

The Presbyterian Guardian

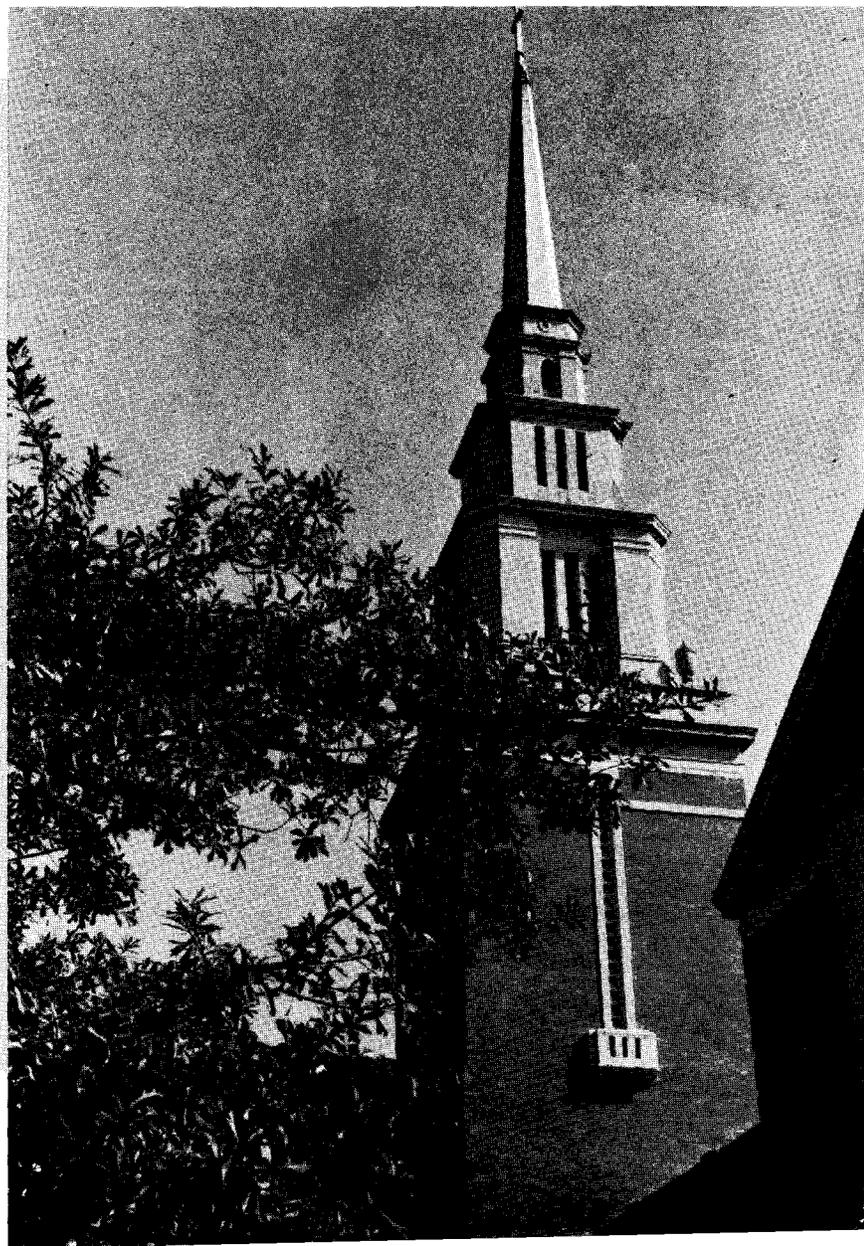
VOL. 44, NO. 9—OCTOBER, 1975

THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*Presbyterian
Church
in
America*

SEPTEMBER 9—12, 1975

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Letters

Thanks for translation articles

The August/September issue of the *Guardian* arrived this week, and I am writing in appreciation for the articles it contained. I particularly profited from Ray Dillard's stimulating article on translating the Bible and Edwin Palmer's response to an earlier review of the New International Version. His comments expressed thoughts that I have had for some time. (I suppose it is natural to consider an article as superior if it agrees with my particular point of view!)

Palmer's illustrations, however, do nearly parallel experiences I have had in my brief ministry. In Sunday school classes and youth groups I have witnessed capable junior high readers read with difficulty the King James Version as they struggled with a sentence structure and antiquated forms with which they were not familiar. New young people who came to church without a church background sometimes stumbled embarrassingly in trying to read the KJV smoothly.

I also remember one counselling session in which I asked the person (who did not regularly attend church) to read what God said about the tongue in James 3. She came to verse 4 where she read, "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, withersoever the governor listeth." It was obvious she was baffled by the style and the words and was reading without meaning. When she read the verse as follows: "Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go" — it readily made sense.

I know that God himself must enlighten a person's mind to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 32) — something even a clear translation of the Scriptures cannot do. God often

uses Spirit-filled teachers to explain the Scriptures to that end (Acts 8:27-35). Yet I do share Dr. Palmer's conviction that an accurate modern translation of the Bible should replace the KJV for the edification of the English-speaking sheep of God's flock and their little ones.

I must also readily admit that switching translations has seriously impaired my recall of passages in the Bible that I had memorized. Like many others of this generation, I grew up studying and memorizing passages from the KJV. Using different translations now has seemingly affected my ability to quote those verses accurately. (Perhaps this is due to my mind and not to changing translations.) I usually have to resort to reading them instead. I have found this especially so in using many translations for study.

It was also true that there were problems in using new translations in the worship services of the church both for members who were used to reading the KJV and for the responsive reading of the Scriptures by the congregation. The purchase of pew Bibles of a recent translation would solve the problem of reading in unison. Perhaps the pastor could then be given the liberty to use the translation in the pulpit that best reflects the original text for the sermon, as Ray suggests in his article. The session and the congregation would need to work at arriving at a practice agreeable to as many as possible in the best interest of the spiritual growth of the congregation.

Surely this is a transitional time for the church in using new translations of the Bible. It is my hope that qualified Reformed scholars will work diligently in producing a modern accurate translation of God's holy Word. I also hope that the *Guardian* will continue to provide incisive articles on the subject of translating and translations to assist us in evaluating new translations which come into print.

Lendall H. Smith
Taichung, Taiwan

Ed. note: Mr. Smith is a missionary to Taiwan of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He had formerly been pastor of Faith Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Pittsgrave, N.J.

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Christian Education

JOHN MURRAY

Anyone who is alive to and reflects upon our social responsibilities knows how colossal and complex an undertaking is the education of youth. The evils encountered by education are manifold, and there is no uniformity in the problems arising. They vary from decade to decade and from place to place, indeed from individual to individual.

This topic may be approached from the angle of an evil of which I fear too few are aware, but one that is the bane of all education. It is the bane of fragmentation. By fragmentation I mean that the pupil is not provided with what imparts a sense of unity, of wholeness, of correlation. This may most properly be called the need for and aim of *integration*. There is ground for suspicion that this directing principle is frequently absent and, therefore, those responsible for education need to address themselves to this question for self-assessment.

Perhaps the most germane example of the thesis that integration is a paramount concern of education is the place that education occupies in the fostering and development of character. Culture, however highly cultivated, has failed of its chief end if it contributes to the promotion of evil rather than good. The more highly educated the boy or girl becomes the more dangerous the education acquired if it is brought into the service of wrongdoing.

It is easy to say that fostering and cultivating good character is not the concern of the school but the function of the home and the church. Admittedly, the home and church are basically responsible and it is obvious that when they neglect this cultivating or are even remiss in it, then the school is faced with a well-nigh impossible task.

But it is apparent how devastating to the best influences exerted by the home and church will be the influence of the school if it pretends to be neutral on moral issues or if its teaching is alien to the ethical principles inculcated by home or church or both. And how chaotic for the pupil if opposing ethical norms are fostered in the same school. We know only too well to what depraved human nature inclines.

A Christian integrating view

Underlying the plea for integration and coordination in education is the need for a unified world view, a common conception of reality. If there is basic divergence in world views there cannot possibly be integration in education.

I am assuming that in this audience there is the acknowledgement that the Christian faith is ultimate for thought and outlook, that the Scriptures are the Word of God and the infallible rule for faith and practice, and that for us now special revelation from God comes to us only in these Scriptures. And I submit that on any other premise our Christian faith cannot be maintained.

