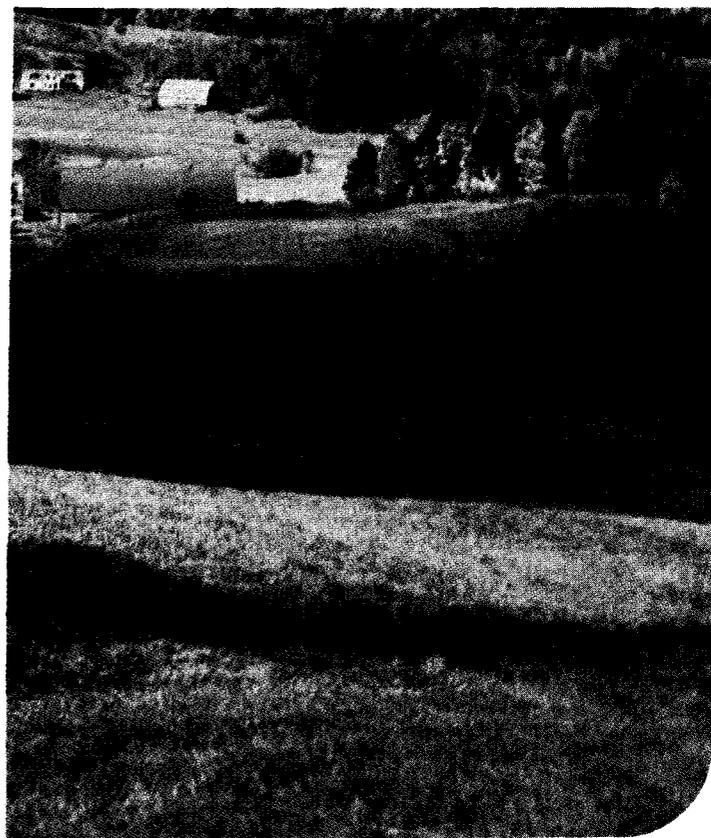


# The Presbyterian Guardian



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## Letters

### RES—half not told

Then there was the Scotsman who promised a large cash gift to missions after his calf was sold. He missed church for several weeks. One frigid morning he appeared at the pastor's study in fiery rage, slammed some money on the desk, and announced his withdrawal from the church. Said he, "I passed the kirk last night, and you were singing about me—the calf has never yet been sold."

Well, "the half has never yet been told" about the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. At least, this is my feeling about the handling of RES matters at the recent OPC General Assembly. Was the assembly aware of the strong protests of some of the smaller Reformed churches against the continued membership of the doctrinally shaky Dutch churches? Did anyone tell that the "pious advice" to the South African government was initiated by the "moderamen" and not by the rank and file? Did anyone paint the dramatic picture of RES delegates vacillating on this "advice" until after they had dined sumptuously as guests of a government official?

One can almost see and feel the frenzy of delegates swallowing whole their deserts in order to get back to the holy, compelling business of instructing the South African government about its internal affairs—all contrary to Scripture and to the standards of our church. Then, in the ultimate act of betrayal of the biblical Reformed churches, the RES determined to continue its dialogue with the World Council of Churches.

Some of us entered the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in order to witness against both the unbelief and political activism of the rotten "ecumenical councils." Now we are in fellowship with the RES, which is more culpable because it pretends to represent Reformed precision. We have sought relief through overtures to the church courts—to no avail. Thankfully, the assembly stopped short of endorsing or recommending membership in this evil alliance to the RPCES and the PCA. Perhaps this hesitancy indicates second thoughts on the

part of the church's highest court concerning our own membership. Let's hope so!

How fortunate that the *Acts* of the RES reached us only *after* the General Assembly concluded its deliberations. One notes no "pious advice" to the butchers of Moscow or the slaughterers of Peking. The RES should hold emergency sessions in those cities very soon.

John H. Thompson, Jr., pastor  
Ocala, Florida

*Ed. note:* The decision of the OPC General Assembly to remain in the RES for now, even while refusing to urge the RPCES and the PCA to join, indicated its concern about developments in RES member churches while recognizing a responsibility to continue to work with the organization while there was still any hope of improvement.

### Time for a change?

Just a word of thanks for the article of John Fikkert, "A Church in Quarantine?" (September).

The name "Orthodox" has no doubt attracted its tens, but it has also turned away its thousands. I have always held that the OPC is the best of all possible churches, if you can stand it. When the name Orthodox was adopted I put forth a much better name that was rejected. Everyone now, of course, is sorry.

Anyway, haven't we been sick long enough, and isn't it time to lift the quarantine? Of course, John did not advocate a change of name, but he touched on an idea whose time has come.

Robert K. Churchill  
OP Chapel,  
Amarillo, Texas

### Omit Orthodox?

The writer wants to heartily endorse the comments of the Rev. John Fikkert in his article appearing in the September issue of *The Guardian*, "A Church in Quarantine." In my opinion his evaluation is of far-reaching importance. I consider it worthy of careful consideration.

I heard Mr. Fikkert voice these remarks in an Orthodox Presbyterian church where the morning attendance has dropped 25% in recent years and is still dropping, while other churches in the

(continued on page 10)

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# Learning CHRIST

Robert B. Strimple

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Westminster Seminary's Vice President for Academic Affairs welcomed new students with the following message at the 49th annual opening exercises held on September 6, 1977.

We are pleased to have with us this evening so many returning students, alumni, and friends. But we are especially happy to be greeting so many who are beginning for the first time their studies at Westminster. In the absence of President Clowney, it is my privilege on behalf of the faculty and the student body to welcome you new students especially in Christian love to the Seminary and its work.

In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 20, the apostle Paul speaks of conversion as a "learning Christ," and I would like to suggest to you who are newly enrolled as Westminster students that you consider the goal of your seminary studies also to be to "learn Christ." Seeing this as our common objective together as faculty and students will serve to remind us of the distinctiveness and the scope of the study in which we are engaged.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:17-24 (NASB):

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as

truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

In this passage many terms appear which we associate with man's intellectual life: verse 17, "mind"; verse 18, "understanding" versus "ignorance"; verse 23, again "mind." And particularly in verses 20 and 21 we find terms which we use to describe that activity which is closest to our hearts as students, our academic endeavor, the pursuit of knowledge: "learn," "taught," "truth."

Notice, however, the unique and unusual way in which these terms are used here. If we wanted to describe the result of Christian training, we would be most likely, I think, to speak of learning about Christ. But Paul here speaks of "learning Christ." If we wanted to emphasize the fact that the Risen Christ himself must illumine us by his Spirit if we are to come to true knowledge, we would be most likely to speak of our being taught by Christ. But Paul here speaks of being taught in Christ. It is possible to translate Paul's preposition in verse 21 as "by" as the Authorized Version does; but in the context ("in Him, just as truth is in Jesus") and in the light of Paul's frequent references to our being in Christ, it is most natural to translate it as "taught in him." And surely this striking, distinctive language of the apostle demands closer examination and meditation upon its significance.

Paul's concern in this fourth chapter, as he expresses it back in verse 1, is that Christians lead a life worthy of, in harmony with, the calling to which they have been called. The Gentiles live a life of sensuality and selfishness in their ignorance and hardness of heart. But *you*, the apostle says, verse 20, and he puts the pronoun in the emphatic position. The Gentiles walk that way, yes, but *you*. . .! Paul points us to the sharp moral antithesis which should be evident to all. The Gentiles walk that way, but *you*—*you* did not so learn Christ!

It has been said that there has not been

found another instance of this use of the verb "to learn" with a person as its object anywhere else in Greek literature, and so it has been suggested that "Christ" here in verse 20 simply stands for "Christian teaching." But there is no warrant for that suggestion. We must let the apostle's inspired language have its full force and remind us of that personal relationship with Christ himself which is the blessed distinctive of our Christian religion—the blessed reality of the Christian life, that by the regenerating work of Christ's Spirit we come to know not merely truths about Christ, but Christ, and by the Spirit's sanctifying work we grow in our knowledge of Christ.

