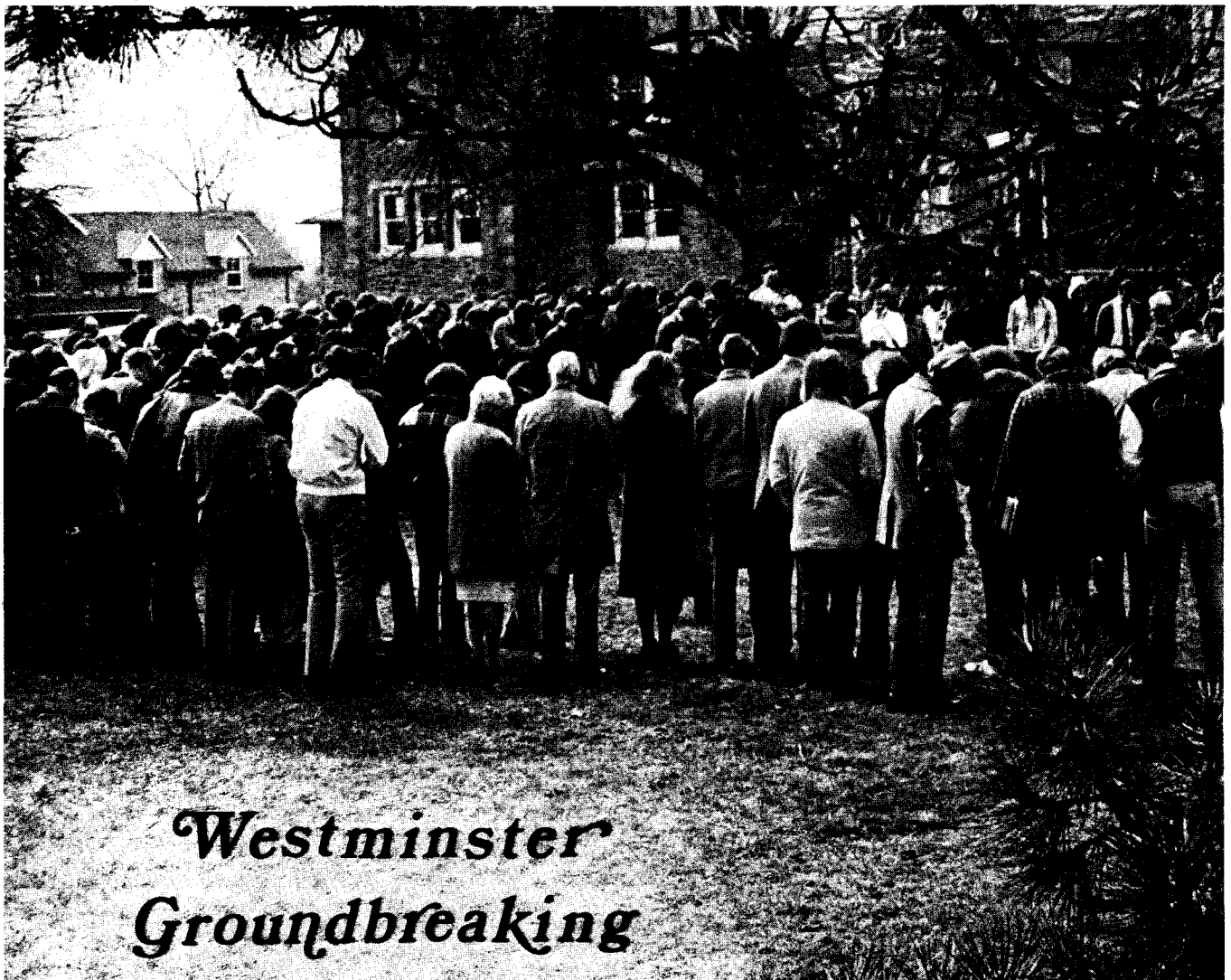
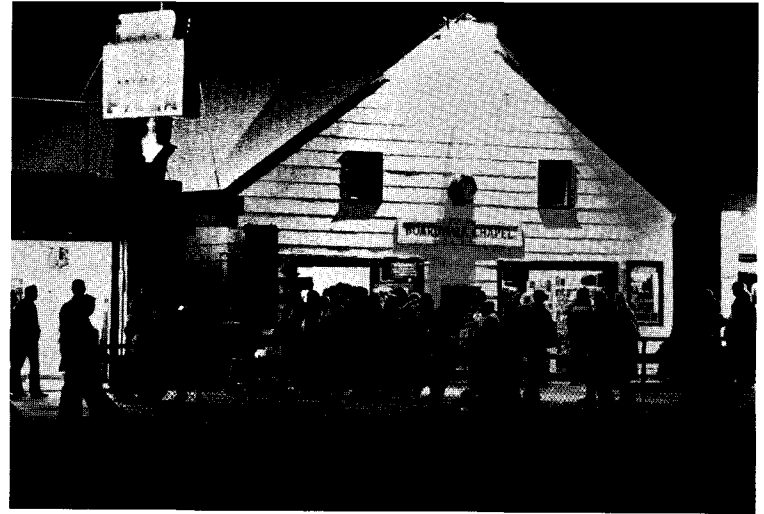
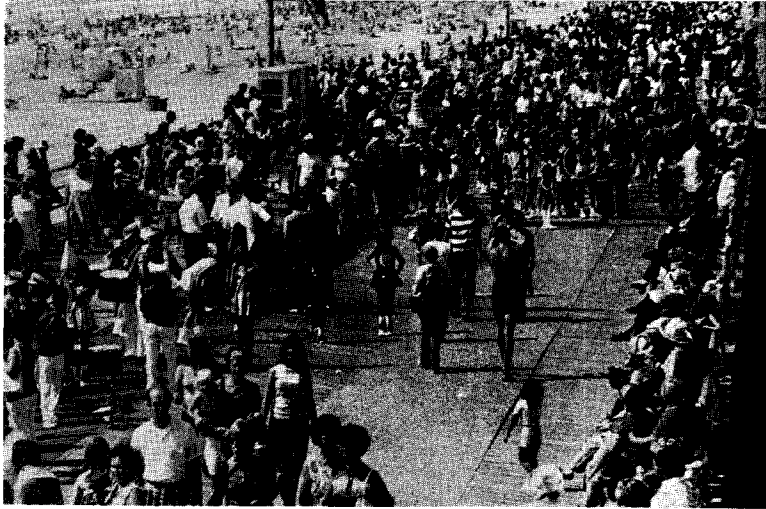


The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 43, NO. 4 - APRIL, 1974



*Westminster
Groundbreaking*



evangelism on the boardwalk

About sixty persons made definite professions of faith in Christ as personal Savior. These were not people from our churches who had already been exposed to the gospel, but "outsiders" who came or were brought in by friends to hear the Word of God. It happened during last summer on the Boardwalk in Wildwood, New Jersey.

The challenge of the beach

Ministering the gospel in Wildwood is filled with rewards and setbacks, all magnified by the high-paced existence in this resort setting. The atmosphere is thoroughly transient and hedonistic. You face the challenges of lust for money, lust for sex, lust for alcohol, lust for drugs. Hostility to the gospel may be overtly manifested by laughing and jeering.

Even so, the grace of God presses forward with irresistible power. The sixty professions of faith last summer compare with about forty-five the year before. And these people come from all walks of life.

This is even more significant in light of the changed religious climate in the country. The change was quite apparent between Summer 1972 and 1973. The spirit of "idealism" had still been there in 1972, but had died completely by last summer. People were not looking for "causes" any longer. Basically, they were only looking for satisfaction of their sensual desires.

In the face of these challenges, we were gratified to see God's Spirit still mightily at work. One girl who had made a profession of faith the previous summer returned to be an active participant in the program. As a result, her sister came to know the Savior, and through the sister another girl and her boyfriend also came to make professions of faith. The chain may continue to grow as Pattie's family, of Roman Catholic background, is showing marked interest in the gospel.

Such occasions for joy and thanksgiving were very important to us all as we faced so many trials and setbacks at the hand of Satan. We have seen people make professions of faith who then got mixed up with the drug traffic. We have seen one volunteer's ten-speed bike stolen from inside the house where we lived. We have seen the police too impotent to book the thief even after we caught him in the house a night later trying to steal a second bike.