I am well aware that in Christ we have the supreme revelation of God. He is God incarnate, the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of his being; he is the

If boys and girls are in the image of God, their chief end cannot be anything less than to glorify God and enjoy him. Education that is destitute of this objective has lost its direction.

focus of revelation. But this in no way displaces or prejudices the finality of Scripture because only in Scripture do we have the revelation that Christ is and only through Scripture do we come into saving contact with him.

Now if the biblical revelation is ultimate for thought, outlook, and practice, we must readily see the implications for education. Education must aim at integration and this integration must rest upon and proceed from a world view, an integrated conception of reality. The Christian, unless he is afflicted with intellectual schizophrenia, derives his integration and his world view from the Christian faith, and this means from the Christian revelation which is the Holy Scripture.

A Christian world view

The thesis is not that of religious education in schools and not simply that of Christian education in schools. The thesis does imply the latter. But there may be Christian education in schools and yet the education may not be Christian.

The reason is that the subjects which are the main business of the school curriculum are not taught from the standpoint of the world view derived from the Christian revelation. Christianity gives us a world view; it enunciates principles that underlie all our thinking if we are Christian; it prescribes the governing conceptions in terms of which we are to interpret reality. Christianity is not something tacked on to our world view; it is itself a world view. And the central features of our Christian faith are conditioned by and in turn condition that world view.

Two examples will suffice, the teaching of history and science.

History is the unfolding of God's plan in the world he created, that he sustains by his power, and that he directs in wisdom, justice, and grace. It is not that we can scan the hidden purposes of God or fathom the depths of his counsel. But how important for life to know that history is not the product of aimless fate but that God's counsel stands and he will do all his pleasure.

The grandeur of God's sovereignty must govern our view of history. No greater service can be rendered by the school than to insure that children and youth become imbued with this conception. By the same token, it is tragedy if we fail.

In respect of science, there are two principles that have

(Continued on page 142.)

Presbyterian Church in America

Third General Assembly



The Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 9, 1975, by the retiring Moderator, the Rev. Erskine L. Jackson. The assembly convened in the sanctuary of the First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi. First Church is the PCA's largest congregation with 1,958 members. Dr. Donald B. Patterson, senior pastor of the host church, welcomed the commissioners. The warm and efficient hospitality of the church was enjoyed throughout the week.

After selection of his successor, the Rev. Erskine Jackson reported that the Church is in a healthy state, growing both spiritually and numerically. Mr. Jackson later presided at the opening worship service and preached from 2 Timothy 3 on the subject, "What Good Is a Slogan?" In his sermon Mr. Jackson dealt with the PCA's slogan, "True to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith and obedient to the Great Commission." The service was concluded with the observance of the Lord's Supper.

Dr. Morton H. Smith, stated clerk of the assembly, informed commissioners that the PCA has grown from 260 congregations with approximately 41,000 members at its founding in December 1973, to 386 congregations with approximately 60,000 members presently (figures are for communicants only). There were 541 commissioners repre-

senting 279 congregations at this year's assembly.

Fraternal delegates from five U.S. denominations were present and addressed the body. These delegates represented the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, the Christian Reformed Church, and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Also in attendance was a representative from the Presbyterian Church in Brazil.

Ruling elder Leon F. Hendrick was elected moderator. The new moderator is a senior Circuit Court judge and has been a ruling elder for fifty-one years, all but two of them on the session of First Church, Jackson. Judge Hendrick's long experience both as a judge and as a presbyter fitted him well for distinguished service in the moderator's chair.

Constitutional Documents

The Constitutional Documents Committee presented its final report on the Constitution with the presentation of the Directory for Worship. The assembly adopted the Directory essentially as proposed by the committee. With the approval of the Directory, the As-

This report was prepared for the Guardian by the Rev. William H. Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Union, Mississippi.

sembly declared the Constitution to be adopted. Any further changes to the Constitution will have to be made through the regular amendment process. Until this assembly, changes in yet unrevised parts could be made by a simple majority of the assembly.

The Committee on Constitutional Documents will be continued and will begin work on Scripture proofs. Under the leadership of the Rev. Charles Dunahoo, the committee has given steady guidance to the Church through the first three assemblies during which the Constitution was being put in order.

Church Offices

The 1974 General Assembly had appointed an ad interim committee to study the number of church offices as well as to deal with a number of related overtures. (See the *Guardian* report in the August/September 1975 issue.) The committee asked that the assembly endorse as scriptural the view that "there are but two ordinary and perpetual offices in the Church—the office of Elder and Deacon—and that the Scriptures also teach that some Elders, with special gifts, calling, and preparation, serve as 'Preaching Elders.'"

The 1975 General Assembly chose to make no decision on the question, after it became obvious that there was little unanimity on the matter. Instead, the whole question was committed again to a new ad interim committee for

further study.

Comment: The issue before the PCA is an old one. It was strongly debated by Charles Hodge (three offices) and James Henley Thornwell (two offices). The Southern Presbyterian Church adopted Thornwell's view, but gradually moved away from adherence to two-office principles in its practice.

There is much sentiment in the PCA for a return to the two-office view together with changes to implement its more consistent practice. Already there is a strong emphasis on the parity of the eldership in the PCA. Yet there are some men who hold the three-office view and a number who are undecided. The report of the committee does need further investigation in the light of Scripture and the Constitution. It will be interesting to see how much if any of it will be retained by the new committee. Thornwell's writings continue to be invaluable in the study of this question (and a four-volume edition of his collected writings is newly available from the Banner of Truth Trust).

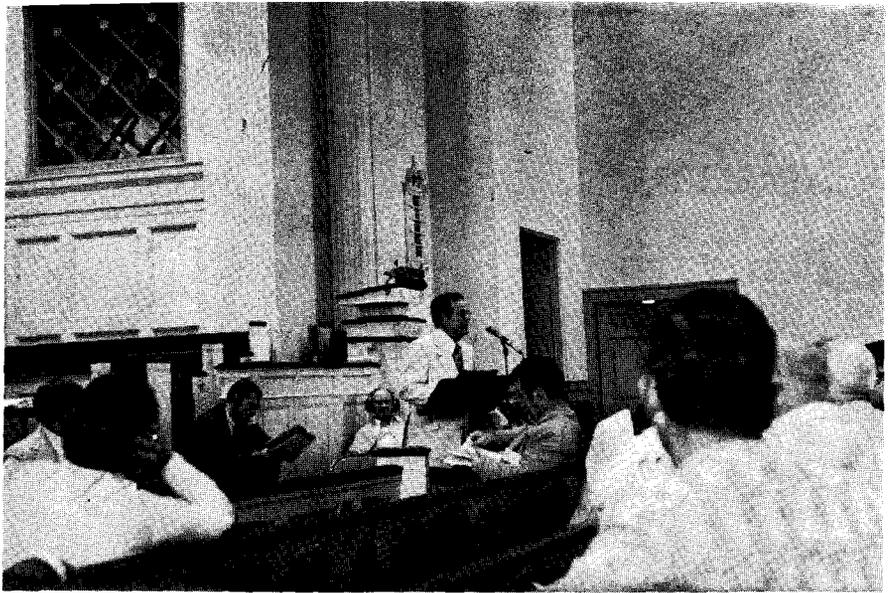
Inter-church Relations

The assembly approved without dissent the PCA's participation in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. NAPARC is the result of an initiative by the PCA in calling together the five charter denominations in Pittsburgh, October 25-26, 1974. Having approved the Council and recognizing the need for experienced leadership in this crucial area, the assembly took the extraordinary step of nullifying an earlier election of the Rev. Donald C. Graham to the Committee on Mission to the U.S. and elected him instead to fill a vacancy on the Inter-church Relations Committee.

Mission to the U.S.

The Committee on Mission to the U.S. is charged with the task of evangelism and church planting on the North American continent. The committee has labored effectively with less than adequate financial resources. Beginning with churches in fourteen states, the PCA now has congregations in twenty states. Inquiries have been received from many additional states and from Canada.

At the opening session of the assembly, two newly formed presbyteries were received, the Presbytery of Louisiana and the Presbytery of the Ascension (in Pennsylvania and Ohio). The committee expects that the PCA will con-



Host pastor, the Rev. Donald Patterson, addresses the assembly.

tinue to have a strong Southern base, but will increasingly become a truly national church. The committee was given an extension of one year to present a policy manual for assembly approval.