Now notice very carefully please that to emphasize this is not at all, not for a minute, to adopt the so-called "interpersonal" concept of revelation which is popular in so many seminaries and theological circles today, the insistence that God gives us himself in his self-revelation and not any facts or any truths about himself. Remember how Paul warned the Romans against those who stand "in opposition to the doctrine which you learned" (Rom. 16:17); and how he urged Timothy to continue in the "things" which he had learned and believed (II Tim. 3:14). Paul saw no conflict whatsoever between his emphasis on sound doctrine and his emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ.

You see, the Christ who is learned and known by the one who is truly a child of God is not just any Christ—the Christ of your imagination, the Christ of some unbelieving theologian's imagination, like those seven British theologians who this summer published their attack on what they term *The Myth of God Incarnate*. No, the Christ who is learned and known by the one who is truly a child of God is the true Christ, the Christ who is revealed to us in that Scripture inspired by his Spirit, revealed to us in his person as the God-man and in his work as the Redeemer, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification.

And therefore, as I say, to emphasize the way in which Paul speaks of the Christian as one who has learned Christ,

(continued on page 13)

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An open letter to  
Donald J. Duff

## The POSTmillennial Question

Barry A. Traver

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Not long ago I was reading Rousas J. Rushdoony's recent booklet, *God's Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism*. In it he speaks of an "Orthodox Pharisees Church" where amillennialism has become the only allowable millennial position (p. 9). The following day I read your article, "The Millennial Question" (*Presbyterian Guardian*, May 1977), in which you argue that "it is high time" to follow Dr. Meredith G. Kline's suggestion "that ecclesiastical polity should be changed so as to curtail or even reduce confessional liberty as to millennial position" in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

### Relation to common grace

Specifically, you claim that Dr. Kline has shown "that both classical premillennialism and postmillennialism are incompatible with the biblical doctrine of common grace, while the amillennial position is altogether consistent with it." Thus, although your article concerns itself primarily with premillennialism, it is clear that you also consider the postmillennial position to be inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture.

This fact is brought out in your autobiographical account. You relate your most recent change of mind: "Through my study I became convinced of the amillennial position, but I was still willing to allow for others. . . . I have changed my mind, however, and narrowed the degree of latitude I am willing to accept with regard to the millennial question."

Thus, if I understand you correctly, you think it may be high time to have an Orthodox Presbyterian Church where amillennialism has become the only allowable millennial position, even though you admit that, "judging from public statements of men in our own church, . . . such a time is not yet come."

Personally, as one who has very great respect for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, I am glad such a time has not yet come and hope that such a time may never come, at least in the direction you suggest. More than that, I hope that you yourself may have yet another change of mind as you continue to explore the Scriptures in this area, for I believe there are indications in your article that you have not given sufficient consideration to postmillennialism as an especially live option for Reformed Christians today.

On the complex matter of how common grace relates to the millennial question, I—like you—will not say very much, although for a different reason. I do not think that the millennial question can be approached very satisfactorily through the common grace question. There are amillennialists who do not even believe in "the biblical doctrine of common grace" (see, for example, Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* and his *Behold, He Cometh*, a commentary on the Book of Revelation).

There are also postmillennialists who do not feel threatened by the implications of the doctrine of common grace (see, for example, Gary North's essay, "Common Grace, Eschatology, and Biblical Law," in the Winter 1976-77 issue of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*). Those who want to explore the millennial question on the basis of the implications of common grace are welcome to do so; but there are other, more direct approaches to the question.

### History of Reformed thought

One such approach is to consider what conclusions concerning the millennial question various Reformed leaders and thinkers have come to in the history of the church. Here I would strongly recommend to you an excellent article by Greg Bahnsen, "The *Prima Facie* Acceptability of Postmillennialism" (in the same issue of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* just mentioned above).

As you might at least partially infer from the title of Bahnsen's 58-page article, he presents what may seem to many to be a somewhat surprising thesis: "that the postmillennialism which characterized John Calvin, the second generation reformers, the early English Puritans, the Westminster Assembly, Presbyterians and Independents in England, American and Scottish Calvinists, German and Dutch scholars, the great missions movements and awakenings, early American Presbyterians (whether Old Light or New Light), social and intellectual movements—this same postmillennialism continued with driving force among missionary leaders, ecclesiastical leaders, Christian writers in England, Scotland, Germany, and America, leading Presbyterians in the Northern, Southern, and Reformed Presbyterian Churches, as well as the great Princeton theologians. One cannot draw back from concluding that *postmillennial eschatology is central in the heritage of Reformed theology . . .*" (pp. 103f., italics his). I hope that you will read Bahnsen's article for full confirmation of that statement, if it should seem surprising to you.

I could at this point—but will not—go on in great detail about such recognized (and recognizable) postmillennialists as John Owen, Stephen Charnock, Matthew Henry, Isaac Watts, Joseph Cotton, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Dick, E. W. Hengstenberg, J. H. Thornwell, R. L. Dabney, W. G. T. Shedd, and many others. Instead, I would rather speak of three items I know will be of definite interest to you: the Westminster Standards, the Princeton/Westminster Seminary tradition, and *Trinity Hymnal*, all of which are likely to be of special significance to a pastor in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

### Recent Presbyterian tradition

You argue that "we should stick with the amillennial documents we have," and you indicate that you "hope that the church will not water down its confessional standards in order to promote a greater toleration of differing views." Are you not aware that the Westminster Standards favor, if they favor anything, not the amillennial but the postmillennial

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From another direction

## "The Millennial Question"

"Press Review" in the Clarion

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The following comment is reprinted from the Clarion, publication of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the so-called "Article 31" churches whose best-known leader was the Dutch theologian, Klaas Schilder. The article has been somewhat condensed.

The Millennial Question is an important issue. The reader knows that the word "millennial" means: pertaining to the millennium, which is the so-called "thousand-year reign" of Christ in Jerusalem in Palestine.

This doctrine that Christ will come and establish a thousand-year reign on this earth with the earthly Jerusalem as His residence and with the Jewish people as His people, is strongly propagated in our days. *Clarion* has given attention to it, too. Lately *De Reformatie* in The Netherlands wrote about it in connection with the publication of some books in Dutch translation of the American author, Hal Lindsey, especially *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

Prof. J. Douma discussed the ideas of this author in a few articles. Rev. Tj. Boersma wrote a book against Hal Lindsey's ideas and gave it the title: *De Bijbel is geen Puzzleboek* (The Bible is Not a Jigsaw Puzzle Book). Prof. Doekes wrote a number of articles about this thousand-year reign doctrine from a different angle, showing that there is much more at stake than only a difference of opinion with regard to a certain number of Bible texts. It is a different way of reading and interpreting the Scriptures.

About this question I also read an article in *The Presbyterian Guardian* of May 1977. It is written as an open letter by Rev. Donald J. Duff, pastor of one of

the Orthodox Presbyterian churches, to Dr. Meredith G. Kline, who before wrote an article in connection with the same question and also against this doctrine. Rev. Duff writes that first he did not know very much about the matter, that later he rejected the thousand-year reign ideas, although being of the opinion that those ideas were to be tolerated. But this changed. He writes:

Six years ago I became a pastor . . . [The issue of the millennium] was no longer a topic in systematic theology, but a question of "What does the Bible say for God's people today?" [Having once been willing to allow for varying opinions] I have changed my mind, however, and narrowed the degree of latitude I am willing to accept with regard to the millennial question. As I continue to preach, I find that it is not just a matter of how I interpret a few texts in Daniel or Revelation, but how I interpret the whole Bible and in particular the Old Testament. . . . It will make a big difference whether I take the amillennial or the premillennial position as I preach on Exodus or Deuteronomy.

The reader knows [that] "a-millennial" means: there is *not* a special thousand-year reign of Christ in the earthly Jerusalem coming; "pre-millennial" means that Christ will come and establish that thousand-year reign on earth before the new earth comes. The author continues:

I have concluded that if I am really going to preach Christ from the Old Testament as Jesus himself did on the road to Emmaus, as Stephen did before the Sanhedrin, or as Paul did in all the synagogues, I can only do so from an amillennial position. Only that interpretative approach will give the proper application for God's people today.