But we also saw our college student helpers take up a collection among themselves and raise \$60 to replace the stolen bike. We saw college students who had done little or no witnessing for Christ return from Wildwood to their campuses with a desire to make Christ known. And we saw many people in the program grow in their personal relationship and understanding of God.

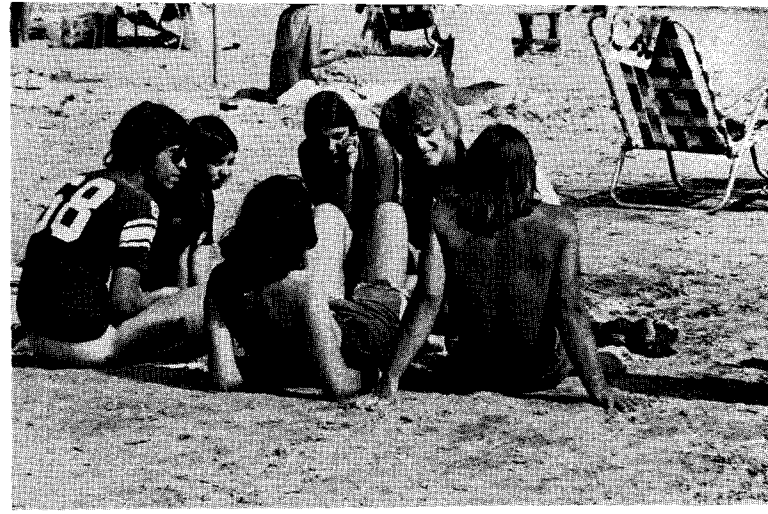
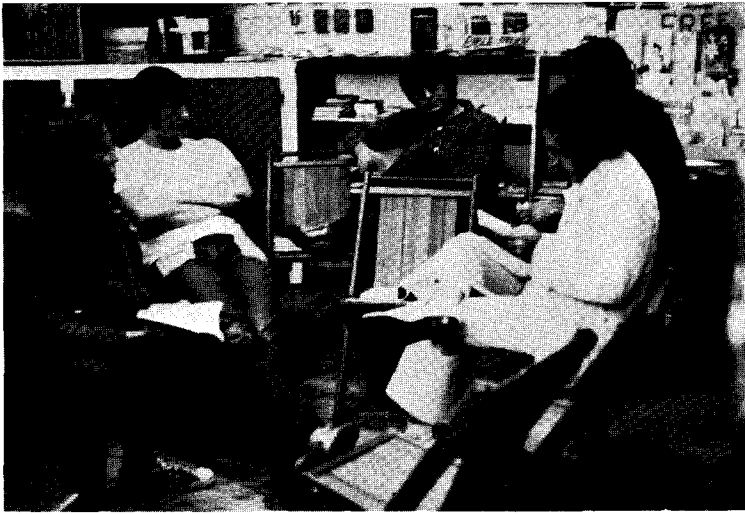
The Boardwalk Chapel program

It's not all that impressive, sitting there on the Boardwalk in Wildwood, New Jersey. A little frame building—but the gospel of God's grace in Christ is faithfully and energetically proclaimed within its walls and out onto the beach. The Chapel is a mission work of the Presbytery of New Jersey of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. It was begun over twenty-five years ago.

The program at the Chapel saw a new first last summer. The mission was expanded to include specially selected college students in a program of training and practical experience in witnessing. Through God's grace we were able to acquire a fine rooming house where twenty-five college students, seven seminarians, and two wives lived during the summer. Ron Lutz and Jim Peterson had the dubious privilege of bringing their brides right from the honeymoon into this crowded domicile!

The regular staff of the Chapel was also enlarged

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this past summer with seven paid staffers. This added manpower enabled us to concentrate more on the various aspects of the Chapel ministry and do a better job. The college student training required the additional staff.

Looking to Summer 1974

We are hopeful and expectant that God will do still more great work in Wildwood. There is much that needs to be done. Many of the seminarians on the staff will be involved in other summer ministries and there will have to be replacements.

The program of the Chapel needs alteration and efforts are being made to use up-to-date modes of communication in presenting the gospel. We feel that to communicate to this sadly confused and guilt-ridden generation requires nothing less than total effectiveness in gospel communication. Sometimes the church has ignored or suppressed the creativity of God's people for the sake of

more traditional modes of communication. We are gratified by recent decisions of the Chapel committee to make the program more relevant to a generation that is in rebellion against the traditionalism of the church.

We would like to express our thanks to Len Chanoux and Thomas Mullen who have shown such a great interest in the Chapel over the years and kept the work going long before seminarians were ever invited to participate. This ministry has meant a great deal to all of us who were privileged to work in it and profit from the experience. We also thank the men who came to give lectures for the college trainees and who spoke nightly at the Chapel.

Boardwalk Chapel Seminarian Staff

Stan Elgersma	Ron Lutz
David George	Jim Peterson
Stuart Jones	Richard Ramsey
Ray Watrous	

are you interested in investing your summer in

discipleship training in evangelism?

This opportunity could be yours on the beaches and boardwalk at Wildwood, New Jersey, through the **college student program** of the Boardwalk Chapel.

The Boardwalk Chapel is a beach evangelism project of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, operating in Wildwood for over twenty-five years.

The Boardwalk Chapel is staffed by seminary students and an ordained pastor who conduct a discipleship training program in evangelism for college students.

The Boardwalk Chapel's purpose is to spread the Good News that men can receive forgiveness of sins and new lives through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Boardwalk Chapel, its staff, college students, and many other Christians work together to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission through a program of rap sessions, tract distribution, music, counselling, and personal witnessing.

God may lead you to participate in this ten-week program of training through Bible study, biblical seminars, and actual evangelism right where the people are.

You would live with twenty-five other college students in a house provided by the Chapel only four blocks from the ocean. Some of your greatest Christian growth during the summer would result from meeting and living with believers dedicated to the task of doing God's work in Wildwood.

Pray and consider this opportunity!

For application and information, write:

The Boardwalk Chapel
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Essential information:

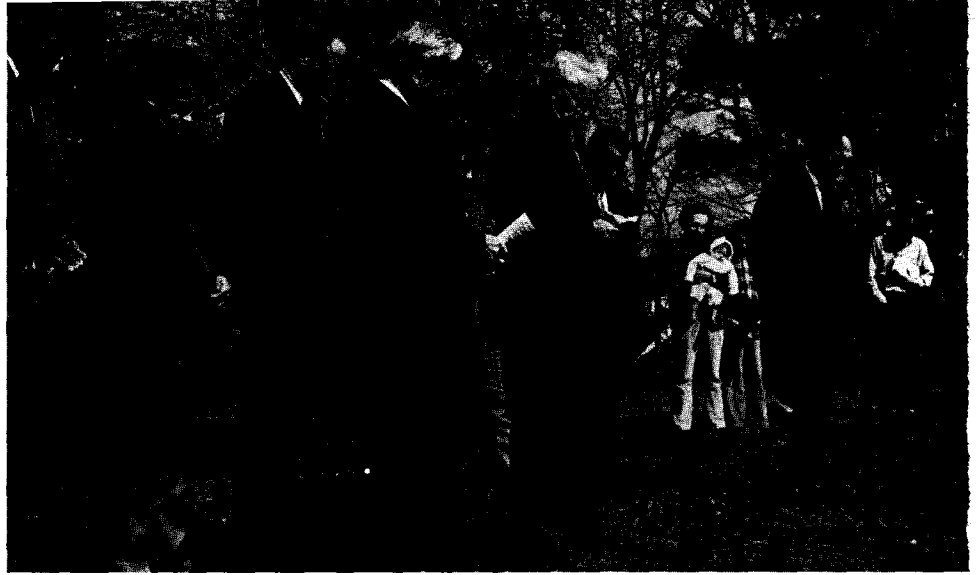
Dates: June 17 - August 25, 1974

Cost: \$200 (includes your room for ten weeks)

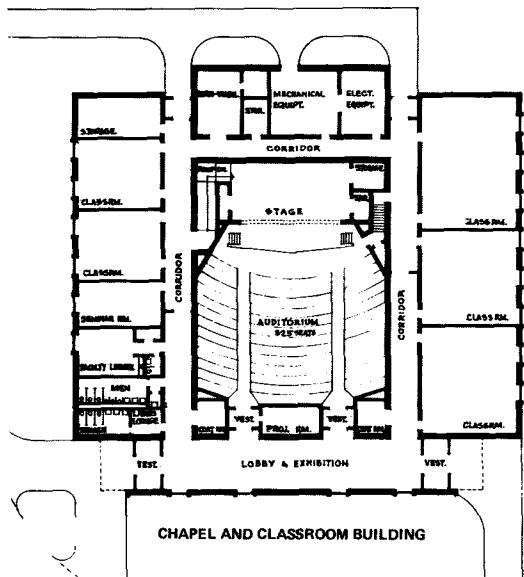
Students able to provide their own support so as to give their full time to the Chapel program will receive first consideration.