Denominational Budget

The Third General Assembly adopted a budget for 1976 calling for \$147,720 for the Committee on Administration (covering several "house-keeping" functions); \$429,747 for the Committee for Christian Education and Publications; \$548,529 for the Committee on Mission to the U.S.; and \$1,172,000 for the Committee on Mission to the World.

Several significant policies decisions were made regarding the budget: (1) The budget adopted for a particular year will be the spending limit for each committee. (2) Each committee will have the liberty to rearrange its budget within the approved total during the year. (3) The distribution of undesignated gifts will be decided by each annual assembly. In the past, distribution has been according to each committee's percentage share of the total budget. The distribution of undesignated gifts for 1976 was set at 40% for Mission to the World, 30% for Mission to the U.S., 20% for Christian Education, and 10% for Administration.

Recognizing the problems that three of the committees faced in meeting their 1975 budgets and the need for better stewardship within the PCA, the assembly approved a joint Sub-committee on Stewardship Ministries. This committee has already produced a film entitled, "In Partnership with God," a tithing message by ruling elder Kenneth Keyes, as well as stewardship literature. October 19 through November 16 was

designated as "commitment season" with the theme, "Show Proof of Your Love."

The assembly also recommitted a resolution stating disapproval of such fund raising methods as bazaars, rummage sales, etc. It seemed that the assembly was united in its disapproval of such methods, but desired that the resolution be more carefully drawn so as not to rule out the sale of bonds for buildings, the receipt of rent on unused church properties, etc. The heart of the resolution is to be found in the statement that "God has revealed in His Word that His Kingdom is to be supported by the cheerful, willing, and loving tithes and sacrificial offerings of His children."

Comment: One of the problems being faced in the area of financial support is that large amounts of money are going to causes outside the PCA. The 1974 statistics are revealing: Assembly Causes, \$908,334; Presbytery Causes, \$283,673; Congregational Causes, \$731,179; Non PCA Causes, \$1,947,469.

Much of the reason for this problem is probably the fact that many conservative churches had directed their money outside the Presbyterian Church, U.S., because of dissatisfaction with the liberal trends within the PCUS. One of the challenges of the current situation is to bring this money to the support of the PCA on all levels.

It remains to be seen what great things might be accomplished through the PCA if the congregations rally to the support of the Church and if our people practice tithing and sacrificial giving. There can be no doubt that the money is available to meet the proposed budgets and to increase significantly the budgets in years to come.

Christian Education

JOHN K. REEVES

The Rev. Mr. Reeves, pastor of the Moss Point (Miss.) Presbyterian Church, served as chairman of the Committee on Commissioners (a temporary assembly review committee whose members are chosen by presbyteries in advance) dealing with the report of the permanent Committee for Christian Education and Publications.

The Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America acted on over forty items in regard to the Committee for Christian Education and Publications. Space permits mentioning only a few of these.

A Family Conference on the General Assembly level was approved for 1976. It is planned for July 12-17 at Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. The joint venture with the corresponding committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to operate Great Commission Publications, Inc. was approved for five years with \$150,000 budgeted for the project in 1976. The proposed plan for extension seminaries was not adopted, though a substantial minority favored the proposal.

The Tuberculosis Clinic and Rehabilitation Center in Korea—a ministry of the Rev. and Mrs. Hugh Linton—was approved as the object of the 1976



The Rev. John Reeves reporting on Christian education matters.

Love Gift offering of the Women in the Church. Several overtures concerning the need for a denominational newspaper were referred to the permanent Committee for Christian Education and Publications for its recommendation at the next assembly.

The Rev. Paul G. Settle was reelected as coordinator for the permanent committee for 1976. Finally, the assembly gave high commendation to the permanent committee, its coordinator and its staff, for their excellent work in 1975.

Comment: The approval of the "joint venture" was certainly a very important action, especially in light of the one personal resolution presented to the assembly urging that the assembly cease and desist from this project. The overwhelming vote seemed

to show a strong support for this project that would encourage the production of Christian education materials in agreement with our confessional position.

The defeat of the extension seminary plan should be seen against the background of the fact that this project did not arise in the Christian Education Committee originally, but was given to it by the last General Assembly. The vote perhaps showed that the assembly was just not ready to get involved with extension seminaries at this time.

The comparative ease with which the Christian Education recommendations went through the assembly could well be taken as emphasizing the high commendation given to this committee and staff for their work during this past year.

Mission to the World

DON K. CLEMENTS

One of the most hotly debated issues at last year's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America was the report of the Committee on Mission to the World, especially that portion of the report that permitted the committee to cooperate with independent and interdenominational mission boards in the sending out of PCA missionaries. Therefore it was expected by most observers that the Mission to the World report at this year's assembly would also be extremely controversial.

In keeping with the purpose of the establishing of Standing Committees

for the PCA General Assembly (i.e., temporary review committees chosen by presbyteries in advance of the assembly), the Committee of Commissioners for Mission to the World met for a total of nearly twenty-six hours, breaking down into five separate subcommittees, and holding much of the time in open meetings to hear the various viewpoints being expressed within the assembly.

Besides the issue of cooperation with independent mission boards, many other important items were discussed, such as: the primary thrust of the PCA

Mission to the World; the need for presbyteries and sessions to be involved in recruiting ministers for the mission field; the relationship with individuals and churches on the foreign field who might have some connection with the World Council of Churches; the use of women missionaries; a proposed Missions Manual and Position Paper drawn up by the permanent committee; and the financial and stewardship matters of that committee.

By Wednesday night the standing Committee of Commissioners had completed its review and report, adopting all but one of its recommendations unanimously. Although there were several minor amendments made to the report on the floor of the assembly, the main thrust of the standing committee's report was fully adopted with only a little more than two hours of

open debate.

Among the recommendations approved were those continuing the Rev. John Kyle as coordinator of the permanent Committee on Mission to the World; calling for a day of prayer and fasting for world missions in the Spring of 1976; approving the use of the World Relief Commission (an agency of the National Association of Evangelicals); supporting military chaplains from the PCA (two Army chaplains are just entering on active duty this fall, and one Navy chaplain has been approved for January); and instructing the permanent committee to be "carefully biblical" in its use of women on the foreign field.

Program approved with guidelines

The major emphases of the report, however, dealt with the issues of the primary thrust of Mission to the World, and called for the permanent committee to continue to be committed to a higher proportion of church-planting-oriented missionaries as opposed to service-support missionaries (such as pilots, nurses, technicians, administrators, etc.). Added to this from the floor of the assembly was a call for the presbyteries of the PCA issue calls to at least ten additional ministers to go to the mission field during 1976.

Another major area was cooperation with those possibly involved with the

World Council of Churches. The report adopted a statement calling on the permanent committee to operate in compliance with the instructions of the First General Assembly to maintain separation from the WCC, while at the same time allowing some room for extraordinary cases where so-called "second degree separation" would require giving up a specific mission field.

The one recommendation that received the most negative debate in the assembly was one setting up machinery for extensive and careful examination of the final draft of the Missions Manual and Position Paper at next year's assembly. This recommendation called for the standing Committee of Commissioners to arrive four days in advance of the assembly's opening in order to have sufficient time to study the proposed manual and make suggested modifications and changes. This would involve some logistic and financial expense, but the report called for this measure in order to ensure to the denomination as a whole that very careful study would be given before the final adoption of this important policy-setting manual. After several amendments and substitutes were defeated, the committee's original recommendation was adopted by voice vote.

Individuals, churches, and presbyteries throughout the PCA now have until February 1, 1976 to make any

recommendations they feel are necessary to improve or to change this proposed manual, and all can be assured that next year's assembly will make a careful and detailed study of the final draft.

Comment: I was one of those who came to this Third General Assembly with some measure of fear and trembling of what might happen as a result of extreme differences within the denomination. As chairman of the Committee of Commissioners on Mission to the World (the temporary standing committee), it gave me great pleasure to see the committee members work so hard to bring out a unanimous report to the floor of the assembly, and then to see this passed with only a minimum of debate. There can be no doubt but that the Spirit of God was at work in bringing these issues to such a conclusion, and that the process set up for final approval of the Missions Manual gives safeguards to everyone who has continuing concerns in these various areas.

