Shell on Thursday, from II Samuel 19; and on Friday a portion of a taped sermon by Dr. E. J. Young on Romans 1:16 was heard. After every recess the session was resumed with the singing of a hymn or psalm and prayer.

As consideration of the report of the Committee on Foreign Missions was taken up, Mr. Hunt spoke at some length of the concerns that were upon his heart as a long-time (40 years) missionary in Korea. He spoke of a gap in communications and a sense of frustration as to what the church's overall missionary program is. Calling for a reassessment of policy, he asked: "What is our philosophy of missions? How many missionaries is the committee seeking? What are the priorities? What kind of people are we looking for as candidates in particular situations? We ought to know the plans for each field and station. Why not a printed manual?" He said we really need 70 missionaries in Korea alone, but realistically at least three families in the next five years. Mr. Hunt also expressed the opposition of the Korean

Mission to the foreign loan fund, from which it is proposed that congregations (in Japan and Formosa) may borrow for church property needs.

Foreign Missions

Mr. Galbraith replied that it was difficult to discuss the broad aspects of all these matters, nor can the committee "make all the intricacies of its total policy plain to everybody"; but he was "glad for a church where a missionary feels free to express himself openly." He invited Mr. Hunt to seek more time with the committee itself to discuss these matters further.

In reply to a query from Mr. Saltzen as to how information can be fed back to the churches "so that we will know the goals and priorities," the general secretary said that the committee does have certain goals, but that they must remain flexible because of the two limitations of money and men. Our present goals do not envisage new fields but rather the strengthening of the areas where we now have work, he indicated.

Mr. Dunn said he was distressed at "the hampering effect of having to go through the Stewardship Committee to appeal for more foreign mission funds." He favored a more direct appeal to the people. Mr. Marston, however, thought we did have an overall plan evaluated by the Stewardship Committee. Mr. Metzger pointed out that the committees are really "ourselves, and we don't want to favor one committee over another. The record shows," he continued, "that we needed a change from the disorderly, haphazard, high pressure methods that went on. Furthermore, we can't do all the kingdom work in the world; we need constantly to reassess in order to be good stewards of what we can do."

At this point Mr. Ellis, for the Committee on Overtures and Communications, introduced a recommendation in response to Overture 5 from the Presbytery of the South, that the matter of the committee's recent appointment of the Rev. David Moore to Japan be discussed on the floor of the Assembly. Mr. Moore, a member of the Central Mississippi Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern), had been twice refused appointment by the foreign missions agency of his denomination in view of his objections to working with the Kyodon or United Church in

Japan. It is his intention to work with the Reformed Churches in Japan, with which the OPC missionaries cooperate and with which conservative Southern Presbyterian men also work. (The Board apparently doesn't want any more such men on the field.) In April the Central Mississippi Presbytery granted Mr. Moore's request for permission to labor under the OPC in Japan. He is a 1962 graduate of Westminster Seminary, and son of the Rev. James Moore, formerly an OP minister and now pastor of the Independent Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

Moore Appointment

Mr. Galbraith acknowledged that the appointment of Mr. Moore raises the question of ecclesiastical separation. "So long as a man is able to protest and act thereon, and is willing to do so, he must continue to do so until silenced or removed," he said. "The situation is analogous to that in the PCUSA in the thirties when the Independent Board was formed. The OPC was not begun just because there was unbelief in the old church, but when it was no longer possible in the courts of the church effectively to protest or seek reform. To refuse to permit him, and others, the opportunity to carry on the struggle to its conclusion would be to reverse the policy on which we ourselves acted as a Scriptural method of opposing error and unbelief in the church . . . We are also giving people an outlet for their missions giving while they fight for the faith," he concluded.

In reply to a question by Chaplain Stingley as to who would have primary control in administration and discipline, Mr. Galbraith said that the com-

mittee had agreed to Mr. Moore's continuing as a member of Central Mississippi subject to review by the committee. He would, however, be a member of our Japan Mission and in that relationship under the jurisdiction of our Committee on Foreign Missions. Financial support has been promised from sources outside the OPC, he noted.

Mr. Sloat was somewhat bothered by the arrangement, wondering if this wasn't "going out by the back door" and why the men in Central Mississippi didn't set up their own independent agency to force the issue in the church.

Mr. Atwell urged caution in concluding "that in applying Biblical principles of separation in one situation we insist that every other solution is sinful. The old Independent Board, after all, was a temporary expedient. For men in the South it may well be that the OPC holds out a better solution . . . Let us be tolerant of others in their concern to raise issues and fulfil obligations as they see them," he pleaded. "Let us exercise Christian sympathy and understanding toward these brethren at this time."