The author is right. The Old Testament prophecies about Jerusalem find their fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem where Christ is on His throne ruling there as the "Ruler of the kings of the earth." Hebrews 12:22-24, as well as Galatians 4:26 and other places of Scripture, are clear in this respect. I like to point also to Isaiah 65:17, 18: "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be

remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy." Here the prophecy about Jerusalem is connected with the new earth and the new heaven, as we read about it in Revelation 21. It also speaks there about the Lord wiping all the tears from the eyes of His children. This is what Isaiah 65:19 mentions, too.

Important also is Isaiah 60:17-22. Again there is spoken about the future glory of Jerusalem and God's people dwelling in it. And it, then, says that the sun and moon shall not be needed [as] lights anymore, since the Lord God Himself shall be her light in her midst. This also we find . . . being fulfilled in the New Jerusalem [as] Revelation describes it: the new Jerusalem on the new earth (Revelation 21:23). All this does not mean that there are no difficulties in understanding and in explaining a number of Old Testament prophecies. But in the above-mentioned words we find the line in which the New Testament (that is, the Holy Spirit) interprets the Old Testament. And we are bound to that interpretation of Scripture itself, or, of the Holy Spirit Himself.

In this connection I like to mention another text. The ideas about a thousand-year reign of Christ in an earthly Jerusalem are closely related with ideas about Israel as the real people of God's covenant, while the church is only an interim-entirety. However, the apostle Peter in I Peter 2:9, 10, writes about the New Testament church, consisting of believers from both the Jewish people as well as from the Gentiles: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him Who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy."

If the reader would take the trouble to study these two verses, he would discover that Peter uses terms here that are used in the Old Testament to indicate the Lord's relation to Israel. So, what under the Old Testament could be said of the people of

(continued on page 11)

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# GUARDIAN

## Looking for New Editor

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With the resignation of the Rev. John J. Mitchell, who had served as editor for the past seven years, the *Guardian* is looking for a new chief. The search is being actively pursued, but there is no result to report at this time.

Mr. Mitchell assumed his new duties as General Secretary of the Committee on Stewardship of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, beginning on October 1. He com-

pleted the October issue of the *Guardian* before taking up his new post.

The *Guardian* is published by the Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Corporation, an independent organization whose major concern is the magazine itself. The corporation is controlled by a board consisting of the following: Glenn A. Andreas, Edmund P. Clowney, F. Kingsley Elder, John P. Galbraith, George E. Haney, Robley J. Johnston, Arthur W. Kuschke, LeRoy B. Oliver, Robert E. Reymond, O. Palmer Robertson, Michael A. Schneider, John VanVoorhis, and John H. White.

One committee of the trustees is charged with the task of finding a new editor. It has considered several possibilities and has talked to some candidates. The choice is difficult, involving both journalistic ability and theological perception. It is difficult also to expect to find a person who has all the necessary gifts and who is immediately available.

Even so, the committee hopes to see a new editor at the desk early in the next year.

Meanwhile, a second committee has undertaken the tasks involved in publishing the *Guardian* on a regular schedule. This group is seeking suitable materials, editing, seeing it through typesetting, fitting it into the space layout, and having it printed and mailed out. Subscribers should be patient if all of this results in somewhat later delivery than usual.

Though with a new editor the office of the *Guardian* may be moved, for the time being all correspondence should be directed to 7401 Old York Road, Philadelphia, PA 19126 as before. Mrs. Grace Haney is handling the subscriptions and renewal notices will be going out as usual.

We appreciate the support of our readers and ask that you pray for the *Guardian* during this period of change and search. Thank you.

—The Trustees

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## Old Wine Debates in NEW SYNODS

*Davis A. Young*

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*The 1977 General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, adopted a statement on the use of alcoholic beverages. The statement is given in full in the July-August issue of the Guardian, and the editor commented on its significance at some length. Dr. Young is an elder of an RP congregation in Wilmington, North Carolina, and a professor of geology in the state's university there.*

Four years ago, the Lord put our family into a city more than one hundred miles from the nearest Orthodox Presbyterian congregation. We joined the local Reformed Presbyterian church. This was a very difficult decision to make, since I

had been in the OPC all my life. Further, I had been opposed to the proposed OPC-RPCES merger.

In the past four years I have come to appreciate the RPCES a great deal and to respect many of the people in the church. In my judgment, our two denominations are much closer together than I had thought previously. But there are still serious reservations in my mind about the wisdom of merger in the near future. One reason is the RPCES position on the use of alcoholic beverages.

### The Synod debate

It was my privilege to attend my first RPCES Synod this past May. The debate on the use of alcoholic beverages was naturally of great interest. The following remarks regarding that debate are intended to amplify the editorial comments in the *Guardian* (July-August issue).

Actually, I was a bit surprised at the editorial conclusion that "we are back to 1937 all over again." Prior to this Synod my general impression was that we never had left 1937 on this issue inasmuch as the RPCES had never departed from its traditional view on total abstinence. Certainly the church had never made any official pronouncements to indicate that it had repudiated its position on total

abstinence.

I hope no one in the OPC was naive enough to have voted for merger in 1975 in the hope that the RPCES no longer believed in blanket total abstinence. As far as I was concerned, the 1937 situation had prevailed all along. All the 1977 Synod resolution does is to make it clearer that this is still pretty much the case.

### Guilt of overgeneralizing

One thing keeps standing out in my mind in the whole discussion of alcoholic beverage use. Both sides seem to be guilty of overgeneralizing what is an extremely complex issue.

The RPCES resolution is guilty of overgeneralizing and going beyond Scripture when it advocates total abstinence in a blanket fashion. The Bible simply doesn't advocate total abstinence for everybody at all times. It certainly warns of the potential dangers of drink and condemns drunkenness; but it doesn't recommend that no one ever touch an alcoholic beverage.

The Bible does *command* us to abstain when there is the likelihood of leading a weak brother into violating his conscience (Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8). But it certainly doesn't lead us to believe

that there are no situations or circumstances where we are not bound to offend someone else. The Bible just does not recommend blanket total abstinence. Those favoring total abstinence should stick to the biblical directives of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 and stop generalizing.

On the other hand, the "moderates" of both the OPC and the RPCES also are often guilty of overgeneralizing. For example, the *Guardian* editor's conclusion is that "the biblical principle is moderation." Well, yes and no. It is too general a statement.

Does any pastor in counselling a fifteen-year-old in his congregation suggest the path of moderate drinking in that stage of his life? Does a pastor in dealing with a converted alcoholic suggest that it is all right if he drinks moderately? Isn't it true that the biblical principle is abstinence in many situations?

One certainly should not drink moderately with or offer alcoholic drinks at dinner to persons about whose feelings towards alcoholic beverages we are unaware. Unfortunately, perhaps too many of those who hold to the "moderate" or "Christian liberty" position have abused that liberty by drinking moderately at times when they should have been abstaining. There are too many times when drinking in moderation has hurt another Christian.

The Bible does not teach blanket total abstinence. But then, neither does it teach blanket moderation. The sooner the RPCES and OPC recognize this and succeed in articulating it in some detail on paper and in working it out in practice, the more likely we are to have a successful merger some day.

### Signs of hope

Having said this, however, I would like to suggest that perhaps there has been some improvement in the situation. There are some signs of hope.

The fact that the resolution on beverage use of alcohol was adopted by a vote of 146-34 obscures what really happened at Synod. The real crux of the issue was resolution #2 of the total package of seven resolutions. Resolution #2 specifically reaffirms advocacy of total abstinence.

The original version of this resolution as brought in by the study committee contained the following language:

In light of the increasingly serious abuse of alcohol in contemporary American culture, in which it is reported that almost 9% of those between the ages of twelve and seventeen overdose with alcohol at least once a week and that almost half a million teenagers have serious or potentially serious problems with alcohol, our Synod should continue to counsel all individuals—pastors, officers, and lay people—to follow the procedure of total abstinence from the beverage use of alcohol. Dispassionate discussions of this and other Synodical statements and studies might be held in Sessions to assist

the ruling body of the local fellowship of believers in achieving consensus of policy in accordance with Scripture. The results of such discussions might be shared at Presbytery level for the sake of conference and possible uniformity.