The Rev. Don K. Clements, pastor of the Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia, served as chairman of the Committee of Commissioners on the Mission to the World during the Third General Assembly. Mr. Clements is the prospective Navy chaplain referred to in his report and expects to go on active duty soon.

An Observer's Observation

The editor of the Guardian was able to be present throughout the sessions of the Third General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. Every courtesy was extended and fellowship with those of like precious faith was enjoyed.

The Presbyterian Church in America is less than two years old. Formed largely by a "grass roots movement" among ruling elders in the Presbyterian Church, U.S. (the "Southern Presbyterian" Church), it began its organized life on December 3, 1973 in Birmingham, Alabama. At that time, it chose as its motto a commitment to be "true to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith and obedient to the Great Commission."

More than one observer, however, has noted the existence of two tendencies within the new body. There were those who wanted the church to

be evangelical and evangelistic; others were concerned, not to deny this, but to see the church be genuinely and faithfully Reformed and Presbyterian in doctrine and practice.

This tension came to a head at the second assembly, held in Macon, Georgia, in September 1974. The "truly Reformed" party lost on a motion that would have instructed the permanent Committee on Mission to the World (foreign missions) to cease its involvement in mission activities not directed to planting or strengthening Reformed churches. At the same time, this assembly did instruct its committee to prepare a manual to govern its operations with the understanding that these concerns would be dealt with.

During the year, the persistent and able efforts of the "truly Reformed" party had their effect. Though not abandoning any of its support of mis-

sion works now in existence, the permanent committee showed itself concerned to develop a consistently Presbyterian mission testimony abroad. As approved by the Third General Assembly, the foreign mission program of the PCA is pointed in the right direction.

The decision of this assembly to enter into a five-year commitment to the "joint venture" in publications with the OPC was another step setting a pattern for the future. Though some concern about possible opposition existed before the assembly, the decision was enthusiastically positive with only a scattering of negative votes.

In the area of inter-church relations, the assembly's decision to enter NAPARC and to approve fraternal relations with solidly conservative Reformed and Presbyterian bodies, also indicated the basic commitment of this church.

Though many of the crucial decisions, particularly in regard to budget and stewardship matters, came only

after some sharp debate, this observer was greatly impressed with the general spirit of unity seen and felt in the assembly. Because of its size, debate was limited. Yet the moderator felt free to extend the limits to ensure that all views would be heard. Though there was much joking about the existence of "parties" within the assembly, there was no evidence of a party spirit.

Most encouraging, and commented on by many commissioners, was the active and effective presence of a large number of very able ruling elders. More than once a speech by a ruling elder settled a debated issue. And these elders, many of whom had given time, money, and in some cases reputation, to

see the PCA formed, were now concerned to see the church be a genuinely Presbyterian body with its agencies firmly under the control of the courts of the church.

It seems fair to say that the first two assemblies of the now-named Presbyterian Church in America were mainly concerned with determining that the new church should actually come into existence. This third assembly went far to determine the sort of church the PCA would be. The decisions taken in Jackson, Mississippi, will set the patterns for years to come.

Though not every concern of the "truly Reformed" men was fully satisfied, the steps taken were all in the

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EDITOR
JOHN J. MITCHELL

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right direction. Though some issues remain unsettled (such as the debate about the number of church offices), this assembly did act to complete its Constitution as a genuinely Presbyterian body in every respect. Though there were strong differences of emphasis to be heard, there was a beautiful degree of oneness that enabled most of the business of the assembly to be settled with near unanimity. Even where the vote was split, there was no evidence of bitterness or dismay over the results.

Is it too much to talk about a merger of the OPC, the RPCES, and perhaps other bodies, with this new group? The PCA is a healthy church, growing rapidly in size and also in doctrinal and spiritual discernment. Could it be what its name suggests, *The Presbyterian Church in America*? This observer, at least, is ready to see some active movement toward a union of all those who are "true to the Scriptures, the Reformed faith and obedient to the Great Commission."

J. J. M.



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The Presbyterian Guardian

A report on the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, N. A.

The following is adapted from the report of an R. P. pastor to his local congregation on the "Covenanter" Church synod.

There are a number of ways to report on a denominational synod. One may present a list of the actions and let the reader draw his own conclusions. One may comment on the meaning of the principal actions. Or one may go behind the actions and attempt to assess the life of the church as reflected in the spirit, temper, and quality of thought exemplified in the synod. What follows is mainly the third alternative as this pastor seeks to report pastorally to his people.

The "Christian liberty issue"

If there is one thing for Reformed Presbyterians to pray about in the years ahead it is the division that racks the Church over the "Christian liberty" question. This came to expression in the "debate" over the report of the Committee on Ordination Vows Binding the Conscience. I say "debate" because it was more a clash between two opposing ways of thinking than a debate on the application of an agreed principle.

The committee argued the *sola Scriptura* principle to show that, since the Bible did not require "total" abstinence from alcoholic beverages in every situation, the Church's guidance to its people in this area could only enjoin "total" abstinence in situations where a "weaker brother" would be caused to stumble. The committee concluded that a "virtual" rather than "total" abstinence might be expected of the Christian, it being conceivable that there are situations in which, there being no "weaker brother" to offend, there would be no biblical reason for abstinence.

This stirred the "hornet's nest." Relatively few were prepared to vote against the committee's line of argument and all except the conclusion was passed by a vote of 60-26. The opposition asserted the right of the Church to make rules binding on all members even where Scripture is silent. But, as the committee pointed out, Scripture is not silent on this since it enjoins the

use of (fermented) wine in a number of instances. One speaker was prepared to agree with that, but only for Bible times; Jesus, he said, would not have made or consumed wine in today's world of rampant alcoholic abuse. So much for *sola Scriptura!*

Others apparently felt there is no situation where some "weaker brother" might not be caused to stumble and so they balked at the committee's conclusion. The following sentence—"The practical result of this requirement will be a virtual abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages, etc."—was amended (by a vote of 44-41) by changing "virtual" to "total". A number of commissioners dissented from the final report as adopted, because it had been made logically inconsistent.

As adopted, the report enshrines a basic inconsistency in that it asserts that (1) the Bible does not teach total abstinence, but on occasion recommends the use of beverage alcohol; (2) the R. P. Church is racked by disagreement on this whole issue; and (3) the Church is going to go on requiring total abstinence anyway. Obviously, there are tensions in this deliverance that must be resolved.

The question of "Close Communion"

The committee on the subject of "Close Communion" failed to produce a report although the last synod had instructed it to bring in changes for our practice of communion in accord with the new "Terms of Communion" sent down last year. But the "Terms" themselves failed to gain the approval of a majority of sessions and such a report became irrelevant.

At the same time, the Synod was faced with requests from one session and two presbyteries to change from the present "Close Communion" (requiring participants to give full creed subscription before communing) to "Restricted Communion" (allowing some Christians to commune who are not members of the R. P. Church and do not subscribe in full to the R. P. creed).

Changes in harmony with these re-

quests were proposed and adopted (71-13) and sent down for adoption. The effect would be to permit "Session-controlled Communion" that (1) would allow professing Christians belonging to some "true branch of the visible church" to be admitted to the Lord's Supper upon examination by the session, and (2) would not allow casual visitors or those unknown to the session to be invited to the Table.

The changes leave a great deal of careful application to the local sessions. What constitutes a "true branch of the visible church"? When do even professing Christians, because of lax attendance, become properly subject to denial of the Table? Much prayerful consideration will be needed before the first "Session-controlled Communion" is held in an R. P. church.

Further comment:

In a pre-synodical conference, one speaker analyzed the statistical trends of several churches. The Christian Reformed Church is in "serious" condition; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is "critical"; and the RPCNA is "terminal." Only the RPCES showed much life. And it is true that many RPCNA congregations are just a handful of deaths away from closing.

When we look at our buildings, and committees disbursing thousands of dollars, the Church seems so permanent; it's here to stay. But when we see the church as the body of Christ—and never more so than when we gather for worship—the permanence seems to dissolve and the specter of enfeebled congregations strikes us. The time has come to rend, not our garments in self-pity, but our hearts in evangelical repentance, calling on the Name of the Lord in whom alone we may become a living witness to the gospel in this needy world.