Moore Speaks

Mr. Moore, who was present and given the privilege of the floor on this matter, said that Central Mississippi had considered for over a year the feasibility of setting up its own agency to send him to Japan, but concluded it to be inadvisable. "I have roots in the Southern Presbyterian Church," he said, "and want to continue in it while I can do so conscientiously. Some of us often wonder whether we should just walk out, but about half of our missionaries are still true to the gospel . . . What effect this action of mine will have is of course uncertain, but it may serve as one means of awakening and awareness of the issues . . . The line will have to be drawn at some point, and with a union with the RCA a possibility, and possible confessional changes and involvement in COCU, the time may be short, perhaps only two or three years."

After Mr. Zinkand's greetings at the opening of the afternoon session, Mr. Dortzbach posed a number of additional questions as to the expediency of the committee's action, which he regarded as "hasty." He wondered about the reaction of others in the South, particularly some who have al-

STATISTICS

Orthodox Presbyterian churches and chapels are now found in 28 states, with 112 congregations organized and 12 chapel groups at the end of 1967. The total number of ministers at that time was 163.

Total membership is nearly 14,000, and contributions during 1967 came to almost two million dollars, an increase of 14.2 percent over 1966. Benevolences were just under 21 percent of the total. Contributions per communicant averaged \$217, of which \$45 was for benevolences—up from \$199 and \$41, respectively, in the previous year. Average attendance in Sunday school increased slightly—one-half percent.



COMMISSIONERS AT THE 36TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ready pulled out of the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Thompson's remarks then brought the discussion to a close, as he expressed amazement at alleged attitudes "of those of us behind the magnolia curtain. I am glad the committee has taken this hopeful and forward-looking action. Soon the pressure will be on! The ecclesiastical machine will force the issue and the lines will be drawn even more clearly within the Southern Church. Finally," he said, "we need to encourage men in this vexing trial as they see their church leaving them. We need to offer a spark of light and let them know that there is a truly reformed and presbyterian church on the horizon. There is nothing as wonderful to know as that someone is holding out a hand. One of the greatest privileges of my life is to serve the OPC and I covet for these men the same privilege!"

In the election to the Committee on Foreign Missions there were 129 ballots — the highest we noted — and three ballots were required to elect the following from among eight ministers and five elders to the class of 1971: Olson, Coray, Dortzbach, elders Haldeman and DeMaster.

The Committee on General Benevolence reported increased gifts, although only 62 of the churches sent

contributions to this committee from their deacons' funds. After an unsuccessful motion to include this committee in the unified budget, the recommendation to the churches of gifts of at least \$1.25 per communicant member was adopted. It was pointed out that the deacons' funds are separate in the local churches and usually received in specific offerings, and that the mechanics of inclusion become somewhat complicated in a combined budget.

General Benevolence

A second recommendation was adopted in an amended form — an amendment proposed by Mr. Woolley to keep the distinction sharp between the work of the church and that of the state: that the cooperation of the churches in stimulating interest in the local as well as the worldwide ministry of compassion be urged, and that a new emphasis be given to the duty of our churches to educate their members in Christian principles which should animate Christians in the relief of poverty and deprivation.

Elder Triggs was reelected to the committee, and Mr. Keller.

The Committee to Confer with Representatives of the Christian Reformed Church reported three meetings with a similar committee of that body dur-

ing the year, and indicated its intent of further discussions. The committee was continued, with the addition of Mr. Adams, and Mr. Marston as alternate. Other members are Vining, Busch, Galbraith, Peterson, elders Roeber and J. Smith.

THURSDAY, MAY 16

Action on the recommendations of the Committee on Pensions, which had begun shortly before the close of Wednesday's business, was concluded Thursday during the first hour. Members of the committee answered a number of questions concerning the revised plan for pensions and insurance, which was then adopted. Scheduled to go into effect January 1, 1969, it provides \$10,000 group insurance and a retirement equity fund from which benefits will be paid to participants. Elected to the class of 1971 were Mr. Galbraith and elders Haug and Forbes.

Discussion and action related to the report of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations occupied most of the time of the Assembly until the afternoon recess. The first item had to do with an overture from the Presbytery of New Jersey, calling attention to an action taken last fall by the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland that

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The Presbyterian GUARDIAN

EDITOR

ROBERT E. NICHOLAS



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Pre-Assembly Conferences

Informal conferences were held at Calvary Reformed Presbyterian Church of Willow Grove during parts of four days prior to the General Assembly. The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterians, Evangelical Synod met in Wilmington at the same time as the OPC meetings in Westfield. Some 40 to 75 ministers and elders from both denominations participated in at least portions of the discussions.