Synod quickly eliminated the lengthy clause dealing with teenage alcohol problems. After much other debating and amending, Synod finally came down to the heart of the matter. Would it support or reject blanket total abstinence?

A motion was made to eliminate the word "all" from the statement "Synod should continue to counsel all individuals . . ." The motion to delete the word "all" was adopted by a vote of 83-73. At that stage it was clear that Synod had rejected the position of blanket total abstinence

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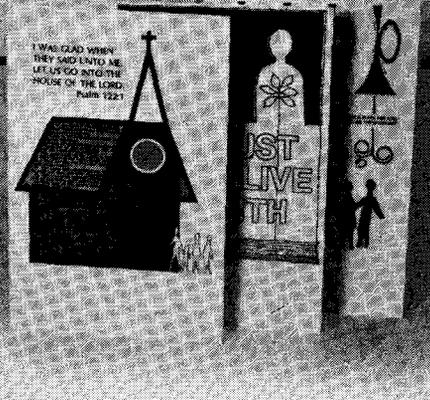
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advocated by the committee.

### A reversal of viewpoint

It appeared that the "moderate" position would win out. But later in the day, another motion was made to substitute the language ultimately adopted in resolution #2 for the original amended form (with the "all" deleted). Although the motion was at first ruled out of order as having in effect already been rejected by Synod, the Synod was charitable enough to allow further debate to continue on a matter on which feelings ran very high.

The motion to substitute language advocating total abstinence was ultimately adopted by a vote of 100-95. These facts need to be brought out so that *Guardian* readers will realize that the RPCES is split right down the middle on this issue.

### Improvements elsewhere

Although the crucial battle over resolution #2 was very narrowly lost by the "moderates," some significant improvements in resolutions #3 and #4 were made by Synod over the original committee recommendations. After each of the seven resolutions had been debated and "improved," the entire package of resolutions was voted on and adopted 146-34.

By no means does this vote prove that Synod favored total abstinence by that kind of margin. Once the issue of blanket total abstinence vs. moderation had been settled, probably the majority of "moderates" voted to adopt the final measure as a gesture toward preserving harmony and unity within the church.

As one who does not believe the Bible either requires or recommends blanket total abstinence, I was encouraged to see nearly half of the RPCES moving away from the traditional total-abstinence position. It was a much larger number than I ever expected. In this sense, I would say that the OPC and RPCES are really closer to each other than in 1937.

In spite of all this, I still have great concern about the effect of a possible merger. Merger with the OPC would clearly tip the scales toward the "moderate" position, and that might be extremely difficult for some RPCES men to live with. It is my impression, though I sincerely hope it is a wrong impression,

that some RPCES men and churches would pull out of the church if the "total abstinence" position were ever formally repudiated. I'm not sure that another schism is the price to pay for merger. Much as I sincerely wish for the ideal of merger, I still question the wisdom of it at this time.

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Mr. Mitchell, the former editor of the *Guardian* comments as follows:

*I appreciate Dr. Young's sharing of this background and his own impressions. In saying "we are back to 1937," I did, perhaps naively, think that things had changed since then. The Proposed Plan of Union for the OPC and RPCES (which was passed by the OP Assembly and failed to obtain the required two-thirds majority in the RP Synod of 1975 had carefully avoided any statement of "blanket total abstinence"—much to the relief of anxious Orthodox Presbyterians. Since nearly 60% of the 1975 RP Synod did approve this Plan, it seemed to many that the RPCES was no longer insisting on a "blanket total abstinence" position. I personally regret the action of 1977 that does, as I saw it, put the situation back to the divisive tensions of 1937.*

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## The Wine Debate, cont.

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### Selective reporting

Your selective reporting of the RPCES General Synod was a great disservice to your readers. Much more work of substance was completed than what was selected for inclusion in the July-August issue of the *Guardian*.

One item not mentioned, yet having a potentially important role in merger talks, was the move toward shared control of Covenant College with the Presbyterian Church in America. Another item left out was the retirement of Dr. Robert G. Rayburn as president of Covenant Seminary

and the elevation of Dr. William S. Barker to that post.

Of course, space was not spared in your four column article, "The Church and Alcohol." Even what was reported regarding the adoption of the statement on total abstinence was one-sided. It would have been helpful for readers of the *Guardian* to know that while the final statement passed 146-34, the crucial vote was on point 2, "Synod reaffirms . . ." The vote of 101-96 clearly showed that Synod was divided on the issue. The final vote for adoption would reflect in part (the issue having been decided on point 2) a desire not to see the events of 1937 repeated in 1977.

Your comment that we are back in 1937 is without merit. We will be back in 1937 only if one wants to relive those events and keep the body of Christ divided. I believe Synod took a position not based on Scripture, but I equally believe I have no scriptural cause for dividing, or keeping divided, the church of Christ over a matter of "adiaphora."

To be sure, discussions on merger are not helped by this action of Synod. But on the other hand, discussions of merger are not helped by a continuing desire to keep the old debate going from the other side.

You may say we are back in 1937, but I and many of my contemporaries choose not to live in the past. We choose to live in 1977, announcing to lost men in 1977, "Be ye reconciled to God." Let us arise and together build a united testimony for Christ before a lost and dying world.

Thomas E. Troxell, pastor  
Hope Reformed Presby. Church  
Tempe, Arizona

### Engagement not broken?

I read the July-August *Guardian* with great interest, particularly the RPCES resolution on alcohol and your comments, as well as the very pertinent questions asked by Roland Priem. I think we in the "ministry" should not dismiss his questions without very serious consideration.

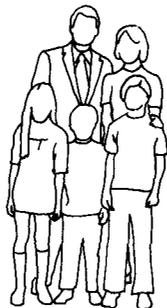
I would make the following comment about the resolution on "The Beverage Use of Alcohol." First, the makeup of the committee was supposed to represent the

(continued on page 12)

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# Christian Family Planning

Alan Hemphill, M.D.



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The family has been the basic unit of society since God himself established it in Genesis 2:24. His word has much to say about the family. As Christian couples it is our duty to know what God's directions for us are in this most important area.

What are God's purposes for marriage and the family? First, and foremost, it is to fulfill man's need for help and companionship. Genesis 2:18 tells us that it was not good for man to be alone, so God made Eve and brought her to Adam to be his helper. Secondly, God's command to them in Genesis 1:28 was "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over (it)." (See also Genesis 9:1-7.) Other purposes of the family are to provide for and teach the children which bless that home (Deut. 6:7, Prov. 19:18, I Tim. 3:12, II Cor. 12:14, Eph. 6:4). Another purpose is to be a picture of our heavenly family relationships (Eph. 5:21-33).

It is obvious that the first purpose is to be fulfilled in every marriage — mutual help and companionship in their fullest sense for every Christian couple. The second and third purposes, however, are not necessarily to be fulfilled in all families. Since it is in God's providence (Gen. 29:31; 30:22) that about one out of eight couples are not *able* to have children, there are some couples who in God's plan are not to "be fruitful and multiply." They may still have a full and happy marriage according to God's purpose for them. Furthermore, the second part of that command—"to fill the earth"—is now or at least soon will be accomplished, and some parts of the world are

now more than filled. According to these observations, then, *unlimited* procreation is not now (if it ever was) a requirement for mankind.

Another Scripture passage which has bearing on our thinking about Christian family planning is Luke 14:28-32. Here Jesus, though not speaking directly to our subject, makes it very clear that when attempting to accomplish something of importance, it is foolish *not* to plan and count the cost before beginning. Is it reasonable then that we should plan ahead for building our house and not for building our family? I think not.

The third part of God's command to Adam and Eve was to subdue and rule over the earth. This gives man the *responsibility* to use the abilities he has been given for his own good and God's glory — to control his environment within limits, to use and preserve earth's natural resources, to breed better animals, to conquer diseases, and possibly to control his own procreative abilities as God gives him the knowledge and wisdom to do so.