Applications are due in now; contact us as soon as possible!

Dr. Van Til leads in prayer.



Westminster



Philadelphia, Pa.—Westminster Theological Seminary broke ground on March 19 to inaugurate a major expansion of its facilities. Bright sunshine with a brisk still wintry breeze greeted the crowd of onlookers and spade-wielders who gathered for the event.

The ground was broken for the construction of a Chapel and Classroom building. It is located between Machen Hall and Church Road on the highest ground on campus. Actual construction began a week later.

Further building plans call for the construction of urgently needed dormitory facilities. State authorities have warned the Seminary that Machen Hall cannot continue to serve student housing needs. Renovation of Machen Hall itself is also planned.

Westminster moved to its present site in 1939 after ten years on Pine Street in downtown Philadelphia. Facilities include Machen Hall, a three-story stone mansion; a two-story former carriage house that is now serving as classroom and chapel building; two former gatehouses used for student housing. The Montgomery Library, the only new building on the campus so far, was dedicated in 1963.

Groundbreaking

Dr. Clowney eagerly digs in.



CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION

proclaiming April 30, 1974

A National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer

Whereas, it is the duty of nations, as well as men, to owe their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are blessed whose God is the Lord; and

Whereas, we know that we have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God; and

Whereas, we have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own; and

Whereas, intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us; and

Whereas, we have made such an idol out of our pursuit of "national security" that we have forgotten that only God can be the ultimate guardian of our true livelihood and safety; and

Whereas, we have failed to respond, personally and collectively, with sacrifice and uncompromised commitment to the unmet needs of our fellow man, both at home and abroad; as a people, we have become so absorbed with the selfish pursuits of pleasure and profit that we have blinded ourselves to God's standard of justice and righteousness for this society; and

Whereas, it therefore behooves us to humble ourselves before Almighty God, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness: Now, therefore be it

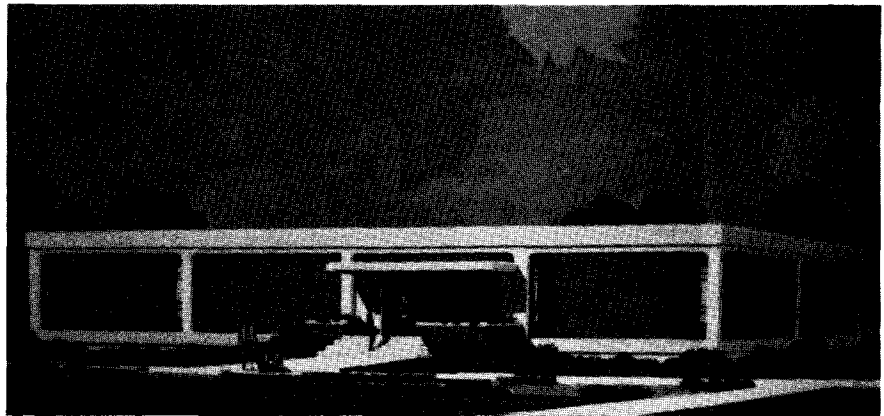
Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress Assembled, that the Congress hereby proclaims that April 30, 1974 be a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer; and calls upon the people of our nation to humble ourselves as we see fit, before our Creator to acknowledge our final dependence upon Him and to repent of our national sins.

Covenant Seminary receives challenge gift for new library

St. Louis, Mo. — At the mid-January meeting of the Board of Trustees, Covenant Seminary learned of a \$100,000 matching gift toward the construction of a new \$400,000 Library - Learning Center — with the stipulation that an additional \$100,000 be raised before the end of 1974. As of the middle of March, \$30,000 of the needed \$100,000 in matching funds had been received.

The new library building is to accommodate at least 100,000 volumes in addition to greatly improved study areas, a closed reserve section, seminar rooms, and an audio-visual room.

The Library-Learning Center is the first of several additions that are included in a master plan for the Seminary. The goal is to enlarge its offerings to provide an expanded program of theological



Artist's conception of architect's plan for new library - learning center

studies for a larger student body. Its present students tax the capacity of existing buildings, so that the trustees have faced the necessity of enlarging the facilities.

According to the new master plan, the next building after the library will be a new chapel. A new classroom and a new administration building will be added later.

Shall We Remarry?

2. The Problem of Independency

DAVID L. NEILANDS

In the first article of this series we pointed back to the division that occurred in the Presbyterian Church of America (now the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) in 1937. We likened this event to a divorce involving the Bride of Christ. The article dealt with the problems that arose in the Second General Assembly concerning eschatological liberty and the Westminster Standards. We then noted the direct connection between 1937 and today as seen in the proposed changes in the Larger Catechism included in the Plan of Union now being considered by the OPC and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

In this article we shall look at the second major issue that brought on the 1937 division.

Independency in foreign missions

This issue came to a focus within the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. In an effort to advance genuinely Presbyterian missions, Dr. J. Gresham Machen had been instrumental in setting up the Independent Board. He was its first president in 1933. The charter under which the Board operated required that its members subscribe to a belief in the "fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government."

In the June 26, 1973 issue of *The Presbyterian Guardian* (p. 86), Dr. Ned B. Stonehouse commented on this issue: On the day following the Second General Assembly [i.e., November 15, 1937] a coalition of the members of the Independent Board who had opposed Dr. Machen's stand in the church, and others who were sympathetic with their views, succeeded in ousting Dr. Machen from the presidency. The significance of this act is minimized, but that it represented a defeat for a consistently Presbyterian witness through the Independent Board Dr. Machen realized full well, and this became more and more apparent as time went on.

Following Dr. Machen's ouster the Board proceeded to elect a president and a vice-president who were independents, unaffiliated with any Presbyterian church body. By its constitution, the independent congregation served by the vice-president categorically forbade any denominational ties. By electing such men the members of the Board were declaring that they saw no inconsistency between Independency and Presbyterianism. The Board thereby departed from its original purpose which was to promote *Presbyterian* foreign missions.

In view of this move toward independency by members of the Board, the Third General Assembly established its own Committee on Foreign Missions to do what the Independent Board had been chartered to do. The Church formally severed its relationship to and support of the Independent Board. It should be carefully noted that the majority of those who vigorously protested this action of the Assembly were the same ministers and elders who, after the Assembly, withdrew to form the new Bible Presbyterian Synod. Some of these men, together with others who later joined them, continued to support the Independent Board and later on

became leaders in the RPC/ES.

Independency today

Independency still appears to have a strong influence in the RPC/ES. The historical ties with the old Bible Presbyterian Synod do not yet appear to have been completely shaken off. The tabulated schedule below graphically illustrates what we mean. The schedule compares, in both the OPC and RPC/ES, the approximate number of ministers not active in the ministry, and secondly, those active in works not related to the denomination.

	Total Ministers	Not Active	Serving Independently	Total No.	%
RPC/ES	344	43	35	78	22.
OPC	198	8	4	12	6.

The first column shows the total number of names listed in the RPC/ES Directory for 1973 (pp. 43, 44) and those listed in the OPC *Minutes* for the 39th General Assembly (pp. 203-206). The second column represents the number of men who are not active in the ministry; it does not include missionaries, chaplains, teachers, or those in church administrative posts, or the retired. The third figure represents those who are engaged in some form of ministry outside the bounds of the church. The total of these two categories represents 22% of the total of ministers in the RPC/ES but only 6% for the OPC.

The comparison of the column "Not Active"—43 to 8—is rather significant. Here is a sizable group of men who, for one reason or another, have separated themselves from the work of the Christian ministry in any recognized form. It appears that most are in some type of "secular" employment, while some may be rendering services as Christians through various benevolent employments. But the large number in this category gives some concern. It raises a serious question as to whether the presbyteries are examining men as to their call to the gospel ministry as well as to their qualifications for such service.