Pursuant to actions by the 1967 meetings of the two bodies, opportunity was given for the missions, church extension, and Christian education agencies of the two churches "to set forth their goals in the light of Biblical principles." Questions were asked, explanations given, and a fuller understanding of the respective programs obtained. Both similarities and differences were noted.

Men from the two communions profited by the times of fellowship in the Lord and the chance of getting better acquainted personally as well as with the work of the kingdom as it is being carried on by these two churches whose heritage and doctrinal standards are so alike. Some indeed felt this to be the most valuable aspect of the conferences.

Chief interest, however, developed out of discussions of "the Biblical principles concerning issues which have been historical differences" between the two groups. These discussions came about through an instruction of the 34th Assembly to the Committee on Interchurch Relations to arrange a conference on a wider basis than that of the two committees which had been talking together for several years. Scheduled for the first afternoon and evening, this portion of the conference spilled over into several

of the later sessions by mutual desire.

Since the discussions were quite informal and not directed toward motions or resolutions, it seems wise not to attempt to quote any of the participants in this brief report. On one of the "historical differences," the matter of eschatology, there appeared to be no major problems. Some questions came up as to attitudes toward "dispensationalism" among the RPs, but no one defended that scheme as in harmony with the covenant-unity of Scripture. Both churches have various views on the millennial question, though the RPs are predominantly "pre" and the OPs mostly "a" or "non" millennial in the sense of a literal thousand years yet to come.

In the area of "Christian liberty" again the difference seemed not so much (if at all) a matter of principle as of emphasis and application, particularly by means of resolutions of Synod or Assembly. The OPC has generally refrained from statements by its major Assembly, presumably feeling that in this as in other areas matters are best handled locally where the session is responsible for informing, instructing, reproving and all such admonition and discipline of its members.

Differences Discussed

It seems too that a desire remains on the part of some to speak of "the separated life" in terms of certain habits or practices rather than in the total context of the believer's struggle against sin and evil within himself and in every area of life in the world about him. It was this desire for a public testimony, one supposes, that led to the incorporation of a resolution along these lines in a joint statement of the two committees submitted to the 1967 Assembly "as a part of a possible plan of eventual union."

There was some frank and honest expression of conflicting attitudes. It was suggested that it is attitudes of sensitivity, suspicion, misunderstanding, and unintentional misrepresentation of one another's views, that keep the two communions apart, far more than any formal doctrinal divergence in theory or practice. It was clear that even during the conferences certain statements were subject to misunderstanding on the part of some hearers. There are those who think they sense an intellectualism and rigidity and a lack of evangelistic zeal in the OPC.

The liveliest exchanges, coupled with efforts to get at specific Scriptural teaching, arose out of an unforeseen area of disagreement over the question of the relation of regeneration to faith and its relevance to motivation in preaching the gospel. What some OPC men felt was an "Arminian" position was espoused by some of the RP brethren, though not everyone is in agreement as to the precise views that were being defended. This part of the "debate" did open up the question as to how thoroughgoing is the "Reformed" commitment at what has been regarded as a rather crucial point in examinations of candidates in OP presbyteries.

In saying this, let it be clear that no charges of "heresy" are being made, simply an effort to give a general impression of the conferences from the standpoint of this observer and conversations with others who were present. Much more discussion lies ahead, and doubtless a greater attempt at careful Scriptural exchange of views on some of these matters. Without mutual understanding and confidence there can be little hope of moving toward that Biblical union which the OPC has gone on record as favoring.

"in effect reversed the position taken by the Synod of Assen, 1926, with respect to the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3" and requesting the Assembly to "consider the implications of this action in view of the sister church relationship that exists between our two churches." The recommendation was adopted, that the matter be referred to the Committee on Ecumenicity for careful consideration and report to the 36th General Assembly.

After some discussion pro and con a recommendation postponed from the 34th Assembly was adopted in the following amended form: "that this General Assembly encourage between presbyteries, agencies, and local congregations, wherever practicable, (a) pulpit exchanges, (b) cooperative publishing, (c) exchange of publications, and (d) representation at existing conferences and meetings; and that this Assembly urge these lower judicatories and agencies to report activities of the above mentioned categories to the Committee on Inter-

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Now that the Christian community has the full Scriptures, it has what is necessary for its guidance.

men had come down from Jerusalem Peter had mingled freely with the Gentile converts and had lived just as they did. After the Jewish Christians had arrived, he separated himself from the Gentile Christians and took the attitude that the Gentile Christians should live like the Jewish Christians. Paul objected. If Peter, being a Jew, was willing to live like a Gentile convert, then why should he subsequently demand that the Gentile converts live like Jews? (Gal. 2:11-14).