Therefore, if God does not require all couples to "fill the earth," and if he admonishes us to *plan* major undertakings, and has given us the *ability* to plan the number and spacing of our children (within the limits of his sovereign control), does the Bible have anything to say about birth control?

Yes, Genesis 38:8-10 speaks directly of birth control by withdrawal (coitus interruptus). It is not clear from the passage itself, however, whether God's punishment of Onan was for birth control *per se*, or for his selfish act in refusing to fulfill his moral duty to his brother's wife, ac-

ording to God's law. The latter interpretation is more in keeping with other Scriptures. Leviticus 15:16-18 speaks of ceremonial cleansing *only* for seminal emissions without regard to moral fault for "wasted seed" (see also Lev. 15:19-24).

Leviticus 20, Romans 1, and other passages list sexual sins, but contraception is not included. Sexual continence is permitted in I Corinthians 7:3-5, but only for short periods with mutual agreement for prayer, and not specifically for contraception. In Deut. 23:1 eunuchs were excluded from God's people, but Jesus said in Matthew 19:12 that some had made themselves eunuchs "for the sake of the kingdom." Whether one considers that Jesus was speaking figuratively or of literal, physical sterilization makes no moral difference, for the end result is the same. Thus, the Bible speaks of withdrawal, sexual continence and sterilization, but without giving any clear directive for or against their use in family planning. Consequently, Scripture seems to leave the question open to the individual couple before God.

## Principles for Family Planning

If family planning is an option for the Christian couple, what are some of the principles that should be its basis? As we have already seen, God's first purpose for marriage was for companionship in its fullest sense. Genesis 2:24,25 tells us that since God made woman from man to be his helper, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Other passages such as Genesis 24:67, Ecclesiastes 9:9, and the Song of Solomon teach us that this total physical

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*About the author: He is a pediatrician in a four-man pediatric practice in Long Beach, Ca. and member of a weekly doctor's Bible Study at Memorial Hospital Medical Center of Long Beach where he is on staff. He is married, has three children, and is a member of Los Angeles, R.P. Church. Reprinted from the Covenanter Witness by permission.*

and spiritual union of husband and wife is to be one of great comfort and pleasure to both. A newly married couple needs time to adjust to one another, and to learn to share the joy and pleasure of each other before the responsibilities of a family increase. The length of this period will vary with the needs and desires of each couple.

God makes very clear what parents' responsibilities are for their children. The marriage is to be permanent, broken only by death (Matt. 19:6). Parents have the responsibility to provide for the physical needs of their children (II Cor. 12:14, I Tim. 5:8), and we are to plan for those needs ahead of time (Lk. 14:28-32). Psalms 128:1-4 and 127:3-5 make it clear that children are a rich gift and blessing to the couple that fears the Lord. "Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them." The Old Testament is full of passages showing our great responsibilities to teach, train and guide our children in the ways of the Lord. All these factors must be considered as each couple decides how many children God would have them care for and when.

Other considerations in family planning may be the health of the mother or the problem of fear of an untimely pregnancy which may limit a couple's complete enjoyment of their sexual union.

All of the above considerations must take into account the fact that man's attempted controls are only finite, and that God is in sovereign control of all. He can and often does overrule even the prayerfully laid plans of Christian families for their joy and his glory.

It is not the purpose of this brief article to give a detailed account of all the various methods of contraception that are available today. However, a few comments are appropriate. There is some controversy regarding "natural" versus "artificial" means of birth control: "Natural" referring to various rhythm methods, abstinence, or withdrawal; "artificial" including diaphragms, pills, etc. There is nothing in Scripture specifying either. We certainly do many other things "artificially" such as irrigating crops without thought of its morality. So why should "artificial" means of birth control be less moral than "natural" means?

All of the above discussion pertains to family planning by contraception, in other words preventing fertilization of the egg. It is reasonably clear from Scripture that abortion is one form of birth control which is not an option for the Christian. The choice of some IUD's and some of the newer birth control pills may

be much more of a difficult problem. The means by which they work has not been completely worked out, and probably differs from one brand or type to another. Some may prevent conception, while others may prevent implantation of the very early embryo, but *after* conception has occurred, thus causing an early abortion.

#### For More Information

For further information about the pros and cons of the variety of methods available today there are a few good, new *Christian* books now available. These books also deal with sexual fulfillment and sexual problems in marriage from a Christian point of view. Probably the best are: *The Act of Marriage*, by Tim and Beverly La Haye, (Zondervan, 1976, 394 pp., \$6.95, \$3.95 pb) and *Intended for Pleasure*, by Ed (M.D.) and Gaye Wheat, (Revell, 1977, 223 pp., \$7.95). Dr. Wheat also has a set of tapes, *Sex Technique and Sex Problems in Marriage* (Bible Believers Cassettes, 130 Spring St., Springdale, Ark., 72764—set of 4 cassettes, \$13.95). Any one of these would make a very important addition to the library of a Christian family, church or pastor. They could be invaluable as counseling aids for pastors. They deal with an important area of the family that Christian writers in the past have largely avoided, and yet they deal with it thoroughly in a clear and tasteful manner.

God intended marriage and the family for our good and our pleasure. I trust that these thoughts will help you, by God's grace, to make yours a relationship that is closer to his ideal.

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#### News and Views

(continued from page 16)

The conference began with two addresses before and after lunch on Friday by the Rev. William A. Mahlow, Sr., pastor of the rapidly growing Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Annapolis, Md. Pastor Mahlow, speaking on the general theme of making disciples in the churches, offered numerous practical suggestions on how to bring individuals and families to a total commitment to Christ, to the word of God, to the church, and to evangelization of the world. Late Friday afternoon Dr. D. Clair Davis of Westminster Seminary spoke in his usual stimulating manner on "The History of Small Groups in Reformed Churches." A communion service in the evening was followed by questions to Dr. Davis concerning points raised in his presentation.

On Saturday morning, the Rev. Wayne Brauning, pastor of Hope Fellowship in Philadelphia, delivered a helpful exhortation on the pastor's need to guard against discouragement and bitterness. Afterward the respective presbyteries held their business meetings throughout the day. Expressing the favorable response of many, one presbytery went on record as endorsing an attempt to schedule another such meeting in the fall of 1978. Overall, there appeared to be a sincere attempt to realize more fully the psalmist's words: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

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#### Letters (continued from page 2)

community advertise two Sunday morning services or have enlarged their buildings or parking lots. The OP congregation does not advertise Sunday worship services.

I wonder if Mr. Fikkert's words would be more convincing if a comparison were made of regular OP churches that do include the word Orthodox in their corporate name with churches that do not use that name or use their local name with the words Orthodox Presbyterian underneath.

Another part of Mr. Fikkert's article deals with independent isolation. Is it possible that this condition is partly caused by introversion? Rev. John Miller noted this cancer several years ago and wrote an exhaustive article dealing with it. This too might be worthy of consideration.

A. L. LeGro  
Wilmington, Delaware

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## "The Millennial Question"

(continued from page 5)

Israel, exactly that can be said of the New Testament church after Pentecost. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Israel now, the people of God's new covenant.

The reader may remember that the question of this millennialism was (and is) an issue in the proposed merger between the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. This aspect was also touched upon in the article of Pastor Duff. We read further:

One of my biggest concerns [in 1975 when the Plan of Union was voted on] was in connection with the proposed changes in the Westminster Larger Catechism, changes intended to alleviate a supposed amillennial bias in the catechism and allow for greater latitude on the subject of the millennium. [But] premillennialism is not then just an aberration in an otherwise sound system, but it is a symptom of something that is fundamentally wrong.

I am now convinced that we must not compromise on a couple of catechism questions in order to promote unity with those who want more latitude in regard to the millennial question. We should stick with the amillennial documents we have and even consider going further in making them more explicit. . . .

We can hope that the OPC will listen to voices like this. The difference between Reformed and millennialism is far bigger than a different interpretation of a few texts. That is absolutely true. Professor Doekes showed that clearly in *De Reformatie*, as pastor Duff says it above, as I said. Let us be warned.