The comparison of the "Independent" figures—35 to 4—is even more significant. The 35 figure may be lower than it should be since only four persons living outside the United States have been included; others not clearly identifiable may really belong here. The Synod Directory shows about 143 churches in the RPC/ES. This means that 31 ministers are serving independent congregations and other causes unrelated to the RPC/ES.

It also appears significant that this situation is church-wide. Every presbytery has at least one in either of the two categories listed, with the Philadelphia Presbytery having the most with a combined total of 14.

Here we have the strange phenomenon of independency within the church. Because there are so many it cannot be looked upon as an accident. It would appear from these findings that there is a severe weakness in the realm of Presbyterian church polity within the RPC/ES.

For this group, it is a separation and an independency from what they once professed to be their sacred calling.

This has resulted in the dedication of their time and talents to secular pursuits rather than to the specific work of the church. For the other group, it is an independence from the supervision and control of the church which shows a lack of appreciation for and sense of responsibility to the church and its program. Their efforts are dedicated to the promotion of independent and unrelated projects while still maintaining ministerial membership in the denomination.

Foreign missions now

I believe that the RPC/ES has unwittingly promoted a spirit of independency in the church by some of its practices. Until very recently, before foreign missionaries were sent out by World Presbyterian Missions (the RPC/ES foreign missions board), they were obliged to raise their own support. This has been historically the method employed by the major independent "faith missions." Naturally, support is sought not only within the denomination but also from a variety of other churches and individuals. Certain benefits are derived from this system, but it also tends to foster a spirit of independency. It is only natural to think of one's responsibility to those providing the support, rather than to the church at large, and thus to think and act independently.

Recent changes have eliminated this requirement that each missionary raise his own support. However, it is evident from literature distributed by World Presbyterian Missions that even under the modified system separate support accounts are maintained for each missionary. Money designated for specific missionaries is applied to their account, whereas undesignated gifts are placed in the general fund for operating expenses.

Conclusion

Independency in any form is not Presbyterian or Reformed. We have shown that independency was a contributing factor in the original divorce of 1937. So, again, we have come full circle. What we rejected in 1937 we are being asked to accept now. The problem of independency that existed in 1937 is still there, even though it has taken on a different form.

This is the second in the series "Shall We Remarry?" by "Scotty" Neilands, ruling elder and former moderator of the OPC General Assembly. A third and concluding article is scheduled to appear next month.

Lessons from Paul on . . . schisms and party spirits

EDWARD L. KELLOGG

As we ponder the question of union between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, we might wish to find explicit instructions in the Bible as to when two denominations should unite and when they should remain separate.

But when the New Testament was written, there were not several or even a few different denominations. There was just one church of Jesus Christ. Our duty, then, is to study the instructions given that one church to see if some principles there will shed light on the question we face. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians should be helpful.

A church with gifts, sins and failures

Consider that church in Corinth. It was a church that, by God's grace, had received many wonderful gifts. There were members with excellent knowledge, others able to express themselves fluently—indeed the church in Corinth did not fall behind in any gift, as Paul recognizes (1 Corinthians 1:4-6).

But this church also had its sins and failures. The majority of converts were probably Greeks because Paul had turned from the synagogue there to preach to the Gentiles. The Greeks loved pleasure and their worldly background had been involved in its pursuits. Immorality was so rampant in this seaport that Corinth was known as the sin-city of the Mediterranean world. And churches located in such surroundings are very often affected by them.

So we see in the church at Corinth the sin of a divisive party spirit. Some professed loyalty to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Cephas, and others—disdaining the rest?—claimed to be of Christ. The Paul-party was likely made up of Gentile converts, and their tendency would be to press to ex-

trêmes the liberty in Christ. The Apollos-party probably delighted in oratory and rhetoric. The followers of Cephas, or Peter, very likely emphasized observance of the Jewish ordinances. Those who claimed to be of Christ exhibited spiritual pride, whatever their other reasons for such a claim.

Now it would seem that here was a condition that afforded good reason for establishing four different denominations, each ministering to its particular adherents. Paul might have counselled them to separate if only to avoid the contentions they had already experienced. But the apostle made no such recommendation.

No, Paul would have regarded such a solution as only deepening and making more serious the problem they faced. He did not want them to move apart, but to draw closer together. So he exhorts them: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1:10).

Many servants, differing gifts

Paul also showed that all these party figureheads were actually servants of the one Lord doing their different tasks. One was a planter of the seed, another watered it, but it was God himself who brought forth the harvest (3:1ff.). So often in denominations people given undue prominence to some human leader rather than to the Lord and Head of the church.

Such a divisive spirit is wrong, according to the apostle. We should by our unity manifest the truth that there is but one body, one Holy Spirit uniting us all with that one body, one true calling, one Lord of us all, one faith and one bap-

tism. The glorious truth is emphasized by Paul in Ephesians 4.

But there was also that problem of gross immorality in the church at Corinth; a man was living openly with his father's wife. Does Paul suggest that the other believers, those not involved in such a sin, should withdraw? Not at all; he tells them to exercise discipline and so remove the blemish from the church.

For a church member to remain in good standing while living in such sin is to corrupt the whole body. "Your glorying is not good," Paul says. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven . . ." (5:6, 7). So Paul spells it out: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (5:11).

Withdraw from apostasy, not problems

Paul is plainly teaching that withdrawing is not the answer. The church at Corinth did give serious consideration to Paul's exhortations, and they obeyed the instruction, putting away their divisions and disciplining their immoral member. Thus they edified and united the whole body.

But had they refused to obey Paul, they might have officially taken a stand favoring the inclusion of such a sinner and the continuing in their own divisiveness. Then they would have become officially apostate. And the exhortation of Paul to separate would have applied: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14ff.).

When sin in faith or life, either in our own or some other denomination, becomes apparent, the proper procedure is not withdrawal. It is instead the exercise of discipline or, for an offender in another judicatory, the humble but fervent petition that discipline be administered—for the honor of Christ, the purity of the church, and the reclaiming of the offender. If the offense is private, we have the Lord's instructions in Matthew 18. If it is public, we are obliged to urge the proper judicatory to correct the matter. By such means we seek the purity and peace of Christ's church in a biblical manner.

There were numerous other offenses in the Corinthian

church. There was the lack of consideration for the consciences of others when eating meat offered to idols. There was the irreverent manner of those who introduced confusion into the worship services. There were those who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. And there were others who cast aspersions on the ministry of the apostle himself, making false accusations against him.

When we see all these problems in that Corinthian church, perhaps the problems in our own churches seem rather small and insignificant. We may be thankful we don't face such a condition. In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Paul did not approve of dividing into separate denominations then, but urged that steps be taken to obtain oneness of mind and true Christian unity. If such conditions did not call for withdrawal then, they hardly call for it today.

The lesson is for today

Only a very few persons now in the Reformed Presbyterian Church took part in the initial break back in 1937. If causing the break then was schismatic, would not opposition to the healing of it today indicate a continuing schismatic attitude? That is, if the sin of schism was committed when the break was made in 1937, is it not schismatic to oppose its healing today?

Some might feel that only those who left the church at that time were guilty of schism. But this is a very shallow notion of the nature of sin and seems to ignore such teaching as that of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. Pride, malice, bitterness, a satisfaction in being rid of certain people, all such attitudes are serious sin and indeed schismatic in their nature.

As we consider the application of Paul's teaching in his letters to the Corinthians to our present situation, let us humble ourselves and ask how in our time the brethren, both Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterian, can heed the exhortation of the apostle:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Last month, the same author examined our Lord's prayer for his church as recorded in John 17. The Rev. Mr. Kellogg is pastor of the Point Loma Orthodox Presbyterian Church in San Diego, California.

New NPC presbytery organized

Glendale, Calif. — The West Coast Presbytery of the National Presbyterian Church was organized here on February 26 by a team from the South, including the Rev. Messrs. Cecil Williamson and Paul Settle.

The gathering was at the Bible Presbyterian Church (Indep.) of Glendale, which did not itself join the new presbytery, though its pastor, the Rev. Phillip Clark, did so.

Elected moderator was the Rev. Ralph Didier, pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, Anaheim; his church could not join because of

its women elders, inherited from its United Presbyterian background.

Of nine churches received, eight were Korean; fourteen of twenty-one ministers were Korean. Every speech had to be translated, and the English speakers tended to take the leadership roles.