He also spoke to the church concerning the multiplication of specific commandments with regard to particular practices. Why do we concern ourselves with commandments—touch not, taste not, handle not? These things are themselves of little consequence. They are to perish with the using (Col. 2:20-22).

Of real consequence was whether one observed or did not observe certain things for the purpose of serving God. Some persons observe days, he says. Others do not observe them. Some men eat. Others do not eat. Of what consequence is that? What is important is that they both give God thanks (Rom. 14:5-8).

New Life in Christ

Instruction was necessary then in order that the church might come to understand the liberty which it had in Christ Jesus. Similar instruction should be undertaken now, so that the church will not involve itself in making countless prohibitions but that it will reflect more adequately on how the new life in Christ can be expressed.

This is all part of the internalization of the life of the believer which is characteristic of the new dispensation. The time would come, Christ prophesied, when men would worship God neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria but would worship him in spirit and in truth. For God seeks such to worship him (John 4:23). In this statement there was no reflection on the appropriateness of the current worship of God in Jerusalem. Christ insisted that salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22).

Nevertheless, the time would come when the outward restrictions of place and of particular forms would be abolished and Christians would be called upon to worship God in the maturity

which came as the result of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The form that the Christian life would take would be first of all and foremost an expression of the new life in Christ Jesus, in all of its richness and variety, instead of a uniformly imposed order, which because of its externality could be distorted just as easily as it could be observed with the proper understanding and reverence.

The Proscriptions of the Church

What measures should the church take to lead its constituency with respect to matters which fall within the scope of Christian liberty?

There is precedent in the case of the Jerusalem Council for authoritative pronouncements with respect to the life of the Christian community. We should not forget, however, that at that time the revelation of God had not yet been fully given. The church was in a period of formation, when it had to establish its position both in

contrast to the Hebrew community from which it had emerged and from the pagan milieu from which many of its converts had been brought. It was a time of great convulsions in the religious life of the people, a time when it would be necessary for the church to speak out more forcibly than it would have to speak later on, when these issues had been resolved. Now that the Christian community has the full Scriptures, it has what is necessary for its guidance.

The church should restrict itself to admonishing the Christian to obey the evangelical precepts. It should seek to stimulate the expression of the new life in Christ. It should warn its constituency not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by having the renewed mind that is in Christ.

To stipulate in detail what the use of one's Christian liberty should be—except to point out the context in which that liberty has its sole meaning—is to throw into question the very meaning of that liberty itself. The church must be careful that in so doing it does not bring into question the gospel itself.

A series on Christian counseling — part 2

Behind the Study Door

JAY ADAMS

In the first article I attempted to sketch the course of a typical counseling situation as it might have taken place in the life of Sharon Whitman, a fictitious Christian woman who complained of being deeply depressed. In her case, as so frequently, we saw that her depression was due to guilt—the guilt of long-standing resentments complicated by other irresponsible actions.

These subsidiary factors stemmed from failure to handle her initial guilt depression properly. If she had sought forgiveness from God and man, the debilitating effects of guilt heaped upon guilt never would have occurred. I shall discuss the principles behind that case later on. First I want to talk about some of the ways in which counselees may prepare themselves for counseling.

To begin with, when you go to a minister in time of need you expect him to be able to help you solve your problems because of his unique relationship to God and the church. This is a scripturally justifiable assumption.¹ God requires the church to choose its teaching elders from among men of the highest spiritual maturity (Titus 1:5-9; I Tim. 3:1-7), whose understanding of the word of God is "accurate" (II Tim. 2:15), and whose conduct sets an example for the rest of the flock (I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7).

So long as your expectations stay within these scriptural bounds and you demand neither omniscience nor perfection, you are on firm biblical ground. Within these same scripturally realistic limits ministers must ask whether they are fit to counsel another. Helpfulness and effectiveness

in counseling largely depend upon these preconditions.

Preparation

Once one has asked for an appointment, what does he do next? The counselee can *prepare for the initial interview*. His objective ought to be to put the counselor in possession of the maximum amount of information as quickly as possible. One way that has been found helpful is to go prepared to answer the three following questions:

1) *What is my problem?* As clearly as you are able to do so, be ready to set forth the exact nature of the difficulty that led you to seek an appointment. You may find it helpful to distinguish between long-standing underlying factors and the immediate occasion which prompted the interview. Consistently Jesus went behind the immediate or "presentation" problem to a deeper one. You have only to read the Gospel of John again in this light to see how this was his constant practice. The woman at the well is an instance, Nicodemus a second, and the man born blind a third. Yet he never ignored the presentation problem.