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America was held at Geneva College concurrently with those of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church during the first week of June.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

(Continued from page 135.)

to be borne in mind. The first is that the pursuit of science is in fulfillment of God's mandate to subdue the earth and therefore to bring its resources into the service of man. This should impress upon us the dignity of the vocation of scientific research. This is the Christian attitude and it is not too early for pupils at the primary level to be imbued with this attitude as their teachers seek to demonstrate the wonders and treasures of the world in which they live and from which they derive their sustenance.

The second principle is that "the highest aim of scientific investigation" is "to glorify God by bringing to light the wonders which God fabricated into the structure of this marvellous world and the universe of which it is a part" (G. H. Girod in *Torch and Trumpet*, Sept. 1967, p. 4). We should be constrained to exclaim at every stage of scientific progress, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom thou hast made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalm 104:24).

It is readily seen how radically different the classroom becomes when these two principles govern the thought of the teacher and are therefore communicated to the pupils. And let it not be forgotten that no other orientation is compatible with the world view our Christian faith provides and demands.

In other words, every thought is brought into captivity to Christ and therefore to the revelation of which Christ is the focus. And the Christian teacher abandons his or her faith at the point of vocation in life if he or she fails to bring this integration to bear upon the education conducted. In a word, education must be Christian. And this means far more than that the teacher acts as a Christian; it means that the subject matter must derive its integrating principle from Scripture.

Christian view of creation

It is not difficult to illustrate how this orientation comes to expression and conditions the character of instruction. No tenet is more basic in our Christian faith than the doctrine of creation, that God created the heavens and the earth. This is the answer to the whence of our world.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That God made the world and all things is close to the first, if not the first, element of nursery instruction. And it is a capital mistake to think that this concept diminishes in relevance as education advances. No question is more urgent than that of whence. Whence our environment? Whence the universe in which we live?

Correlative is the doctrine of God's providence, that not only did God make the world but that he sustains it by his power and directs it by his wisdom, and that, as we have derived our being from him, so in him we live and move and have our being.

We are painfully aware of the extent to which aimlessness, frustration, and despair have gripped our generation. Life for so many is devoid of meaning or purpose. Are we to suppose that our schools have no responsibility? Admittedly the family and church bear a large share of the default creating this situation. But unless the school fosters the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, the influence of the home and church, even when it is highly exemplary, tends to be negated. It is common knowledge that in many cases the school has undermined what home

and church have sought to establish and develop.

On the other hand, it is to the credit of teachers and schools that when home and church have gone by default, these teachers and schools have done the greatest service in filling the vacuum left in the cultivating of the pupils.

Christian view of man

I have referred to creation by God and to his all-sustaining and directing providence as basic to the world view that Christian revelation provides and, therefore, as indispensable to the integration a biblically oriented education will furnish. But there is another aspect of the Christian revelation that is fundamental to this same objective. Education is concerned with human beings. But what is, who is man?

Education apart from any conception of man as to his distinguishing identity, purpose, and destiny is inconceivable. Many teachers may not be intelligently aware of the theory underlying their teaching practice. But theory there must be. If it is not determined by conscious reflection on the part of the teacher, it has been shaped by tradition, or by the training the teacher received, or by the educational system in which the teacher plays a part.

If education is to be Christian, it must be based upon and conducted in terms of the Christian view of man. Otherwise it is not Christian, and if not Christian, it is alien and opposed to Christian interests.

What is man? What is his distinct identity and office? Here the Christian faith is unequivocal. The whence of man is, with all other things, the creative action of God. But what is his identity? It is that man was made in the image of God—not that the image of God is in man, but that man is in the image of God, man *is* God's image.

This is man's definition and it involves his function and purpose. The implications for education are obvious. Of paramount importance perhaps is the observation that education is hereby placed in an entirely different perspective by reason of the dignity belonging to the being of man and the corresponding responsibility devolving upon those concerned with the cultivating of that being.

To put it pointedly, education is concerned not with entities but with persons who are the image of God, persons with respect to whom this is most ultimate: they are made in the image of God. When teachers become imbued with this conception, then their vocation comes to be viewed in an entirely different perspective.

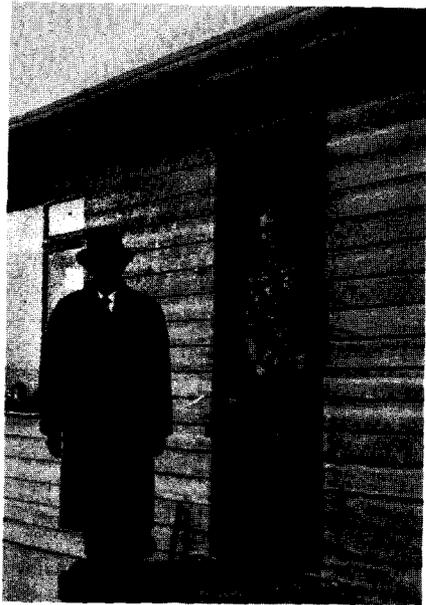
Christian view of man's goal

When the Westminster Assembly began their Shorter Catechism with the answer, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever," it was giving not only the keynote of a sound theology; it was enunciating a foundation principle of sound pedagogy.

If boys and girls are in the image of God, if that is their identity, their chief end cannot be anything less than to glorify God and enjoy him. Education that is destitute of this objective, or has allowed it to suffer eclipse, has lost its direction. That the glory of God and the enjoyment of him is the goal of all life is surely an axiom of Christian profession. Education cannot be an exception.

Christian view of redemption

If education is to be conducted in terms of the viewpoint provided by the Christian faith, then to ignore what is central in the Christian faith would be impossible. *To



Professor and Mrs. John Murray, with Logan and Ann Margaret, in picture taken in early 1975.

First Scottish Christian School

During the last few years of his life, Professor John Murray became very involved in the cause of parent-controlled Christian schools in Scotland. He helped organize a committee of teachers and parents who shared these convictions, and he spoke in a number of places in the Highlands on the nature and need of Christian education. He also arranged for the Rev. Geoffrey Thomas of Aberystwyth to speak at a number of meetings in October 1973 in Inverness and Dingwall which he chaired.

As a result of this activity and Professor Murray's leadership, the first Christian school in Scotland opened on September 10, 1974 at Balvraid, Dornoch, with six pupils ages 4 to 8 years. Professor Murray drove his son Logan the 14 miles to the school each day, where he was very happy.

This new school has incurred con-

siderable expense for furnishings and in purchasing a car to transport the children. On April 29, 1975, a meeting was arranged in Glasgow to explain to the Christians of southern Scotland the nature of Christian schools and to seek their support. The speaker again was the Rev. Geoffrey Thomas and that morning he was privileged to spend a little time with Professor Murray. The committee of the Christian School Society is certainly going to miss Mr. Murray's counsels and leadership. Their secretary is R. W. M. Mackenzie, Hilton of Cadboll, Fearn, Ross-shire IV20 1XP, Scotland.

We are indebted to the Rev. Geoffrey Thomas, pastor of the Alfred Place Baptist Church in Aberystwyth, Wales, for sending us this information and the lecture by Professor Murray reproduced here.

ignore what is central would nullify the Christian character of education. What is central? It is redemption, and redemption presupposes the need for redemption—sin in its guilt, defilement, and power.

Education is directed to those who are natively in rebellion against God. The essence of sin is to be against God and against our fellow human beings. This is its extreme gravity and the judgment of God is correspondingly extreme. If we fail to take account of our definition as human beings made in the image of God, then education misses its chief end to glorify God. But it is the fact that man is in God's image that makes sin so serious and makes all the more indispensable a specifically Christian instruction, an instruction centered in the realities of sin and redemption.

All of this is implicit in the term "Christian education." If it is Christian, it is Christ-centered and must find its focus in all that is involved in the person and work of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord. Only the provisions of God's grace in Christ meet our need. To withhold from pupils the elements of the Christian faith is not only to conceal from them the realities of life but also to deprive them of the only means of meeting the exigencies and crises of life and of fulfilling the great end of their existence. To put it bluntly, it is to damn them to godlessness.