The only Caucasian congregation to join was the Fountain Valley Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Stanley Allen pastor. (This group broke away from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church five years ago.)

No attempt was made to approach the OPC Presbytery of Southern California with any suggestions of

comity or explanation of why a new presbytery was needed in the area.

San Jose Christian Schools San Jose, California

needs:

Teacher, Kindergarten

Teacher, 4-5 grade combination

High School Teachers in
Math., German, Bible, Science,
and History

contact:

Donald G. Jamieson, Principal
2350 Leigh Avenue
San Jose, CA 95124

Letters to Missouri Synod Lutherans

The confrontation between "moderates" and "Conservatives" in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, has received national press coverage. After years of allowing "moderates" (read "liberals"?) to gain increasing influence within the Synod and its educational institutions, "conservatives" finally struck back. They elected Dr. J. A. O. Preus as president of Synod, and adopted resolutions calling for strict adherence to the Synod's traditional confessional position.

The basic area of confrontation has to do with the doctrine of Scripture, in

particular the interpretation of God's Word. "Moderates" press for a rather loose approach, allowing individuals to deny the historicity of Adam and Eve, Jonah's experience, certain miracles, and even questioning that Jesus is the sole name by which men may be saved. "Conservatives" are insisting that such teaching be barred from the Synod's institutions, particularly its world-famed Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

The dispute has reached the point that the Seminary president, Dr. John Tietjen, along with a large majority

of the faculty, has been dismissed by the Synod's officials. Tietjen and his sympathizers, both faculty and students, are attempting to set up a "Concordia in Exile," using the facilities of nearby non-Lutheran schools. Preus and conservative Synod officials are equally determined to maintain Concordia's program and have arranged for a continuing faculty to provide instruction.

The following letters are of interest as expressions of concern from those outside the LC/MS who have sympathy for the plight of confessional allegiance in these days of frequent neglect.

RESOLUTION BY THE STUDENT COUNCIL COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

We, the Student Council of Covenant Theological Seminary, while not having firsthand knowledge of all facts in the matter concerning the boycott of classes by students and faculty at Concordia Seminary, yet clear on some of the basic differences and issues at stake and pressed in our hearts over the apparent rending of the Body of Christ being publicized both in the local and national press, desire to set forth the following statements of belief and concern—both to our brothers in Christ in the student body at Concordia Seminary, and to the Church and world at large, that:

1. We hold that the Bible is the very Word of God, and in the autographs is free from any error, including matters of science, history and geography, and is the only infallible rule of faith and practice for man. The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself.

2. We believe that professors of Christian religion—whether they be Lutheran, or Reformed, or any other theological framework—who do not hold to this infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, do so fail to teach the full and complete truth of God's revelation to man.

3. We exhort the student body at Concordia Seminary, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the authority of the Word of God, to resolve this controversy through properly established ecclesiastical courts. We do not endorse or censure wholly the political activity of any one side in this controversy, but do exhort both to work through the legitimate ecclesiastical channels. We would exhort both parties to accomplish this procedure in the love and integrity which Christ commands us to manifest before a watching world.

Signed by: Fred McFarland, president; Gene Haas, vice-president; Robert Petterson, secretary; Ken Fuchs, treasurer; Don Clements, senior class representative; Steve Young, middler class representative; Durinda Alexander, graduate students representative.

This statement was adopted unanimously by the Covenant Seminary Student Council and has been distributed to all resident students at Concordia.

THE COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICITY AND INTERCHURCH RELATIONS THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

To: The Rev. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, President
The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod

Esteemed Brethren:

The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church takes this opportunity to express its deep appreciation for your labor in the service of Christ in the defense of fundamental truths of the Christian faith. We are grateful to God that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is resisting the drift into doctrinal decay and indifference, and we join our prayers with yours that your church and its schools may be used in the future as they have in the past to raise up generations of pastors who will be able to protect Christ's little ones and guide them in the only way that leads to everlasting life.

Dr. Preus's bold and courageous efforts remind us of the leadership of Dr. J. Gresham Machen that, in a previous generation, led to the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church when the denomination of which he was a part cast aside its doctrinal standards for something less than full-orbed Christianity. We pray that God will give Dr. Preus and his colleagues grace and strength to stand in this evil day.

Yours in the bonds of the göspel,
LeRoy B. Oliver, Chairman

Response from Dr. Preus:

Thank you so much for the kind letter of January 30 and the report on the action of your Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations.

I am most grateful for this expression of encouragement.

May the Lord continue to keep us faithful to His Word and a godly concern to that end.

Blessings and best wishes to you.

Sincerely,
J. A. O. Preus, President

The Christian and Guidance

God, the Christian's sovereign guide

The entire subject of personal guidance, of directions for one's life, of knowing God's will, is one that deeply concerns the serious-minded Christian today. Does God want me to be a minister or a lawyer? Does God want me to marry sooner or later—or perhaps not at all? Where should my children go to college? Should I buy a Ford or Chevrolet—or a Toyota or Datsun? How should I spend my leisure time?

Guidance is promised

The Bible assures us that God will guide his people. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8). The assurance that this promise will be kept is found in the nature of our sovereign, triune God. For our God has been pleased to reveal himself and his will and purposes to us.

The character of our great Lord is presented quite graphically in the Scriptures. Those who love the Reformed faith rightfully insist that God reveals himself to be the sovereign Creator and Provider of all things. The Bible presents God's works as the fulfilling of his purposes, all to the final end of bringing glory to himself. Our God is the infinite, eternal and unchangeable God of the Scriptures. It is such a God who gives the Christian confidence that he does not walk alone, but has a sure and faithful Shepherd all of the way.

Our guide is sovereign

To say that God is sovereign is to say that "the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deuteronomy 4:35). He alone is God. He alone is self-existent, dependent on nothing outside himself. God has no origin, no beginning. We do not fully understand this, but we humbly bow to the Scripture's teaching. To say God is sovereign is to say God *is* God.

To say that God is sovereign is to say that he is the Creator. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6). God is sovereign because he made all else that is.

God is also sovereign because he

WILLIAM H. BELL, JR.

continues to rule over all that he has made. The most high God rules over the kingdoms of men and gives them to whomsoever he wills (Daniel 4:17). He works out his eternal purposes, even through the sins committed by men (Genesis 50:20). For our God "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

Our God is sovereign because he is *our* God, the great Jehovah, the "I AM" who came down to lead his people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. He is sovereign in redeeming his people, having planned it from all eternity. So Peter says that Christ "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Not only did God sovereignly redeem his people in Christ, he also sovereignly called out individual sinners: "For whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29).

The sovereign God reveals himself

Since God is sovereign, he is able to communicate to us. By sovereign choice he made us in his own image, so that we are formed after a pattern of God's own character. God created us to have wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, not in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable way that he does, but nevertheless in a way that is parallel to God. By nature Adam was good, holy, and truthful, a fit subject for communion with God.

But Adam sinned, rejecting God's communication. His fall brought mankind into a state of wickedness. His original qualities were marred and polluted. Yet despite this fall into the deadness of sin, God sovereignly chose to draw out a people unto himself, to be his own possession, to enjoy fellowship with him.

It is of God's nature to reveal himself to those made in his image. In the created world itself God's power and Godhood are seen (Romans 1:20). But we can only know God so far as he makes himself known. Without verbal

revelation we should never have known God as our heavenly Father. But even with an objective revelation in human language, it is not our unaided reason that discovers God. God reveals himself to us by the eye of faith; through the Bible and working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we are enabled to grow in our knowledge of our sovereign Lord.

God's revelation of himself is given supremely in his Son, Christ Jesus. "He that hath seen me," Jesus said, "hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). God has revealed himself and his will in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of his Son. To know God, to learn God's will for my own life, I must strive continually to know the Savior himself.

Secret things, revealed things

Behind all the apparent chaos and instability of this world, our sovereign God has a certain plan, his sovereign will for all things. This will involves the calling out of a people to himself, the perfecting of these his saints, and the ordering of all events to their good and his glory. But when we speak of knowing God's will for our lives, we must be clear on what we mean by this.