2) *What have I done about it?* As crisply as possible prepare to relate in chronological order the steps you have already taken in an attempt to solve the problem (with any consequent results, either good or bad).

3) *What do I expect the counselor to do?* Do you want advice, support, information? Say so, explicitly. This may seem unnecessary, but note Jesus' question in Luke 18:41, "What do you want me to do for you?" Of course Christ was not merely seeking information. His questions were calculated to help others understand the situation more precisely. This too is an important reason for carefully formulating your ideas at the outset.

If a counselee is not prepared to offer such helpful information, the wise counselor may ask these or similar questions. Christ elicited valuable information by the use of just such queries: Mark 9:14-29 (esp. vv. 16-18 and 21-22). Data derived from the answer to question two (What have I done about it?) often provides essential insights into faulty courses of ac-

tion which, by becoming new elements of it, have enlarged and complicated the original problem. Such unscriptural responses to stress often indicate more deeply ingrained habitual response patterns which characterize a basic personality "set" of the counselee as he comes for help.² It is important to try to discover these patterns at the outset, for they will have to be analyzed and corrected according to scriptural standards before counseling may be terminated successfully.

Response Patterns

If the counselor's intervention is aimed at meeting the immediate crisis alone, he may help the counselee substantially, but when the next crisis arises the counselee is likely to find himself as helpless as before. The more fundamental problem of how to respond to trouble scripturally must also be learned. The counselor's objective will be not merely to patch up a bad situation, but to help the counselee learn how to "put off" the old man and "put on" the new man, to God's glory.

Moreover, as counseling continues it will become evident that sinful responses to trouble (patterns of self-centeredness, resentment, self-pity, worry, greed, laziness, blame-shifting, cowardice, envy — to name a few) not only complicate problems, but in many instances are themselves problems beneath the problems.

The action is cyclical: bad response patterns develop; these patterns themselves cause new problems to arise; the new problems are then responded to unscripturally; *ad infinitum*. It is important then for the counselee to spell out his answer to question two in some detail, whenever possible citing specific instances.

From the very beginning the focus of counseling should fall on the whole person, and not merely on the presentation problem. From the outset all counseling should aim at the growth of the believer in every dimension of his life. Problems must be handled specifically, concretely and in detail—but must themselves become illustrations of and stepping stones to the deeper patterns which need to be replaced with biblical ones.

* * *

Note 1: Much modern counseling theory teaches otherwise. One professor taught us in a graduate course on

psychology: "Never give advice. Never use your authority as a minister. Always ignore direct appeals for guidance. Your only job is to help the counselee help himself."

Note 2: Scripture consistently notes the importance of habit patterns, developed over long years of "training" (usually unconscious): Cf. "a heart trained in greed" (II Peter 3:15) and "as is the habit of some" (Heb. 10:25). Note also Heb. 5:13, 14; 12:11 for comments on the positive patterns which develop as a part of the process of sanctification. Old life patterns constitute one's "former manner of life" (Eph. 4:32) and must be replaced by new ones. The old man (old habit patterns) must be put off and the new man (new patterns) must be put on.

Paul suggests in Eph. 4:22-32 that this relates to the whole man and as examples mentions speech habits, attitudes, interpersonal relations, work, and other things of the same nature. In the chapters to follow he extends this sort of change to the crucial problems involved in several facets of life. Eph. 4:28 speaks of this contemplated change in terms of the specific case of a thief who not only must give up the practice of stealing but who also must develop new patterns of hard work.

Assembly Report (continued)

church Relations." Deleted were references to joint youth activities, joint church extension, and holding common conferences between the OPC and the RPC/ES.

RPC/ES Proposal

At this point Mr. Clowney moved that the Committee on Ecumenicity be instructed to seek to consider with the appropriate committee of the RPC/ES a proposed plan of union between the OPC and the RPC/ES. "I feel that in principle our approach ought to be biblical-theological rather than pragmatic," he said. "Is this church seeking to uphold its profession, to exercise discipline, to hold to the inerrant Scriptures? Together we profess the Westminster Confession position on unity and the communion of the saints. The church is not a human organization but the kingdom of our Lord and Savior. The Bible, I believe,

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requires the sharing of his gifts and graces. We have a confessional obligation to do what this motion asks."

"Let it be admitted that there is theological weakness in the RPC and also among us," he continued. "Are we willing to minister the gifts God has given us to aid in bringing about less confusion? Union to be sure would bring an agonizing process of dissension, discussion, heart-searching, and conflict, but this motion invites us to get back to such agony for the sake of the honor of Christ," concluded Mr. Clowney.