A Christian view in all subjects

It is plausible to maintain that, although the implications of the Christian faith have a close bearing upon the teaching of history, for example, yet in the teaching of languages, arithmetic, or mathematics, there could not be any difference between the secular school and the Christian school. Are we to suppose that there is a Christian Latin as distinct from non-Christian, a Christian arithmetic as distinct from non-Christian? This is not the contention of those espousing the cause of Christian education and it is a misunderstanding or misrepresentation to suppose or aver that it is. But the implications of the Christian faith have, nevertheless,

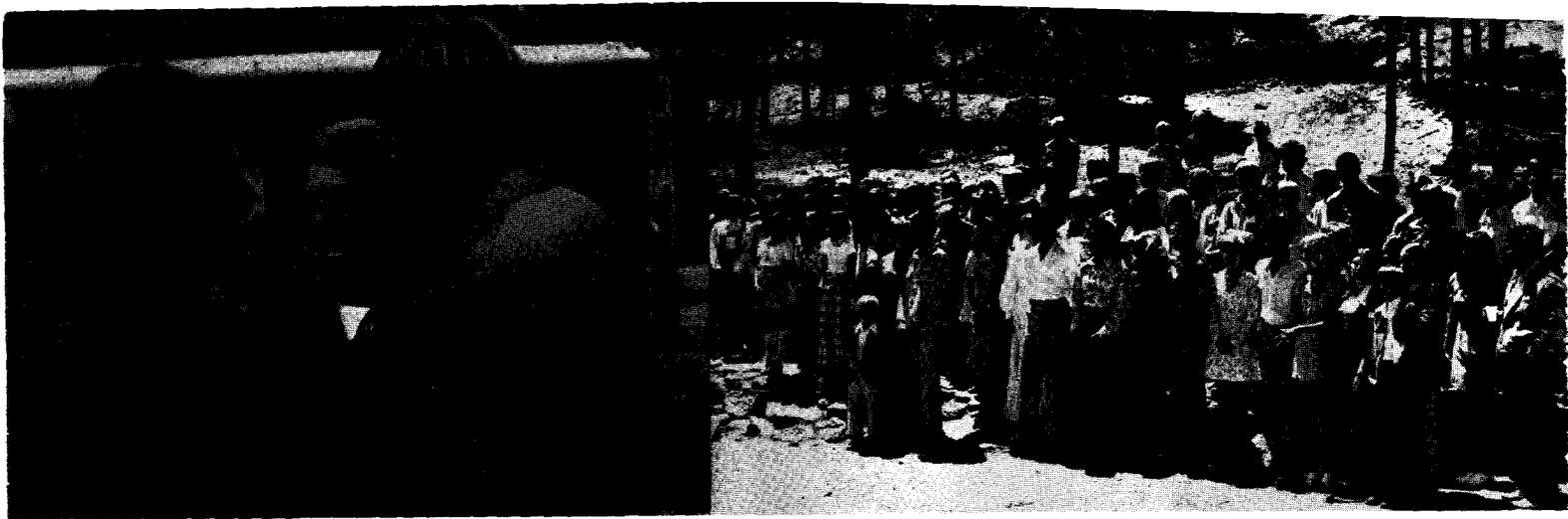
the most intimate bearing on instruction concerned with such subjects.

For example, in the subject of language it is a platitude to say that language is a most interesting phenomenon. But I submit that it is not a platitude to say that it is an astounding phenomenon. I also submit that there is a lamentable hiatus in the teaching of language if this feature is not impressed upon the student. For this hiatus neglects what supplies the highest motivation and incentive to language study. The point here is: Why does man speak? Why is there for man the privilege of such diversified and enriching communication? The reason is that God speaks and man speaks because he is made in the image of God. This is the foundation of Christian education as it is concerned with language and literature.

Or let us think of mathematics. It is not that there is a Christian and non-Christian mathematics. It is that in the Christian school mathematics is integrated with the world view provided and demanded by the Christian revelation. And the difference is concerned with this integration and the bringing of every subject into the service of the kingdom of God and of his Christ.

To conclude then, the sum is: "The whole range and content of education must be God-centered; that is, God must be the unifying principle and the interpreting principle of the whole curriculum" (*Blue Banner Faith and Life*, July-Sept. 1967, p. 128).

Professor John Murray, after a long and fruitful ministry of teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary, returned to his beloved Scotland. His interest in Christian schools goes back many years and he was an active supporter of efforts to establish such schools in the Philadelphia area. We rejoice that his own son may benefit from this interest. Professor Murray was called home to the Lord on May 8, 1975; a Christian school in Scotland is a fitting memorial to his life.



Sequel - Camp Elim, 1975

In the May issue of the Guardian, there appeared several pictures from the 1974 Bible conference at Camp Elim, in connection with a discussion of summer activities for young people. What follows is a report of Camp Elim 1975 supplied by the Rev. Donald J. Duff, pastor in Grand Junction, Colorado, and treasurer for the camp.

Camp Elim, the young people's camp of the O. P. Presbytery of the Dakotas, was held July 21 - 28 near Pinecliffe, Colorado. There were eighty-four campers and twenty-four staff members present. Every church and chapel in the presbytery (which covers not only the

Dakotas, but Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Montana), with one exception, was represented by either a camper or staff member.

Travel and distance are always important factors of going to Camp Elim. This year there were a good many stories to be told of breakdowns along the way. The bus from Oklahoma City broke a universal joint; the carload from Abilene, Texas, had waterpump trouble; and the people from North Dakota experienced a whole series of problems.

This year the subject for the classes was the doctrine of man. In the eve-

nings the Rev. Glenn Black preached on the theme of "The Christian Home." The first evening Mr. Black told the fascinating story of his wartime experiences and gave his personal testimony to the Lord's goodness. On Saturday, in place of the regular classes, the young people conducted a worship service they had prepared for during the week.

Friday night was the traditional banquet night. The "clans" competed in decorating the tables in accordance with the theme, "Creation." The clans also competed each evening in a quiz on Genesis. On Saturday there was competition in skits, in addition to the week-long competitions in softball, volleyball, relays, rifling, archery, horseshoes, and ping pong. In the past two years there has been a race for boys up Carey Rock, which towers several hundred feet over the camp.

On Sunday afternoon there was a musical program in which many of the campers performed on various instruments. There was also a slide presentation on some marvels in astronomy by Mr. Ronald Wahl, an elder in the Park Hill Church in Denver. After the evening service, camp ended with a campfire service.

As early as 4:00 a.m. on Monday, the campers began to get up and most had left by 6:00 a.m. Many of them would not be home until late that evening. Some would not arrive until the next day.

Although up to 1000 miles separate the campers for another year, hundreds of letters will be written, and some phone calls made. Already within three weeks of camp, four or five campers have traveled over 800 miles to visit their friends from camp. Thus, while Camp Elim 1975 is over for many, it served to start waves of activity that will continue to ripple until camp is held next year.

A New Conference

"Uncle John Calvin says that true wisdom consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." With such historic words was launched an historic occasion: the first Youth Bible Conference of the (OPC) Presbytery of Northern California.

Uttering such classically Reformed wisdom was none other than the Rev. Robert Atwell whose zeal for Bible camp, love for young people, and wealth of Bible knowledge made him the obvious choice for evening speaker. Mr. Atwell was also instrumental in beginning the French Creek (Penna.) Bible Conference some thirty years ago. French Creek continues to be one of the most popular and effective conference ministries.

The new conference was held in Covenant Chalet's cozy quarters located some 5000 feet up the beautiful Sierra Mountains. The limited facilities were jammed with nearly sixty junior and senior highs who studied, slept,

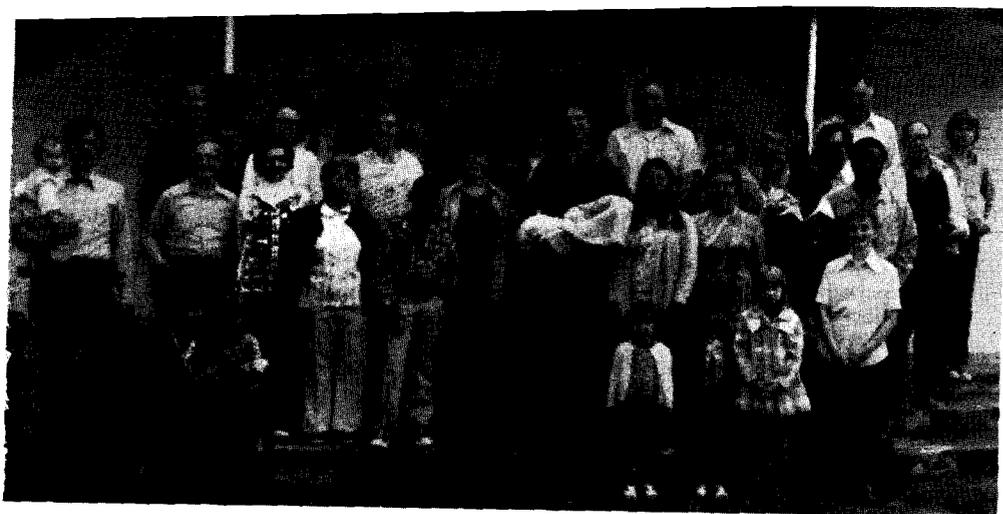
ate and played together for the six days of July 14 - 19.