J. Geertsema

*The Rev. J. Geertsema, a pastor in Chatham, Ontario, is a member of the editorial committee of the Clarion.*

*It should be noted that his definition of "millennial" as referring to the thousand-year reign of Christ in Jerusalem is accurate only for some premillennial views but not for the postmillennial position, which sees the thousand-year period—either strictly or loosely—as a period of progress and victory for the gospel before Christ returns.*

## ANATOMY OF A PREACHER

*The following letter is not a "fake" — it was actually sent to a young man on the occasion of his ordination.*

Dear Rick,

Here's an anatomy lesson for a young preacher, on the day of his ordination:

For your own sake, your church's sake, the kingdom's sake — I hope you'll keep a good

- head** on your shoulders, and that those
- shoulders** will be broad enough to weep on and shaped right for putting to that wheel people talk about. Also, I do hope you'll have
- eyes** that can tell motes from beams — both in yourself and in your flock — and
- ears** that can listen to the miseries and woes of your people without passing those confidences along to your
- tongue** — which will need repairing often at the tip (where you will have bitten it nearly off, many times.) May your
- nose** be short enough to stop just this side of others' business, but long enough to sniff out problems before they become real biggies. You'll need
- arms** that can enfold and support a whole congregation — yet yours will need to be held up by a few faithful people, all your life. I hope your
- hands** will not be afraid of hard work, nor reluctant to do a lot of foot-washing for the Lord's sake. (Sometimes life will feel like a lot of knuckling under and working of fingers to the bone.) You'll have to
- stomach** more than you can anticipate right now, but our sovereign God is always faithful to his own people. Your
- legs** and feet will have to carry you on numerous uncharted paths. (You will find that keeping on your toes helps a lot — although once in a while you'll be made to feel like a heel.) Of course a strong
- backbone** is better than a wishbone, as you walk. Spend a lot of time on your
- knees,** since you and your flock will both reap the benefits. And please, please don't ever lose the obviously warm
- heart** that is one of God's gifts to you. Keep it tender.

In all of this, thank God for Bethann, whom he gave you as a "suitable help."

With love,  
Aunt Dottie

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## Wine Debate

(continued from page 8)

two positions found in our Synod: those who believe the Bible teaches total abstinence, and those who think it does not prohibit its beverage use. In viewing the names of those placed on the committee, I was sure we would wind up with a majority and minority report. It was a very pleasant surprise to see unanimity. Then too, in reading the report there was also a sense that we have grown and can seriously examine a highly inflammatory subject in a very cool way.

I would agree with you that this resolution does put a further obstacle in the road to union [of the OPC and RPCES]. However, the OPC's position on the "Christian Sabbath" also is an obstacle to union. If you will permit the illustrations, we have gone from the first and second finger of the hand to the first and fourth. However, this is not bad, since "the course of true love never runs smoothly." Let's trust the engagement is not broken, but only that the wedding is postponed.

I do not agree with your interpretation of the resolution. It does not "call for total abstinence"; it merely urges it as a matter of prudence due to the serious abuse of beverage alcohol in our day and

the call of Scripture to apply the law of love, remembering, "love works no ill toward its neighbor."

Then there is the matter of a particular church or agency requiring total abstinence of church officers, or requiring total abstinence in agencies for a particular time and place. As to agencies, this should not affect a board since Synod elects its members. However, with missions personnel the country to which one is sent may be the determining factor for total abstinence, i.e., such as an Islamic nation.

As a very practical matter, churches elect to office those whom they think fit for the offices. In the RPCES this means some churches require total abstinence while others do not. It is possible for a church to determine it will have no bald-headed, bearded officers. Some churches exclude those with the scriptural gifts because something about them does not suit the local church.

Let me sum up by saying that the resolution is "pious advice." I trust it will be seriously considered by all in the RPCES and be used as the Lord leads, in love. I also trust that the OPC will not regard it as a "red flag" but as the effort of a sister church to meet our greatest drug problem.

Bob Wildeman, Sr.  
Lingle, Wyoming

minster, in the Department of Systematic Theology both the late John Murray and the present Norman Shepherd have expressed in print their postmillennial convictions.

And there are some (myself included) who would consider *Trinity Hymnal* to be one of the genuinely and especially significant contributions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Are you aware that *Trinity Hymnal* contains many hymns by postmillennial writers and expressing postmillennial sentiments? (For example, look at numbers 123, 217, 218, 225, 226, 275, 298, 300, 326, 372, 373, 374, 384, 386, and 494.) Here are hymns that express the postmillennial expectation (Iain Murray calls it *The Puritan Hope* in a book of that title) that the gospel of Christ the King will have its day of triumph on the earth.

I mention all these things in case you—like many others today—may not be aware that, as Bahnsen documents extensively in his article, "the postmillennial hope has been the persistent viewpoint of most Reformed scholars from the sixteenth century into the early twentieth century. . . . The position has been endorsed by the most dependable and outstanding theologians and commentators from the Reformation to the present" (pp. 68f.).

## The Bible's teaching

The most important question, of course, is what the Bible teaches on the millennial question. Although I agree with you that "most premillennialists have a different set of rules for interpretation to start with" than the amillennialists, I do not think you will find the same to be true of postmillennialism. I invite you to check me out on this by reading, for example, the detailed exegesis of Matthew 24 and Revelation 20 contained in J. Marcellus Kik's *An Eschatology of Victory*. After that you may want to go on to read J. A. Alexander's *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (or other exegetical works by some of the authors already mentioned, for that matter).

To return to your endorsement of the proposal to "curtail or even reduce confessional liberty as to millennial position," I hope that it is clear by this point that before we decide to do that, we must certainly explore more carefully the postmillennial position than is usually done.

This is especially needed since the Westminster Standards themselves seem to favor a postmillennial position. Thus you can see that your posing of "the millennial question" leads necessarily to my

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## The Postmillennial Question

(continued from page 4)

position—and that therefore yours is the differing view?

Since postmillennialism and amillennialism are probably much closer to one another than you may realize, it may not be obvious to you that the Westminster Standards are not amillennial but postmillennial documents; but such is the case. A number of historical studies in recent years show clearly that this is so. For example, J. A. De Jong's *As the Waters Cover the Sea* (a doctoral dissertation done at the Free University of Amsterdam) comes to the conclusion that "Westminster's formulation must be seen as a deliberate choice of mild, unsystematized, postmillennial expectations" (p. 38). This is what we would expect of confessional standards written at a time when the postmillennial position was widespread and prevalent in Puritan thinking. In keeping with the spirit of the times,

Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie, William Gouge, Joseph Caryl, Edward Reynolds, Thomas Manton, and other "Westminster men" were undeniably postmillennialists.

Consider also the Princeton/Westminster Seminary tradition, of which many in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are rightly proud. Archibald Alexander, founder of "Old Princeton," was a postmillennialist; so were J. A. Alexander, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, C. W. Hodge, and B. B. Warfield. J. Gresham Machen, frequently looked upon as the "founder" of Westminster Seminary, was not—contrary to popular opinion—an amillennialist but a postmillennialist, according to Paul Woolley, who worked with Machen in those early years of the Seminary.

Again, contrary to popular opinion, it appears that Oswald T. Allis was not amillennial but postmillennial (see his foreword to Roderick Campbells' postmillennial exposition, *Israel and the New Covenant*). Although postmillennialism is one tradition of "Old Princeton" that has not been strongly maintained at West-

posing of "the postmillennial question."

May our great and gracious God grant us all increasing light on this subject from his infallible Word!

*Mr. Traver, who is presently engaged in the Th.M. program at Westminster Seminary, is pastor of the Talmadge Memorial Fourth Reformed Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

*We are appreciative of Mr. Traver's response to Mr. Duff's article, and we invite any premillennialist to enter the discussion.*

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John J. Mitchell, editor.

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**Learning Christ**

(continued from page 3)

and who is to go on growing in Christ, is not at all to fall into step with the false mysticism of modern theology or to trumpet the popular slogans of "down with doctrine" and "down with propositional revelation." To emphasize Ephesians 4:20, and the accent on learning Christ, is simply to emphasize the full, rich meaning of Christian discipleship, that being a student of Christ involves more than a mere mastery of the loci of Christology, and walking as a Christian is the result of something more than a mere study of the ethics of Jesus.