Several questions were raised by other speakers, some wondering if in the light of the pre-Assembly conference we should not first seek to achieve "a greater unity of faith." Mr. Georgian expressed the view that not everyone agrees that chapter 26 of the Confession applies to this procedure of church union. A motion such as the one proposed is "slanting the OPC to a certain extent in favor of church union," he insisted, as did Mr. Ahlfeldt, who felt that after the recent conference the two churches were "further apart than ever."

Mr. Hunt was not sure the biblical imperative for union is quite so strong as some believe. "Any approach is a method of finding out the practical issues that trouble us," he said. "One way of getting together is the conference way; another is the 'plan of union' way; but the former seems to me more sincere."

Clowney's Position

Mr. Clowney, however, replied to Mr. Solis and others who desired further conferences in order to discover real 'attitudes'. "Such a conference as that just held in Willow Grove is not following the New Testament order of procedure," he maintained. "The Bible requires all men to be in submission to Scripture. All sorts of evils can arise if men are together without the bonds of scriptural discipline. The practical way to deal with problems among brethren is within the church. If we are one in Christ, in our doctrinal allegiance to the Bible, and in New Testament discipline, then we ought to be together to face the issues."

Mr. Knudsen doubted that the reasons presented demand that we go ahead "just at this time. I should like to see us try to reach out toward the RPC/ES and we do have a committee to maintain lines of communication,

but haste now might do the eventual cause much harm."

"It's a matter of perspective," said Mr. Dortzbach. "We're talking about marriage, but we're still courting and may not be ready for a wedding yet!"

Mr. Marston moved to amend by adding to Mr. Clowney's motion: "which will require defining and dealing with the theological and administrative problems involved." It was then moved that further discussion be postponed until after the address by the fraternal delegate, Mr. Horner, following lunch.

The Assembly authorized the Committee on Interchurch Relations to send an observer to the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Orangeville, Ontario in November.

Elected to the Committee on Ecumenicity were Mr. Adams (first ballot) and Mr. Clowney (third ballot).

Greetings from Horner

The Rev. Kenneth Horner, in bringing fraternal greetings, informed the Assembly that on the previous evening the RP Synod had gone on record as favoring another joint conference and had invited the OPC to hold its next Assembly at Covenant College with such a possibility in mind. Speaking personally, Mr. Horner said he was "not a speedy mergerer. I don't feel a biblical imperative for organizational union as Mr. Clowney does, although some day we may be one."

Stating his belief that our differences are "all within the framework of Scripture and our standards," Mr. Horner stressed as most important "the matter of humility. We need to be childlike, teachable, willing to listen to one another and to admit when we are wrong, being patient as we work and wait."

After Mr. Clowney responded for the Assembly, Mr. Urban observed that the doctrine of the visible church is related to the truth, and that we must be sure that differences are being resolved.

Substitute Offered, Defeated

Mr. Kellogg offered a substitute for Mr. Clowney's motion: "that the Committee on Ecumenicity be instructed to study ways and means of furthering unity of the faith between the RP and OP churches, and that it seek through proper means to further this unity." He quoted Martyn Lloyd-Jones as saying that unity must never

be isolated, for fellowship follows doctrine.

Mr. Clowney thought it a good motion, but not as a substitute, insisting that the original motion did not ignore the truth, and pleading strongly—not for marriage, which is optional—but for a recognition that we are one in confession and in Christ and are therefore responsible to exercise mutual loving care under the scepter of Christ. Mr. Kellogg, however, felt that just because the two statements of faith are so very similar, "we want to be sure that we really say and mean the same thing."

Mr. Galbraith, favoring the substitute although unhappy with the context in which it came, noted that there are those in other communions very close to us who might not want to think of a "plan" already in the works. When it is alleged that "differences" shouldn't keep us apart, it "sounds like the argument of the ecumenists," he said, and may give the impression that differences need not be resolved. He thought the discussions of the previous week had been helpful to all in getting at what the Word of God teaches, and that the RP brethren "should be concerned for our errors and weaknesses too. We must seek unity in the truth."

When the vote on the substitute was taken it was defeated by a count of 56 to 63, and the original motion, with amendments in wording, was adopted with but few dissenting voices in the following form: "that the Committee on Interchurch Relations of the OPC be instructed to seek to develop with the appropriate committee of the RPC/ES a basis of union between the OPC and the RPC/ES which will require defining and dealing with the theological problems involved."