God himself has said, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). God's total plan, his will of decree for whatsoever comes to pass, determines what God will actually do or permit. This is his will, and it remains secret with him. It is known to us only so far as God has chosen to reveal it to us, both by telling us what we are to do and by revealing to us what is yet to happen. We can also learn of God's secret will by looking back to see how it unfolded through God's providential ordering of all things. But it is never our concern to know the secret things of God *before* he chooses to reveal them to us.

What is our concern is to know God's revealed truth, his will of precept, as given to us in his Word. This is the standard of our responsibility. The reason why I should do this and not that is because God has said so. I

am to keep the Sabbath holy because God has revealed this truth of his will in Exodus 20:8. These precepts and commands are revealed to us, they are ours to do, and they are for our children after us.

Living in God's decree, by God's precept

What God commands by precept does not always seem to be the same as what he has ordained by decree. God forbids adultery and murder—his will of precept; yet God permitted David to fall into both sins—his will of decree. It is not that God is only pretending to want us to do good, even while he allows us to do evil. But rather, the evil that God permits is even then used to bring glory to God and to reinforce God's revealed commands. So the outcome of David's sin is one of the most glorious and comforting—and pointedly reminding—passages of Scripture, Psalm 51.

In other words, sin is anything contrary to God's will of precept and is always sin. But, when sin occurs it is not contrary to God's will of decree, to what he ordains to happen. Remember, God is sovereign over all. When we disobey God's Word, we do most certainly violate his preceptive will. Even so, God's secret will is never thwarted (Isaiah 46:10); it determines what will actually happen and it is always within God's sovereign purpose. God's secret will has to do with the *future*; his revealed will is our *present* duty and prescribes what we are to do to please him.

This distinction between God's secret will and his revealed will does not mean God has two different wills, one opposed to the other. It is something like the case of a parent who must discipline his erring child. The parent does not desire to punish the child, but he knows it is best for the child. And the child should see no inconsistency in what his parent says and actually does.

So it is with God. He may decree that which he actually hates. So God permitted Joseph's brothers to make him the victim of their sin and hatred. Yet Joseph was reconciled to them when he says, "As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

God's secret will may indeed permit very heinous sins to occur. Yet God

always has in view the ultimate goal—our good and his glory (Romans 11:36). We have nothing to do with his secret will; we are only concerned to obey his revealed will. We may indeed be greatly comforted in knowing that even the most horrible atrocities only occur within God's sovereign will and that even the most grotesque sin will bring glory to God. But while we wait to see how God's secret will accomplishes his ultimate goals, our concern now is to do God's will as it is revealed to us in Scripture.

Praying in God's will

So it is extremely important for us to understand just what we are to pray for. We are to pray that God's revealed will be done in our lives (Psalm 119:133). We are not to pray seeking to know God's secret will (Deuteronomy 29:29); this is not our concern. God does not hold us responsible for something we have not been told; we are not required to learn God's will of decree *in advance*.

After all, we are creatures, and God

The Rev. William H. Bell, Jr. is the pastor of the First (National) Presbyterian Church of Greenville, Alabama. We are pleased to be able to present this discussion of God's guidance for our lives in its introduction here and further application in later articles.

is the Creator. We get into trouble as Eve did when we desire to be like God, knowing what God has not revealed to us. We have no right to expect to comprehend the infinite wisdom of the Creator (Isaiah 55:8, 9). R. B. Kuiper warned about this: "It behooves us to remember that we are dealing with a profound mystery, that we are here on holy ground where angels fear to tread, that finite man cannot begin to comprehend the infinite God, and that therefore we must be sober, scrupulously avoiding human speculation and abiding strictly by the sure Word of God" (*God-Centered Evangelism*, p. 33). Scripture is the final, the only authoritative rule of faith and practice.

To put it simply, we are to pray that in all things we might be fully conformed to the will of God as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures.

God's revelation in Scripture

God has revealed himself in the Old Testament in many ways. Creation is revelational (Psalm 19:1). Providence, the unfolding of God's decrees by his

sovereign power, is also revelational (Psalm 19:2). Creation and providence give us a general revelation about God, available to all men and sufficient to leave all men without excuse for failing to glorify God (Romans 1:20).

But this general revelation is not enough to bring men to salvation. A special revelation is needed, and God has given it. Its design is to promote the personal relation, the covenant communion, between God and man. This special revelation has been given by God in many ways.

In theophany, God visibly showed himself and so revealed something of himself to men as he did to Moses in the burning bush. Visions and dreams have also been used by God to reveal more of himself and his will. Prophecy was revelational, giving men the express words of God. Even the symbolism of the tabernacle was a means of pointing to the reality of the gospel in Christ.

The revelation God gave in the Old Testament was incomplete; there was more to come. Jesus Christ personally fulfilled all the Old Testament revelation, completing and perfecting that which had pointed to him. He is the Prophet of whom Moses spoke, the personal God present with men. And his incarnation, atonement, resurrection and ascension are the final great revelation of God and his gracious purposes for men (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The apostles who follow complete and explain the revelation given in Christ; they are his authoritative witnesses and proclaimers of the gospel. Since all revelation is an organic unity, and all of it points to Christ as the center and completion of God's revelation of himself, we would expect that *all* special revelation would cease when the completed revelation of the Christ had been given. God has spoken, completely, through his Son and the apostles; God has given a final, finished revelation of himself. We have the Scriptures, and in them we have God's total will for our lives.

In summary, all of God's revelation finds its ultimate meaning and purpose in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of all that had pointed ahead to him, and all that follows is a consequence of his life and work. With that work of redemption accomplished, and the proclamation of it given by his apostles, special revelation is completed. We can expect no further special revelation until Christ returns.

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Letters

Thanks for "N. P. C. issue"

I have just read with great pleasure the special issue of the *Guardian* [January] devoted to the National Presbyterian Church. I want to thank you for your generosity in devoting an issue to us in this way, and I want particularly to commend you for your excellent article, "A Reborn Testimony in a Reborn Church." I feel you have done an excellent job in capturing and expressing the nature and the spirit of our movement. Your issue expresses the good relationships between our two denominations which we have now at our beginning, and which I trust will grow even closer and warmer as the years progress.

Donald A. Dunkerley, pastor
McIlwain Presby. Church
Pensacola, Florida

Ed. note: We appreciate these very gracious comments, and many others also that have been received concerning the *Guardian's* coverage of the beginnings of the National Presbyterian Church. But, what else could we do but rejoice at seeing others take a stand for the truth of God's Word today? May we indeed be a source of mutual encouragement and strength in the face of present-day unbelief.

No "ghosts" in merger

Let's make our proposed union of Orthodox and Reformed Presbyterians a happy one, unclouded by the agony of having to address such unexplored matters as the extent of Dispensational thought, or the extent of toleration of Masonic membership. The way to avoid the agony is to be assured that the Synod of the RPC/ES has faced the issues squarely prior to the union.

We should make no bones, and they should make no bones, about stating that "Pre-tribulation Rapture" is necessarily a form of Dispensationalism. If such issues remain glossed over, or committed to burial in a committee, the ghosts can rise to haunt us. I would dread the prospect of someday being outvoted on this issue!

Edwards E. Elliott, pastor
Orthodox Presby. Church
Garden Grove, Calif.

What will OPC do in giving in 1974?

Both Karl Dortzbach and Rollin Keller [in the January issue of the *Guardian*] rightly asserted our Christian responsibility to the whole man, body and soul. Also, their pleas for our whole-souled prayer and financial support are certainly in order. None of us would want to criticize what they have written.

I would, however, want to preclude any trace of the idea that Orthodox Presbyterians have not responded, generously and often sacrificially, to the needs of lost souls. In addition to the support of our local church ministries and our presbytery ministries, we gave generously. We gave \$25,000 for famine relief; but we gave \$30,000 for meeting the effects of dollar devaluation in foreign missions. We gave twenty times \$25,000 for foreign missions, home missions, and Christian education. Never before have Orthodox Presbyterians responded so fully to denomination-wide efforts to obey the Great Commission to disciple, baptize, and teach.

The question now is this: What, by God's gracious enabling, will we do in 1974? The job will be greater in 1974. The cost, personally and financially, will be greater in 1974. The opportunity, too, will be greater. But we will grow in sanctification in 1974. Personally, I am confident that we will respond in 1974 in a greater way than ever before.

James E. McFarland, pastor
Knox O. P. Church
Oklahoma City, Okla.

"Year of Antichrist"? Anno Domini!