Calvin wrote in the Institutes of those who

"have falsely, and also unjustly, pretended the knowledge of Christ, whatever they . . . learnedly and volubly prate about the gospel. For it is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart" (III:vii:4).

Being a Christian, as Paul puts it here in verse 21, is to "hear Christ," and that cannot mean simply to hear about him. If that is all it meant, then Paul could never have put it hypothetically, "if indeed you have heard Him." There could be no question that every last one of Paul's readers had heard about Christ, had learned about Christ. But to hear Christ, you see, to learn Christ, implies more. It implies understanding and obedience; and not everyone who hears about Christ hears Christ in that full sense of believing, obedient response, but only those whose deaf ears are unstopped, whose blind eyes are opened, whose hard hearts of sin are softened by the sovereign grace of God.

This is the supreme blessing for which we praise our gracious God! That we have been made to "hear Christ"—to hear him, not as some voice from the blue nor some voice from the deep recesses of our own being, but to hear him in the proclamation of the gospel, for it is Christ who is preached and it is Christ who is received, not merely facts about Christ. And it is in Christ that we are taught, not merely by him but in him, in believing, living union and communion with him by the

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**Spirit.**

And thus, you see, our relationship to truth is no mere external, academic relationship, in which what we study might remain outside us, so to speak, with no effect upon our lives. No, we must be in intimate personal relationship with Christ to be in true possession of truth, for as Paul says in verse 21, "truth is in Jesus."

Note that well. "In Jesus"—in the Incarnate One, who in the state of his *humiliation* declared, "I am the Truth." Even in the apostle Paul's day some wanted to draw a sharp distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. But Paul will have none of that. To learn Christ is to learn the One who, although the Son of God, learned obedience through the things which he suffered. To know Christ today is to know Jesus of Nazareth who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, who was buried, and who was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. There is but one Lord Jesus Christ; the Jesus of history is the Christ of our faith.

To learn Christ, Paul emphasizes, is to learn the Holy One of God! To put on Christ is to put on the *New Man*. To put on Christ is to put on righteousness and true holiness.

Praise God we have learned Christ; we have heard him and have been taught in him. But how much of him we have still to learn, we who would preach and teach Christ to others. Is Paul's desire yours as you begin this academic year: "that I may know him"? Have you caught the urgency of Peter's command: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"?

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# Genesis 2:22

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## Dear Sarah:

How can we distinguish between righteous indignation and verbal outburst when our children disobey us? Some non-Christian thoughts I've read on this indicate that all anger toward our children's actions is to be avoided.

Yet Scripture gives clear illustration of our Savior's righteous indignation. Is all righteous indignation in Scripture because of disobedience to the first part of the law (Matthew 22:37), or is righteous indignation also applied to the second part of the commandments?

—(Mrs.) Jeanne Phillips

## Dear Jeanne:

Your question is anything but easy to answer. I'm not sure that I can do much more than make a few observations that, I hope, will direct our thinking in the right way.

First: The breaking of *any* commandment, not just those of the first part of the law, is of course sin against God (and certainly deserves *his* righteous indignation.) Therefore, it is theoretically pos-

sible to have righteous indignation against yourself for failing to love your neighbor as yourself. This was shown in Jesus' anger at the hardness of heart of some toward a person who needed healing (Mark 3:5).

Now let's state your central question into a specific situation. Let's say you have told your child many times not to stack dishes when he carries them off the table; and, you always get the same reaction of disgusted compliance with your "silly rule." The day comes when your child decides he knows better and in direct disobedience he stacks your best china—while guests are there and he's fairly sure you won't repeat your admonition—and the inevitable happens. Your anger is real as you see two plates in pieces at your feet and you explode verbally.

Let's examine your anger and its results. If you are like me, the anger is *really* about the fact that two of your best dishes are broken. The child's disobedience—his *sin* of disobedience—resulted in personal hurt to you. Can you be objective enough in this instance to say that what made this really bad was that your child sinned against God rather than that he sinned against you. I seldom have been able to, I must confess. My verbal outbursts stem from the hurt that is done to me, whether by way of embarrassment or tangible hurt, and my anger is directed toward my thoughtless, unloving child!

In such instances, can I honestly say that I have righteous indignation against the fact of the child's sin of not honoring me as a parent? If so, then my verbal communication, hot off the collar, must be directed to that specific breaking of God's law and not at the end result of the transgression.

Aside from Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:12) and the incident mentioned above (from Mark 3:5), there are very few examples in the Bible of righteous anger. And even in most of these it is questionable exactly what God intends us to learn from them about righteous anger. For instance, we are told of Moses' anger at the erection of the golden calf (Exodus 32:19). Surely, we say, this is a case of righteous indignation. But is it? Is the recorded fact of Moses' action—his throwing down and breaking the two tables of stone—really being condoned here? Was indeed his anger righteous?

So what this comes down to is basically this: Are you angry primarily because God is offended, or are you angry primarily because you are offended? This will determine whether your anger is righteous or unrighteous. James says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires" (James 1:19-20).

—Sarah.

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## Futile THINGS

Dorothy Stukey

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*And you must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which cannot profit or deliver, because they are futile (1 Samuel 12:21).*

Futile things. How much of time and strength are spent going after futile things, things that cannot profit or deliver because they are futile?

"And Samuel said to the people . . ." Not President Carter making a telecast to the American people, but the Prophet of God speaking to that chosen people, that special, peculiar treasure that God him-

self selected to bear his Name, to do his will, to glorify him before the nations of the earth.

Are you one of these people? Have you taken the name of Christ upon you? Have you brought your burden of sin to the cross and left it there? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb and dressed in his pure righteousness? Are you walking in that straight and narrow way that leads at last to the gates of heaven? Have you accepted Christ as your king, the ruler of your life? Do you see yourself as a loyal and faithful follower, a servant of Jesus Christ?

Or are you one of those to whom Samuel spoke that day when he said, "You have committed all this evil"? The people of Israel had desired an earthly king. No longer satisfied that the Lord should be their king, they would bring their taxes and their homage to a man like themselves. The choice was between the spiritual and the physical, and they were tired of the spiritual reign of the Almighty and turned their faces toward the pomp of an

earthly kingdom.

### Choices, choices

How easy it is to judge those Israelites. How quickly they fell into sin. Samuel's warnings soon forgotten, they turned aside to idols of wood and stone, the futile things that could not profit or deliver.

But what of you and me? Life is a succession of choices and decisions. With each choice and each decision we align ourselves either in the service of Christ or that of Satan. Already you lift your voices in disagreement? Aren't there choices and decisions that are neither good nor bad?

This may be true to a degree. But if a rich dessert adds weight to an already weighty figure then perhaps it is bad. If the red dress is more expensive than the blue, perhaps it breaks an already strained budget. If it takes more time to call a friend and ask her opinion, maybe you should make the decision yourself. Time is always short, and too much is

wasted because of insufficient planning, misdirected effort, or purposeless activity.

Now this may sound as though I had all the answers, and in a way I have. But knowing what is right and doing right are two entirely different things. In fact, as I sat down to write, I had to confess that I allow so much that is futile to frustrate me that, for a while, I was tempted to put down my pen and go away.

But from the first time that I read this passage in my morning devotions some months ago, that thought of "futile things which cannot profit or deliver" has haunted me. A lifetime of energy and talent may be wasted in futile things before one realizes it, and the Christian woman in today's society would be wise to evaluate *each* activity for its worth in God's eyes. Especially is this true in the use of time—that commodity that slips away from the best of us and before we realize what is happening, it is gone. So our life is spent, and we are left with either gold and silver, or wood, hay, and stubble.

#### What to choose

Do you take time for personal devotions each day, three or four times a week, once in a while, or never? Do you have a Bible commentary? Do study a Scripture passage digging for the meat, or do you quickly skip over a Psalm? Do you murmur a prayer while half asleep or do you wrestle with God in prayer, demanding a blessing before you quit? Are you satisfied to sit in a pew on the Lord's Day? Or do you desire to enter into a real spiritual warfare for the blessing of God upon the church, the bride of Christ?