During the morning hours, the Rev. Roger Wagner, pastor in Sonora, taught "What's So Great about Being Saved?" Counselor-led Bible studies focused on Philippians. The theme, "How to be Happy" was emphasized throughout.

Volleyball competition was fierce, but afternoon activities varied from ping pong, horseshoes and swimming to hiking and fishing. Some of the more monetarily endowed found time to go horseback riding.

God's blessing was readily seen in the cheerful cooperation of kitchen crew, counselors and teaching staff, testimony of spiritual blessing from several young people, and the reasonable degree of safety enjoyed by all.

The Rev. Rollin Keller, pastor in Modesto, served as director, and prepared this report.



A Family Conference

What's a family conference? Just ask any of the forty-two who attended the 1975 Presbytery of the Dakotas (OPC) Family Conference in Hordville, Nebraska, June 9-14. They may tell you that it is a chance to travel as much as 600 miles to get to relax. (Camper families came from Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North

Dakota.)

Or perhaps they'll tell you that it is a chance to enjoy God's creation. It is also an opportunity to hear special speakers such as the Rev. Robert W. Eckhardt from Vineland, N.J., who spoke this year on the book of Revelation, and the Rev. Theodore Hard from Pusan, Korea, who talked about the

"Cultural Mandate."

The kids might tell you that they liked learning of Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* and of weeds and useful things in God's creation. (They may also inform you that the conference president is the one who decides what is a weed and what isn't!)

The young people and young-at-heart will mention all the volleyball and ping pong games mixed in with shuffleboard, tennis, basketball, baseball, swimming, and boating. And the ladies? They liked, among other things, no dishes or meals to tend to.

All, both young and old, would probably be sure to tell you of the blessed fellowship that they had with one another in Jesus Christ. "And we thank our God upon every remembrance of you all."

Reported by the Rev. Glenn D. Jerrell, pastor of the Winner, S.D., church and director of the Family Conference.

National Union of Christian Schools Annual Convention

Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff, professor of philosophy at Calvin College, gave the keynote address for the 1975 Christian School Convention in Holland, Michigan. The convention was jointly sponsored by the National Union of Christian Schools (a federation of 300 parent-controlled elementary and secondary schools in the United States and Canada) and the Association of Christian School Administrators.

Approximately 900 persons attended some part of the three-day program held at Hope College and Holland Christian High School. The official representation from member schools was about 275.

The convention theme was "Vision Founded — Fabric for the Future." Dr. Wolterstorff chose to modify that wording to "Movement Founded — Vision for the Future." Dr. Wolterstorff said:

"The Christian school movement remains what it was at its beginning: A protest movement against a fundamental feature of North American life. By our support of these schools we are declaring that we find the in-

stitution of the public school unsatisfactory, so unsatisfactory that we endure severe financial burden and, if necessary, hostility and ridicule in order to provide an alternative education for our children."

In addition to reminders about the founding principles of the Calvinistic school movement in America, the program provided current topics of concern for board members, administrators, parents, and teachers. Issues such as who should enroll in Christian schools, community relations, credentials and evaluation, learning and Christian action, constitutional rights, and more, were discussed in workshops and small groups. Various curriculum topics were also treated.

One major concern throughout was the enrollment and enlargement of the Christian school constituency. The Calvinistic school movement developed mainly within the Christian Reformed Church communities. The NUCS is constitutionally committed to a Reformed position. How to reach a wider Christian community and maintain the Reformed identity was thoroughly discussed.

Continuing tension in Dutch church

Under pressure to take a more clear-cut position in regard to the admittedly unconfessional views of Professor Wiersinga, among which is his denial that Christ's death was a substitutionary sacrifice, the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) spelled out its dissatisfaction with Wiersinga's views and in effect made Dr. Wiersinga's standing in the church more precarious. The Synod, however, has consistently refused to undertake formal discipline in the matter, preferring to urge Wiersinga to study his views and bring them into more conformity to the church's confessions.

Following the latest Synod statement, an open letter was addressed to all the churches urging everyone to do everything possible to avoid another schism in the church, and pleading for a "freedom to seek new answers to new questions in the light of the Gospel." In commenting on this letter, Dr. H. Ridderbos notes that the authors of the letter ignore the crucial issue: Was Synod right in saying that Wiersinga's view constitutes a denial of a confessional truth? Some observers predict if not a schism at least there will be a polarization into two distinct camps within the church.

God made me laugh, too

JOAN ENGLISH

Laugh? when your house and many of your possessions go up in smoke? Laugh, when you, a high school math teacher, find yourself about to teach your own four boys in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5? Laugh, as you are about to return to Korea where there is little fellowship and life is harder than in the States? Laugh, as you leave your parents, brothers and sisters, and the many friends with whom you have had such wonderful fellowship for the past year? Laugh, as you prepare to spend part of the next year in crowded quarters while keeping an eye on the construction of a new house by carpenters with whom you can barely communi-

Testimonial to Virginia

By the grace of God, I was privileged to be a member of the Presbyterian Constitutional Covenant Union and to attend its last meeting in Philadelphia in June 1936, and to be present at the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America (later the Orthodox Presbyterian Church). I am a charter member of this church.

On September 3, 1938, my wife Virginia and I were married at Westminster Seminary and God has blessed us during these thirty-seven years. On this, our anniversary, I want to thank God for his love for us and for Virginia's love for me. I want to make this statement concerning her: She is truly a "business and professional woman," making it her business to make a continuing profession of faith in Christ as her Lord and Savior.

If you can find space in the *Guardian*, I would sincerely appreciate your printing this testimonial to her.

Paul Rainey
Grove City, Penna.

cate?

Yes, God in his grace has given the ability to laugh in the face of all these things. God in his grace has given peace of mind and confidence in his strength that is sufficient for all things and is made perfect in my weakness. And I would like to share with you the means that God used to bring me to this point.

As I returned to the U.S. a year ago, enjoying the fellowship of many Christian women, being fed spiritually through church services and the local women's Bible study group, seeing the tremendous benefits of a truly Christ-centered education for the boys in the Christian school, and enjoying the ease of life in America, I had to admit that I was in no hurry to return to Korea.

In fact, I was hoping that circumstances would keep us in America. And as the year progressed and I had progressively less desire to return, I also realized that I had to make it a matter of prayer that God would give me a willingness to return to Korea. This became even more apparent as I saw several ministers whose work was being harmed simply because their wives were not happy in the place their husbands had chosen to work. God had led my husband to work in Korea and I would go with him because that was my place. But I began to pray that God would make me *want* to go.

And God answered my prayer — by burning down my house! At least that was the start of his work. Or maybe I should go back a week earlier. That was when Vicki Rustand lost her husband and it was apparent to all who knew her that God can and does sustain in times of trial. The following Tuesday a friend handed me a book, *God Made Me Laugh* (by Richard Watson, Cross Publications, Wilmington, Del.). On Wednesday morning I

began reading this excellent autobiographical account of God's providence. (I cannot recommend the book too highly.)

Then I left the house for a while and when I returned at noontime, Ralph greeted me with a glum face and the announcement of "bad news." Thoughts of my parents and his flashed through my mind. Then Ralph said the news was from Korea, and I immediately thought of the Hunts. By the time he told me that our house in Korea had burned down with most of our things, it was such a relief that there was no room for despair. God in his providence had focused my attention on his providence and then had caused the news to be broken to me in such a way as to cause joy rather than despair.