The February *Guardian* certainly deserves commendation. The popular notion that Presbyterians are indifferent to (or intimidated by) eschatological issues has been further fractured by Reitsma and Miladin. Reitsma's exhortation to dedicated and diligent labor in the Lord's kingdom and Miladin's critique of premillennial hermeneutics were greatly appreciated.

It would not seem, though, that Reitsma really substantiates from Scripture "that we are approaching the most dangerous period in all human history . . . the time of Antichrist."

John's epistles are our only source of information about "antichrist," since

he alone uses the word. Speaking of the many heretical teachers who departed from the Christian assembly, John declares. "This is . . . the antichrist" (2 John 7). To those who heard the dire prediction "that antichrist is coming," John writes to correct their understanding: "He who denies the Father and the Son is the antichrist" (1 John 2:18a, 22). John sees the antichrist as a personification of heretical apostasy, *not* as one "final Antichrist [who] will be a definite person living in the end time." Instead, there are "many antichrists," from which we learn that John himself *already* lived in "the last hour" (1 John 2:18b).

So, perhaps it would have been better to speak of the "man of lawlessness" (since appeal is made to 2 Thessalonians 2) who would appear at the end of history. Yet that too would be unsatisfactory. That man's lawlessness was *already* operating in Paul's day (verse 7). The man of lawlessness would sit in the temple of God (verse 4), indicating that he was operative before the Temple's destruction in A.D. 70. (since the man of lawlessness sets himself against *anything* that is even *called* God—verse 4a—his sitting in the temple is not a metaphorical description of a "religious leader"). 2 Thessalonians 2 parallels Christ's discussion of the "abomination of desolation" in Matthew 24, which in turn is explained by the parallel passage in Luke as being the military overthrow of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20) by the Romans. Thus the "man of lawlessness" is a past historical figure, unveiled in order to bring God's historical judgment upon Israel's falling away (2 Thess. 2:3; cf. 1 Thess. 2:14-16).

Scripture wouldn't appear to teach us, then, that we are *approaching* the time of a final "Antichrist" or "man of lawlessness." And even if the Bible taught us to expect a future man of sin, do we really have warrant to see his appearance as impending? The path of church history is strewn with faulted predictions that Christians (in every age) were upon the threshold of the final apostasy, the last climactic reign of Satan's terror. Should we repeat this error as so many are prone to do today?

Let us rather, "with the optimistic notes of the New Covenant sounding triumphantly" (to use Miladin's phrase), have the God of peace bruise Satan under our feet shortly (Romans 6:20). After all, he has been bound by

Jesus Christ with a great chain so that the nations can be delivered from deception (Revelation 20:1-3) and disciplined for the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20).

All power and authority in heaven and earth is our resurrected Savior's, and he is *with us* until the end of the age. He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25), and so this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4). Let us, then, anticipate, pray, and work for the time (as Miladin says) "when the gospel will have achieved unprecedented success." For it verily is the *power* of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). Christ's kingdom, though it had a small beginning, shall grow extremely large (Matthew 13:31-32); indeed, it will crush all earthly empires and become a great mountain filling the earth (Daniel 2:35, 44), a mountain unto which all nations shall flow. (Isaiah 2:2-4).

"Is 1974 the year of Antichrist?" Not at all. 1974 is another "Anno Domini," "year of *our Lord*!" He only and always reigns.

Greg L. Bahnsen
Manhattan Beach, Calif.

"Year of Antichrist"? No!

With due respect to Carl Reitsma, it was a huge disappointment to read his "Is 1974 the Year of Antichrist?" [in the February issue of the *Guardian*].

Yes, we ought to be instructed on the wiles of the Devil and the spirit of Antichrist, and we must repent or perish! But the article as a whole is but another demonstration of the *colossal shift in perspective that has taken place in the Reformed churches in recent generations*.

What has happened to the Puritan, Presbyterian, Reformed confidence in the triumph of God's kingdom? Has it been thrown out as "Social Gospel"? Where is the conquering spirit of the Reformers? Where is the godly optimism of the Puritans—that "Puritan Hope"; that spirit in men like J. Cotton, C. Mather, J. Edwards, Witherspoon, Bellamy, Dwight and Hopkins, whose faith and biblical activism gave shape not only to theological development but to the social structure of our society—and eventually gave impetus to the War for Independence?

Where is the grand perspective of

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EDITOR
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history that drove the men of old Princeton Seminary to the ends of the earth? Apparently it also died with old Princeton—as have the growth and influence of the American Reformed churches. Very possibly it's because we've committed ourselves to a gospel which, after all, will be a failure in human history. Christ will be victor only negatively, destroying the Antichrist, who is really the dominant force at the climax of history? So, cheer up! Things are getting worse; and the worst will soon be here!

Have we sidelined the exegesis of the Puritans, the Hodges, Warfield, Kik, Murray, Rushdoony, and Hulse, in the interest of current events? Really now, are we exegeting the Bible or the *news-papers*? Not even Augustine was this pessimistic during the collapse of Rome!

Why not take all this one step further and shake hands with the popular dispensational preacher who summarizes the Christian's outlook on the world by saying, "You don't polish brass on a sinking ship"? Reitsma's position—given some academic distinctions (Scofield's time clock, the secret rapture, and that all-important piece of real estate in the Middle East)—is no different from Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth*: Let's prepare for the worst, because the earth is the *Devil's*, and the fullness thereof . . .

Isn't it just possible that what we're witnessing is certain judgment on the wicked and the nations that forget God—the *grave* (Psalm 9:17)? The question is, will Christians prepare to rebuild, in terms of 2 Corinthians 10:5? Jesus' parable said, "*Occupy* until I come," meaning not merely take up space waiting for the collapse of all things, but *get to work!*

Or, are we preparing instead for a millenium of darkness?

Paul A. Doepke, pastor
Munson Hills Presby.
Church
Falls Church, Virginia

The Elders of the Church . . . *between election and ordination*

LAWRENCE R. EYRES

In this third part of our discussion of the application of principles, we come to consider what can be done between the election and ordination of new elders. I have already tried to show how there is an interaction between potential elders and congregations seeking elders.

The man seeks the office out of holy motives; the congregation seeks the man whom God has prepared to teach and rule in the name, and by the authority of Christ. Thus both potential candidates and congregations are in position to be led by the Holy Spirit. And they can depend on him to do just that. In a word, we all need to become familiar with the workings of the sovereign Spirit, that we neither run ahead of nor lag behind him, but follow with him wherever he leads.

Let me repeat that in so doing a local congregation may see fit to hedge the power of members to nominate men of their choice. But it should not be made overly difficult for them to nominate those whom they believe are "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). It is in the congregation's interest to exercise a full and free choice since it is they who must yield submission to these same men in the Lord.

A training period

Once the choice is made, *is it just a matter of course to ordain and install?* This is an important question. I confess that we have no explicit commandment in Scripture on this; nevertheless there are strong biblical suggestions. Jesus chose twelve disciples to be with him (Mark 3:13, 14). These twelve continued with him for up to three years before they were commissioned as apostles (John 20:21-23). To be an apostle required one to have been present for quite some time with Jesus during his earthly ministry (Acts 1:21, 22).

Again, Saul of Tarsus, though he met the Lord himself on the road to Damascus, spent three years much of which was in solitary preparation for his later work. Even after his sojourn in Arabia, Saul did not immediately launch into his life's calling but was in Tarsus and Antioch for at least a year before the Holy Spirit sent him forth to the Lord's work (see Galatians 1:14-17; Acts 11:25, 26; 13:1-3).

Even in the case of these infallibly called men there was need for preparation and seasoning before they were put into full possession of their ministry. How much more when the choice of men rests upon fallible human judgment!

Now these cautions are seriously observed in the choosing and ordaining of those elders commonly known as ministers

of the gospel. These men are normally expected to earn a college degree and complete a three-year theological course before they are eligible to consider a call to the office of pastor, evangelist, or teacher. Whatever we may think of the need for this kind of preparation, there is at least a correlation between the training of ministers and that given to the original apostles.

But beyond this case the correlation between biblical model and contemporary practice ends. In some Reformed churches men are elected and almost immediately installed. The standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church do not require even so much as a formal examination of elders-elect before they are ordained. Nor is there any requirement that ruling elders be ordained by the laying on of hands, even though this is done in most congregations.