And what of our conversation? "For out of the mouth are the issues of life"! Now, I am really great on the weather: "We have had a long cold spell this spring that really spreads gloom." (There I go again!) Have you ever sat quietly, probably as a newcomer, and listened to a group of women? Or spent half an hour on the telephone and, upon hanging up, made any mental note of the conversation? How much of what we say is really glorifying to God?

I can visit for hours with a neighbor on patterns and materials for we both like to sew. But never once have I asked the condition of her soul. We really do not want others to think of us as "religious nuts" and too often we would probably be surprised to know that very few of our friends even know we go to church, let alone esteem ourselves as vital, born-again Christians.

Futile choices might be defined as any-

thing that weakens or destroys our worship and love for the triune God. Can you look back on a time when Jesus was your all-in-all? Has your heart grown cold lately? Are you burdened with the cares and sorrows of this world? Are you wasting your energies on futile things that cannot profit or deliver?

"For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found" (Psalm 32:6). Are you taking time to pray? Does the "everyone" apply to you, to me? Are we godly? Where on our list of priorities do God and his Christ come?

#### Serving the Lord

Is your first thought on rising, "Today is the day which the Lord has made; how can I serve him best?" Mine is more apt to be concerned with getting breakfast and packing lunches and getting three sons off to work and to school on time.

When my father was ill, one little neighbor woman found time to visit my mother, bring her a jar of jam, some

flowers from her garden, or just a pleasant visit—strange that we think of her as a loving Christian?

And what about "praying in a time when God may be found"? Did you ever go calling just to find the friend not at home? You remember the disappointment? To have missed the sweet communion of friend to friend, not to have seen a familiar face and talked together—do you suppose the Lord misses us in an even more real and perfect way, when we do not take time to pray?

Already the day is far spent and there is much to do. But with a prayer that each of us might consider more carefully the direction of our lives, let us recall our Lord's admonition:

*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.*

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*Mrs. Dorothy Stuke—one of those who helped initiate this special section for women—lives with her family in Polson, Montana.*

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## PRINCESS-- God's Gracious Gift

*Jo Anne M. Ross*

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How God blesses our lives and guides our destiny, was never so clear to me as it was this past year. Sarah Beth was born March 22, 1977 at 8:45 p.m.—a beautiful perfect baby girl, weighing 8 lbs. 2¼ oz. This may not seem unusual—another child being born, healthy and hearty—but to us she was our little miracle and God's blessing on our lives. Bob, my husband of almost twenty-seven years, is 48 and I, on March 22, lacked two weeks of being 46. Ours is a love story of almost thirty years and five children: Robert 24, Donald 22, Scott 21, Cathy 15, and Susan 12. We were not Christians when these five came into our lives, just churchgoers. Our vows at their baptism were only words. Nine years ago we responded to God's call to be his children, and Bob and I came to know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Since then we have seen each of our children

come to the Lord. Bob and Don married Christian girls and each has a child of his own.

God, in his sovereign love for us, gave us Sarah Beth late in life to bring up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Those words were never so precious to me as when we had her baptized by the Rev. Russell Piper at the Mission Valley OPC of Ronan, Montana on Easter Sunday April 10th. You see, Sarah didn't come into the world normally. She was born by Caesarean section. Not unusual, you say. Maybe not, but again after five normal births, this little one, I was informed by my doctor, could not live—and neither could I if this operation was not done. I put it in God's hands and he brought us both safely through.

So, young couples, when that covenant child of yours is brought for baptism, think on those vows you are asked to take. Members of the congregation, you also have a duty, to see that this little one is brought up in the Lord.

Sarah, meaning princess, and Beth, a gift of God, is the name we chose to give our baby daughter. She is our little princess and truly God's gracious gift to all the family.

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*Mrs. Ross, a friend of Dorothy Stuke, is a member of Mission Valley OPC in Ronan, Montana where her husband Bob is an elder.*

# The Presbyterian Guardian

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## News and Views

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### OP Christian Ed Committee Focuses on Adult Education

The Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois was the location of the fall meeting of the Christian Education Committee of the OPC. In the past couple of years it has been the custom of the C. E. Committee to combine a brief study conference on some aspect of Christian education with its regular business meetings. The meeting in Wheaton was the latest such meeting. On Friday and Saturday, September 30 and October 1 the Committee considered a model of adult education which has been implemented at the Spanish River Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Boca Raton, Florida. On Monday, October 3, the Committee transacted its regular business.

The two-day conference on adult education began with a survey of the field of adult education in the church. This session was led by Mr. Paul Heidebrecht, an elder in the Bethel Church who is on the staff of Christian Service Brigade in Wheaton. Mr. Heidebrecht acquainted the Committee with a number of trends in adult education and then suggested some implications of these trends for those who carry responsibility for planning and implementing Christian education programs.

Following Mr. Heidebrecht, Dr. David Nicholas, pastor of the Spanish River Presbyterian Church, gave a full presentation of the ministry of his church to adults. He pointed out that the Spanish River Church pays attention to the context of growth as well as the specific means for growth such as Sunday school classes and Bible studies. The members of Spanish River are involved in a program

of growth which strives to integrate learning and practice as much as possible. Dr. Nicholas's presentation of the Spanish River program generated a number of questions and issues for discussion by the C. E. Committee.

In the business meeting which followed on October 3, plans were discussed for a future conference on Music in the Church. Such a conference is being planned for the Fall of 1978. Further details concerning this event will be forthcoming.

### Ethiopia Update September 1977

In mid-1976, Ethiopia launched the first "peasant army" against Eritrea province. One year later, the second peasant army is being deployed. This time, it is much larger (300,000 as against 50,000), better armed (modern automatic weapons), and better trained (the Cubans have sent advisers). But the opposition is also much stiffer. The Eritrean and People's Liberation Fronts are now said to have 30 or 40,000 (in 1976, it was 10 to 25,000). Only a few cities remain in Ethiopian control.

The Sudan is openly on the side of the frontiers. But the most significant development is the Ogaden war between Somalia and Ethiopia, which broke out immediately following the independence of Djibouti, the newest member of the UN. This tiny country, really just a seaport, is at the east end of the Ogaden, the desert area between Ethiopia and Somalia.

The Somalis, or Somali-assisted irregulars, have captured about a third of Ethiopia's territory and are threatening to consolidate their gains by seizing the main towns. Ethiopia faces the threat of being cut off from the sea by the Eritrean and Ogaden conflicts. With this double-front, plus several other opposition movements, it is possible that Ethiopia could lose the Eritrean conflict and Eritrea become independent. This would probably mean strong Arab influence in Eritrea.

Since mid-1976 the Ethiopian government has been involved in a lot of killing. In July 1976, the third highest ranking

official was executed, and with him seventeen others including the governor-general of Eritrea, with whom the OPC mission had had meetings. In February 1977, the second highest ranking official and six others were killed.

Meanwhile, "track down and kill" expeditions against the Ethiopian people (specifically "counterrevolutionaries" or "backsliders") have even increased. In May, the *Ethiopian Herald* reported a toll of 971 killed in one week. Many students have died, some by dynamite and knives to conserve bullets. The government is distributing guns to its new local civilian officials.

The United States stopped sending arms to Ethiopia in April 1977, but in June the USSR began deliveries of heavy weapons (mostly paid for by Libya). In September, prospective delivery was announced of four squadrons of MIG-21 aircraft, 200 tanks, also anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles.

In all this disorder, the religious groups do not seem to have been singled out as they are in Uganda and many other places. How clear it is that God's children are protected by God alone. "Remember them that are bound, as bound with them."

### Philadelphia OP's, RP's Get Together

In an effort to promote increased fellowship between the respective Philadelphia presbyteries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Reformed Presbyterian, Evangelical Synod, a joint presbytery conference was held on September 30-October 1 at Tuscarora Inn, a Lutheran Brethren conference center located on the Delaware River a few miles south of the Delaware Water Gap near Stroudsburg, Pa. Despite earlier gloomy predictions, weather was mild and pleasant until rain began on Saturday afternoon. The center provided excellent accommodations.

(continued on page 10)