In the following six weeks many things were brought home to me. As I received expressions of sympathy from many people, I realized more and more that my peace of mind was truly a gift of God. As the task of buying replacements began and things were found with little effort and at bargain prices, God's care for his children was made ever more real. And as I considered these things, God gave the assurance that if he can give strength and peace of mind when faced with these things, then his strength is sufficient for teaching one's own children and facing any difficulties of living wherever you may be.

God has made me laugh, rejoicing in his grace for the trials of life.

Mrs. English serves with her husband, the Rev. Ralph English, as missionaries to Korea for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. They have returned to the field and are presently doubling up with the Bruce Hunts while a new house is being built.

Honey with a pinch of salt

Everybody knows the story of the high school senior who went away to college and returned a year later to be amazed at how much his parents had learned while he was gone. As my children progress through college I do not think I am getting any smarter.

To be truthful, I am having trouble keeping up with junior high school. Only last night at supper I had to admit in front of an eighth grader that I did not know the composition of the earth's crust, what a binomial is, or what happened 200 years ago in Trenton, New Jersey. And if my pride was not sufficiently demolished by these admissions of ignorance, I have had to confess that I must baste a zipper to get it in straight and I do not feel comfortable wearing stripes with polka dots.

I am glad that my role of mother does not depend upon my knowing everything. The fruit of the Spirit — for which I *am* accountable — does not require me to be a walking encyclopedia. In fact, my knowledge gaps even make me more believable. A child has to feel sympathy for a person who adopted the layered look as late as last Tuesday!

Authority and flexibility

Is it insecurity that causes Christian parents to grab hold of Ephesians 6:1 with such tenacity? They see those words, "Children obey your parents in the Lord," and proceed to exercise their authority over every aspect of a child's life, whether their opinions and directions make any sense or not. And then, having issued a command, parents cannot retract it, no matter how unreasonable it proves to be. A rule is a rule, they say, and cannot be changed. One would think they were Baby-

lonians living in the reign of Darius the Mede.

Judging from the comments made by the myriad teenagers who have graced our living room rug over the years, I would say their parents' arbitrariness is the most distressing aspect of family life. One girl, who had to be home from a date by midnight, asked her father for permission to go to a concert that finished at 11:30. He said, sure she could go, as long as she was home by twelve! Since the girl had been most conscientious about getting in on time, would it have been so awful to give her an extra half hour for a special occasion?

Is flexibility a sin? Can we not adjust to the current mores of teenage culture without feeling threatened? Didn't *we* have clothes fads and our own music? Time passed and we grew up. So will our children. Meanwhile, we parents can prevent much friction if we cease making authoritarian pronouncements on such temporary phenomena as Elton John and knee socks with toes in them. If we did, well-spaced comments on moral and ethical issues would be much better received.

Parents are not God, nor gods, to be followed blindly without reason. We do not know everything. We are not always right. Why, it was this very morning that I learned that my Spanish pronunciation is really terrible. And this from a student finishing her first year of the language. It's a good thing I don't have to go back to junior high. I'd never make it past the seventh grade.

Thanks, Jean. Your salt has not lost its savor. We parents need to bear it plainly and pointedly put at times.

JEAN SHAW

Dear Sarah:

What does it mean today for a child to honor his parents?

— J. M.

Dear J. M.:

The same thing it has *always* meant. God has not changed, neither has human nature. That is why God's Word still has the same answers for people today as it did in Abraham's day.

To honor one's parents means to respect, listen to and obey them, if you are still under their authority. It also means to love, treat kindly, and help them regardless of whether you are subject to them or not. Certainly these were Jesus' attitudes as a child (Luke 2:51) and then at his death (John 19:26, 27).

— Sarah

Dear Readers:

A year has transpired. Do you like Genesis 2:22? Has it spoken to you? Verbally, you tell us it has. But the pen-in-hand needed to keep the pages worthwhile has been slow.

We could use more of the type of thinking that makes you arch your back in the chair and say, "aye" or "nay" with conviction. One good example has been the Hardesty-Scanzoni exchange. It made you cry loudly, "But without the Hardestys and Scanzonis of a few years ago, there could not have been the Susan Fohs of today." You reacted. Surely more of you have thoughts to share.

And "Sarah" asks, "Have I been of any help to you? There's no use filling space just to fill it, and feedback is almost nothing in response to my column. In fact, there have been only enough 'Dear Sarah' letters just to keep up with one for each issue; I'm never sure if there'll be one to answer the next month.

"Do you read this column? Is there anyone with helpful suggestions for better use of the space? I want to hear from you. Your honest comments will be appreciated. Sarah."

So, with the onset of school, family routines are reestablished. You can bring forth the thoughts you've tucked away during the summer, and mail them to: Mrs. Leonard Rolph, Rt. 2, Box 9, Glenwood, WA 98619.

In His service,

Juanita Rolph

The Changing Scene

HENRY W. CORAY

"Comedy," said Aristotle, "is serious business."

It is indeed. For example, notice how the writer of Proverbs exposes the sin of sloth by quoting the sluggard, too indisposed to get up and go to work, excusing his laziness as he mutters, "There is a lion without; I shall be slain in the streets" (22:13).

Or this one: "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the sluggard upon his bed. The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish; it wearieth him to bring it to his mouth" (26:14, 15).

And picture the harried husband of a shrew taking up his residence on the roof of his abode. A passing pedestrian, struck by this weird maneuver, calls out to ask, "Why?" The answer: "It is better to dwell in the corner of a house-top than with a brawling woman in a wide house" (21:9). Solomon, who has given us the illustration, obviously wrote from bitter experience. Of the seven hundred wives in his household, there can be little doubt than some made domestic life intolerable for the king.

(A careful observer of human nature has remarked that Solomon married seven hundred wives because he figured at least one would understand him!).

Spurgeon wit

Whereas comedy is a serious business, on the other hand it must be accounted, in God's providence, a real blessing when rightly practiced. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was gifted with a sparkling wit. "There is," he mused, "as much holiness in a laugh as in a tear."

Once when contributions for the new tabernacle were being brought in, one of Spurgeon's members informed him that a Mr. Pig had given the church a guinea. "Hm," Spurgeon said drily, "a guinea pig." When introduced to a deacon named Alway, the prince of preachers put out his hand and said, "Rejoice in the Lord, Always."

On another occasion he met a Wesleyan Methodist minister on the street. "Mr. Spurgeon," the Methodist said, "I have read all the passages on election you told me to read and I don't come out the way you do at all. I simply cannot believe in unconditional election. Tell you what I did. I got down on my knees and read the passages, and I still don't come out the way you do." "My friend," replied the Calvinist preacher, "that's exactly your trouble. You go home and sit in a nice comfortable chair and read those passages and you'll come out the way I do."

Pastors of the sheep

Dr. Jay E. Adams has turned out an excellent handbook for ministers in his *Shepherding God's Flock* (Vol. 1), Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1974). It is full of solid counsel for men of the cloth—and for laymen too, because it gives the latter a prospectus on what to expect (and not to expect) of their pastors.

This little work, like God's law, is exceedingly broad. It covers a multitude of down-to-earth practical thoughts on the clergyman's call, his family and social life, preaching, visitation, counseling, the ticklish matter of candidating, and his personal habits. Problems for the young shepherd are anticipated. Advice for the veteran of the pulpit is also helpful. I was especially impressed with the last three chapters on visitation, where a great deal of good as well as a vast amount of damage may be done depending on one's approach.

Not a few preachers, disenchanted with the hard, sometimes tortuous role of the profession, have thrown in the towel and given up. Dr. Adams has entered sympathetically into the headaches and heartaches of the shepherd of the flock. His treatment of problems ought to prove to be "balm in Gilead" for tired and discouraged workmen on the walls of Zion.

Adams is right when he states: "What the church most needs today is wise shepherding; shepherding that senses the true nature of the longings, the fears, the troubles and the acute needs of the flock. Creative shepherding will lead to guiding the flock into greener pastures and beside still waters" (p. 79). This book merits a wide reading.

On the Active Roll

My minister tells me
He met a fellow-clergyman on the street.
And so he asked the question,
"How many members are in your flock?"
"Two hundred and twenty," the answer was.
"And are they active?" my pastor said.
"Oh, yes," replied the second man.
"Very active, indeed."
"Half of them are actively for me
"And half actively against me."

The Old Chinese Philosopher