Other Committees

A number of recommendations of the Committee on Ministerial Training were adopted in amended form, stressing the responsibility of presbyteries toward men under their care. Earlier in the Assembly a proposal to make this committee a standing committee had been defeated; it was now determined to continue the committee and to elect two members to the class of 1971. On a second ballot Mr. Mitchell and elder DeMoss were named. Other members are Messrs. Adams, Coray, Whitlock, and elder Meeker.

The Committee on Radio and Television reported that it has selected "the format of a pastor dealing with individuals in their questions and personal problems" and aimed primarily at non-Christians under the title "The Problem Is." It is estimated that a full year's supply of weekly 15-minute programs and a similar supply of a 3½-minute version, along with a full-time radio pastor, would come to about \$30,000. It was decided not to make this committee a standing committee, as it had recommended, but to continue it and approve a budget of \$1,575 for production of sample tapes and other expenses. Mr. Ellis was elected to the committee, whose other members are Messrs. Busch, Georgian, Sibley, and elder Penn.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

At one point Mr. Hills arose but sat down unrecognized. Noticed then by the moderator, he said, "It's really not very important." To which Mr. Marston replied, "It would be a pleasure to hear something that's not very important!" Corayism: "I'm as frustrated as a woodpecker in a petrified forest!"

The report of the Stewardship Committee, begun shortly before the supper recess, was continued. The Assembly adopted its first recommendation, approving a total budget for the three main committees for the year 1969 of \$425,000 in contributions and recommending that our churches provide a minimum of \$366,000 toward it. The Assembly also acted to inform the sessions that the Stewardship Committee needs information concerning the local churches' plans for contributing during 1969 and requests the churches to send such information by November 15. The committee was continued and elder Barker reelected to serve with elders Keenan and Metzger, along with the representatives of the three committees.

On motion the committee was urged to pay special attention to its responsibility for "the encouragement of the practice of the biblical principles of financial stewardship in the church," developing and utilizing more effective ways of fulfilling this responsibility. Motions calling for the committee to draw up plans for the

gradual reduction of dependence on the Thank Offering for normal operating expenses did not prevail. There was some further discussion of stewardship and tithing and the key place of the pastor before the matter was concluded (and we plan to devote some space to this important question in future issues of this periodical).

Silver Spring Next Year

With invitations to meet at Covenant College, Oostburg, or Silver Spring, the Assembly decided to accept the invitation of Knox Church and the 36th General Assembly is to convene at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 20, 1969. A committee was appointed to draw up a reply to the most gracious invitation from the RPC/ES and Covenant College, but pointing out that prior plans for an extended meeting in 1969 in order to deal with the revision to the Form of Government made an assembly with an added conference infeasible.

FRIDAY, MAY 17

The Assembly moved into high gear and dispatched the business of the final fifteen items on its docket with a minimum of debate on this last day. The Committee to study the Doctrine of Guidance submitted a revised paper on "Communion of the Spirit" and was continued with its two remaining members, Messrs. Knudsen and Sibley.

Mr. Galbraith reported for the Committee on Revisions to the Form of Government. The provision for two additional days as the final order of business for the 36th Assembly has already been mentioned. Mr. Elliott reported for the Committee on Revisions to the Book of Discipline and the Directory for Worship, and the committee was continued.

Overtures

Mr. Ellis reported for the Committee on Overtures in response to a request from the Presbytery of Wisconsin that the Assembly "take steps to evaluate the teachings of the Westminster Standards concerning the Sabbath with the purpose of defining the nature of subscription to the Standards on this matter." Instead of giving brief advice as recommended by the report, the commissioners gave heed to the warning of several men against prejudging what may become a judicial case by offering advice in

the abstract. It was determined to inform the Presbytery "that the Assembly does not deem it advisable, apart from appeal from a decision by the Presbytery, to render a decision such as has been requested."

The Assembly also instructed its clerk to thank the Reformed Churches of New Zealand for informing us of their current study of the question as to what extent the churches ought to be bound by the Westminster Confession, Ch. 21:7-8 (on the Sabbath) and ask them the favor of sharing with us the results of their study.

With reference to an overture from Philadelphia asking that the offer of the Knollwood property be respectfully declined, the Assembly concurred with the recommendation to reject the overture and proceeded to elect three ministers and three ruling elders to the Board of Directors of Knollwood Presbyterian Lodge, Inc. as recommended in a supplementary report of the Committee on Home Missions. (Six other directors are to be named by the RPC/ES.) Chosen on the first ballot (102 voting at this point) were: Messrs. Oliver, D. Stanton, and Knight; elders Veldhorst, C. Roskamp, and V. Voskuil.