I cannot accept as biblical what many American Presbyterians hold—that the office of ruling elder is essentially different from that of the minister of the Word. This is not to say that *all* elders ought normally to be holders of college and seminary degrees. (In a later article I hope to show that, while the function of all elders is one of teaching *and* rule, there is a diversity of functions within the visible church.) For now, I would plead for more serious consideration of ways and means of giving adequate preparation and testing of elders-elect before they are ordained and installed.

Suggestions for training

I have been preplexed for many years over the wide divergence between the training and testing required of ministers and that of ruling elders. It seems we've come a long way from the simplicity of New Testament practice. This is not to call for any lowering of standards for candidates to the ministry. But I do plead for raising the standards of elder-competence to the point where we can at least view the various functions of the one office of elder within a single perspective. In other words, *we ought not so to concentrate on a trained and competent ministry that, by default, we are content to accept an ignorant and untried ruling eldership.*

But how are we to avoid the latter within the existing framework of today's Reformed and Presbyterian churches? Let me suggest the following as an acceptable program:

1. A return to the practice of encouraging and grooming young men for possible leadership, together with training of congregations in the technique of seeking and discerning who are Spirit-filled, Spirit-gifted men, will go a great distance toward readying God's men for service in the

church.

Paul instructed Timothy to commit the deposit of truth to faithful men who could teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). These faithful men would emerge in the manner suggested in the two previous articles. "Faithful men" are born, not made. That is, men may be born into the kingdom with potential gifts, but these need developing. It may be years before a quite gifted man has gained the maturity for ruling in the church.

It is also most important that churches recognize gifted men; at the same time, churches must know when a man is really ready to begin the exercise of his gifts in the highest official capacity. Both a discernment of gifts and a clear view of when they are ready for use is required, and an error in judgment may well be disastrous.

Testing the elder-elect

2. What is said above applied to the time *before* a man is elected to office. But even that is not enough in itself. No amount of formal training will make an elder out of an ungifted man; nevertheless, gifted men do need a certain amount of formal training.

As a minimum, elders need to know the doctrines of Scripture, Reformed doctrine, both systematically and exegetically. That is, they must have a grasp of the "theological catalog" of truth so that each vital doctrine is understood in its relation to the whole. This means an elder ought to be master of the Shorter Catechism and fully at home in the Larger Catechism and the Confession of Faith (or other similar Reformed standards).

But the elder must also know how the grand truths of our standards arise out of the Word of God. It is not sufficient that he merely agree with these secondary standards of the church; he also needs to see that the system of truths set forth in them is in fact a correct expression of what is taught in Scripture. This is high idealism! But who can honestly and solemnly take the ordination vows upon any lesser conviction?

Similarly, the elder should have a solid grasp and warm consent to the form of presbyterial government and discipline of the church which he is to serve as an ordained ruler.

3. A man needs some training in ministering the Word both to individual believers and to the unsaved upon whom he must lay the claims of Christ. I believe there is need for a manual specially designed for this purpose. If elders are co-shepherds with the principal minister of the Word, they ought to be taught some of the basic rules for shepherding Christ's sheep—before they learn bad ones in this crucial part of their service. We all know that bad habits are more easily not learned than unlearned!

It is also during this period between election and ordination that existing sessions should undertake the instruction of elders-elect in the formal knowledge suggested above. In cases where acting elders failed to receive such training themselves, special efforts are in order to remedy the deficiency. Then if, in the process of this training, some man should be honestly convinced that he has grave deficiencies in the gifts required or in competence and acceptance of the church's doctrines and government, he would not be acting sinfully if he were to relinquish the office. Especially is this so if the man is convinced that such skill and competence are beyond his reach.

Passing an examination

4. There is one more step to take before ordination, if only to be assured that the first three have been successfully surmounted. Elders-elect should be tested as to their knowledge of Scripture doctrine, the church's government, and of their ability to use the sword of the Spirit in the battles of the Lord.

It has long been my practice to require every newly elected elder to undergo trials before the session prior to ordination. It is no injustice to a man, if need be, to have him wait some months to complete his instruction and examination. These men should be given the privilege of sitting in on session meetings during this time of preparation, both as part of the training and a preview of what is to come.

But this matter of testing should be taken seriously and not treated as a mere token. Nor should it be viewed as either tragic or unjust if a man is honestly judged to be unqualified for office even after being elected by the congregation. Whom do we aim to please in all this, the man himself, the members of the congregation, or the King and Head of the church?

When one of God's choice men has been in training in the school of Christ from the hour of his spiritual birth; after he has lived an exemplary life for many years in one or more praying, discerning congregations; when he has completed a rigorous training in the use of God's Word in all sorts of life situations; and when he has successfully undergone thorough questioning of his knowledge of the doctrines and government of Christ's church—after all this, what a day of joy, for him and for the people, when he kneels before God in front of the congregation and is solemnly set apart for the holy office of undershepherd for Jesus Christ! That day might well be counted the greatest day since he had been born anew, a day for rejoicing by all good men and angels.

Questions for pondering:

1. Our Lord knew that Judas would never qualify as one of the apostles. Yet he chose him to be among the twelve. Why did the Lord do this? What does it suggest concerning the subjects discussed in this article?

2. What has happened in the last nineteen hundred years to put such a large difference between the training and qualifications required for ministers and those expected of ruling elders? Has this difference resulted in downgrading the ruling elder, upgrading the office of the minister?

3. Does the increase in the variety of versions and paraphrases of Scripture make it more important for elders to be clear discerners of the Word? Why?

4. Under what circumstances would an existing elder, though he continues to live a blameless life, be well advised to relinquish his office? In what circumstances might his experience as an elder serve to counteract any shortage of gifts such a man might have?

What is discussed and suggested above obviously means work for pastors, elders, and elders-elect. But throughout all the articles written by Mr. Eyres, he has constantly stressed the need for us all to take seriously this matter of governing Christ's church in Christ's way. The questions posed may indeed have hard answers; but the work given to us demands strenuous efforts.

Would You Have Written This Letter?



JIM PISKE

Last November, I began work as a substitute postal clerk in a small town near our new home city. The appointment was a temporary one (for ninety days), but with strong encouragement that it would later be made permanent. I was a veteran of more than twenty years in the U. S. Postal Service.

Early in December I was told that I *might* have to report for two or three hours work on the Sunday before Christmas. I protested, pointing out that I had voiced my opposition to Sunday work when interviewing for the job and that I had been assured they never worked on Sundays. I would not have accepted the position otherwise. The postmaster could only say he wasn't sure if I would be asked to work on Sunday.

On December 18, a new schedule of work hours was posted on the bulletin board. I was scheduled to work the following Sunday.

Prayer, and a letter

That evening I discussed the situation with my wife and prayed about it. The next morning I got up early and wrote the following letter to my supervisor and the postmaster.

Dear _____:

I feel compelled to let you know that I will not be available for work this coming Sunday, December 23rd. It is not that I plan to be sick or out of town. It is a matter of conscience — that I believe in obedience to God I should not work Sundays except for works of necessity or mercy. I believe this strongly enough that I am willing to bear the consequences, even of losing my job if necessary.

I do not wish to leave the Postal Service. Therefore, I am not resigning as I suggested [in an earlier conversation with the postmaster]. But if my employment is terminated as a result (or partial result) of this action, I will do my best to bear no grudge. How, I don't know; but I'm confident the Lord will provide.

I repeat my offer to come in early Monday or in any other way possible to show my cooperation. But I will not be there Sunday morning.

Sincerely,
Jim Piske

When I arrived for work, I immediately gave the letter to my supervisor. I explained briefly that it was for him and the postmaster, and that it had been written out in order to clearly state my position. He took it into the postmaster's office.

I received no direct reply, either verbal or written. Later that day, or perhaps it was the next day, I noticed that the Sunday work assignment had been crossed out. Still, nothing was said to me about it.

Sequel to the letter

Now some time has passed. My temporary appointment is over, and it wasn't made permanent. The postmaster says my not being willing to work that Sunday didn't influence his decision. I think I believe him, but am not entirely sure. Other factors were definitely involved.

God has given me peace in all of this. There is an assurance that I did the right thing. There is no feeling of resentment.

But I want to ask you: "Would you have written this letter?"

Mr. James W. Piske is a member of the Oak Hill Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Salem, Oregon. We appreciate being able to share his experience of obedience and testimony to his Lord, and pray that it will bring glory to the God who commands us, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

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