The Committee on Proof Texts for the Larger and Shorter Catechisms was continued, with two additional members (one replacing the late Dr. Young) besides Messrs. Skilton and Marston. Elected were Messrs. Murray and Shepherd.

Presbytery Divided

Mr. Vining reported favorably for the Committee on Administrative Matters on the request of the West Coast Presbytery to be divided. The Assembly concurred after brief questioning, and directed that the division become effective as of June 1 along the California-Oregon border: the southern section to be known as the Presbytery of Northern California and the other, as the Presbytery of the Northwest. There are now ten presbyteries in the denomination.

The Assembly determined to set up a corporation to act in matters of money and other assets received for the benefit of the whole church, etc. The required resolutions were adopted and the following six trustees of the General Assembly of the OPC were elected: Messrs. Oliver, Eckardt, Coray; elders Zebly, Roeber, Metzger.

Return Requested

On motion it was decided that the two Sunday school reports read earlier in the Assembly should be circulated among the churches.

Mr. D. Parker was reelected liaison representative of the World Home Bible League. A memorial tribute to Dr. Edward J. Young was adopted and the Assembly led in prayer by Mr. DeVelde. Mr. Kellogg was reelected to the combined Committee on Date, Place, and Travel Fund.

Mr. Galbraith reported as missions correspondent for the RES as to the Baarns Missions Conference in August 1968. Mr. Herbert Bird will take the place of Mr. Murray, who is unable to attend.

Assembly Budget

A total budget of \$11,385 for Assembly expenses, including its committees and RES travel and annual assessment, was approved. A contribution of \$1.30 per communicant for the Assembly fund, and of \$1.25 per member for the Travel fund, was set.

Elected to a Committee to Study the Management Needs of the three major committees and the Stewardship Committee were Messrs. Shepherd, Vail, Olson; elders Cox, Zebly, R. Smith. Appointed to a Committee on Guidelines for Denomination-wide Salaries were Mr. Clough and elders Polley and W. Olson. The Session of Knox Church, Silver Spring, was appointed a Committee on Arrangements for the 36th Assembly. On motion the Stewardship Committee was charged with reviewing the remuneration of officers of the General Assembly.

On motion a committee of five was elected to study ways in which the size of Assemblies may be limited, and report to the next Assembly. Chosen were Messrs. Woolley, Eckardt, Mitchell, and Davis; and elder Barker. This concluded the miscellaneous business, and after a short recess during which the clerks prepared the late afternoon minutes for final approval, the 35th General Assembly adjourned at 6:45 p.m. Friday with the benediction by Moderator Olson.

We Moved Away!

George E. Haney

It was another cold day in a long series of them. The searching for packing boxes (with lids not cut off!) became a real chore in below zero weather. But after a one-and-a-half day delay the ordeal of packing and saying "Good-by" was over and we were off. All four children were snuggled up in our loaded car. We took a few of the favorite toys with us — a tractor, a truck, a doll — but the rest of our earthly possessions would now be hidden from our sight for three weeks, packed precisely (we hoped!) in that large van.

But more importantly we were leaving behind people — people whom we had come to know and love over the course of six years. In a way many of our lives had been forged together as one big family. We had prayed together, we had worshipped together, we had studied together, we had played together, we had laughed together, and yes, we had cried together. We also misunderstood one another at times. We said things we really didn't mean — things that hurt. We left many things unsaid that we wished we had spoken. But somehow these things were now in the background.

Immediately we put on a facade — for the sake of the children, we thought! We talked about the house, yet unseen, to which we were moving. Just how much can you say about that? We talked about the new friends we would soon make. But beneath it all, we felt a hollowness within — a sick sensation. Even the children couldn't escape it.

Then as the days and weeks and months passed by the conversation on the day of parting did become reality. The house to which we moved is now familiar with the worn furniture looking the same as before (perhaps a trifle worse). New friends have been made. Suddenly it seems as though some of them we have known for a long, long time. The oldest of the four has found school to be enjoyable once again. We are busy in our work; the days are full, and at times we are weary.

The house from which we moved is again occupied. That flock is no longer without an undershepherd. The sheep are being fed and the search goes on for the lost sheep that must be brought into the fold. In all this we rejoice.

But our rejoicing goes beyond that! For we rejoice in the knowledge that the bond which unites us together in Christ Jesus is an eternal bond, never to be really broken. As John put it so well, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Well might we sing:

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in
heart,
And hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way,
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil and pain,
And sin, we shall be free;
And perfect love and friendship
reign
Through all eternity.

—John Fawcett

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Orthodox Presbyterian pastor in Menomonee Falls, Wis.*