

Meeting the Crisis in Our Church

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TO intelligently understand the seriousness of the crisis we face in our Church today it is helpful to know how we got where we are — why is it that our beloved Church with such an outstanding record of service during the first 90 years of its ministry has in the last 20 years lost much of its evangelical zeal, its primary mission confused, its gospel message blunted until we have reached the point where the very existence of our Church is in grave danger? I shall try to give you the basic facts as briefly as possible.

I. HOW THE LIBERALS GAINED CONTROL.

Some time during the forties a group of ministers led by a professor in one of our seminaries formed a highly secret organization known as the Fellowship of St. James. The names of their members were never revealed. Their meetings were never mentioned in the Church press. When the existence of the group became known, anyone who inquired regarding their purpose was told that they met to study and discuss theology. Their true purpose, however, was to plot and plan to gain control of our Church — to divert the Church from its Bible-centered evangelistic mission and to institute a program where the so-called “social gospel” and involvement in social, economic and political matters would play a primary part. These men realized that to bring about this radical change they must first get their men elected to key positions in the Church courts and they proceeded to do exactly that.

1. They initiated the rotation system for church officers. In many churches conservative ruling elders were gradually rotated off and replaced with men who were not as well informed regarding Presbyterian doctrine, men who could be led by their ministers to accept without question the new policies and programs promoted by the Fellowship of St. James group.

2. Meeting secretly and planning their strategy well in advance of meetings, these men soon gained control of many presbyteries and synods. They elected their hand-picked men to serve as Commissioners to the General Assembly. They in turn elected liberal moderators and it wasn't long before they were in control of most of the boards, agencies, commissions and important committees of the Church. In the last 10 to 15 years their control was so complete that Assembly votes on controversial issues usually ran 3 and even 5 to 1 in favor of their liberal position.

3. In 1963 the Fellowship of St. James leaders came out in the open, forming an organization known as The Fellowship of Concern. They announced that their primary purpose was to raise funds to help liberal ministers in difficulty with their congregations over their stand on racial matters. But their true purpose, disclosed in a circular soliciting members, was to work for union with the United Presbyterian Church, USA, to strengthen our participation in the National Council of Churches and the World Council and to support the higher critical view of the Bible.

The question could well be asked — how was this minority group able to gain control when the majority of our church

officers and members were and still are basically conservative? The answer is that ruling elders simply did not take their responsibility seriously enough and far too many of our conservative ministers were reluctant to take a stand. And our four Church-supported seminaries poured forth a steady stream of new ministers who had been indoctrinated in the Fellowship of St. James philosophy by liberal professors. Had we ruling elders girded up our loins and aggressively resisted what was happening 10-15 years ago we wouldn't be facing the crisis we face today.

II. THE RISE OF THE CONSERVATIVES.

Under the able leadership of Dr. L. Nelson Bell and Dr. Henry B. Dendy *The Presbyterian Journal* had been doing its utmost to acquaint church officers and members with what was happening for more than 20 years. But informing people was not enough. An active organization was needed to counter the carefully planned and skillfully maneuvered activities of the men in the liberal group.

In May, 1964, a group of conservative leaders met and decided that the time had come to form an organization to combat the political activities of those in control. I was traveling abroad at the time — didn't even know that the meeting was being held — but when I returned I was asked to head the organization known as Concerned Presbyterians, Inc.

I had long been deeply interested in the work of our Church. For more than 30 years I had traveled throughout the Church at my own expense encouraging Presbyterians to give more liberally to the Church's programs. My message “In Partnership with God” had been given more than 600 times and more than 5 million copies had been distributed — all at no expense to the Church.

I agreed to head the organization because I felt that I could render no greater service to my Lord than to try to return the leadership of the Church to men who believed that the Church's primary mission was to lead the unsaved to Christ and to nurture believers in the Faith.

Concerned Presbyterians, Inc. was formed 6 years ago. Instead of operating secretly we announced our purpose and our objectives publicly. Our first job was to acquaint more church officers and members with the seriousness of the situation. We started sending our Bulletin “The Concerned Presbyterian” to a list of about 30,000 conservative officers and church members. Since then our mailing list has grown steadily and we are now reaching 70/80,000 persons with every issue. Every minister, missionary and every Clerk of Session in the Church is on our mailing list.

Col. Roy LeCraw of Atlanta — widely known for his leadership of our Church's Program of Progress in the 50s and for his keen interest in world missions (he has raised money to help with building more than 35 churches in Korea, Japan and Taiwan) — is our Vice President.

W. J. (Jack) Williamson — a capable attorney of Greenville, Ala. — serves as Secretary. He rendered valuable legal advice and counsel in the Savannah churches case which

went twice to the Supreme Court and which definitely established that ownership and control of local church properties in Georgia are vested in the congregations.

Col. LeCraw, Jack Williamson and I receive no salaries and we pay our own expenses as we travel over the Church.

We have four part-time Field Directors who receive nominal salaries — usually the \$1,680. a year which they can receive without upsetting their Social Security benefits. We pay their travel and other expenses. P. Y. Matthews — a dedicated ruling elder of North Avenue Presbyterian Church, Atlanta — another Vice President — is in charge of our field directors who are organizing our laymen in the presbyteries.

Mrs. Kate Constance — my personal secretary for more than 23 years — is our Executive Secretary. Mrs. Jo Burlock who has assisted in my secretarial department for 18 years and three other dedicated women comprise our main office staff in Miami. They are kept busy answering the flood of letters we receive every week and sending out our literature. When the load is too great for them to handle, temporary help is employed. We also have an office in Atlanta staffed by a fulltime secretary who brings in extra clerical and stenographic help when it is needed.

I seriously doubt if our lay movement alone could ever have succeeded in reversing the trends in our Church. But in the fall of 1969 a group of more than 500 conservative ministers and missionaries formed Presbyterian Churchmen United and published their fine Declaration of Commitment in more than 30 leading newspapers throughout the South. Since then their organization has grown steadily. These dedicated men have the same objectives that we have. We are working closely with them. Their entry into the struggle to preserve a Church true to the Word of God has had a tremendous impact. In December, 1969, a huge PCU rally in Atlanta was attended by more than 1,500 ministers and lay leaders from all over the Church.

In January, 1970, we staged a large two-state rally in Charlotte. During the last year Presbyterian Churchmen United and Concerned Presbyterians, Inc. have held well publicized rallies in various areas of the Church, some jointly and some separately. These rallies have been most effective in informing Presbyterians as to what has been happening in our Church.

One of the many accusations hurled at these organizations by liberal brethren is that we are working outside the framework of the Church. That they should condemn us when they themselves set the pattern for organizations operating outside the Church's framework seems to border on hypocrisy, especially when we came out in the open and they operated under cover and in secret for many years. Listen to these paragraphs from a memo sent out in September, 1968, by the Rev. John W. Cunningham, Stated Clerk of Central Texas Presbytery:

"Several of us have talked about the need for a meeting this fall. The purpose of the gathering is to begin to lay plans for next year with emphasis on the 109th General Assembly. We need to have advance word on commissioners from *all* presbyteries, and thought needs to be given to the Moderator. Each of you will have other concerns that ought to be discussed so bring them with you." The memo concludes, "Needless to say it is essential that we be *most discreet* about discussing such a meeting as this. It is unashamedly political."

III. RECENT PROGRESS.

The gap between conservative and liberal votes in the General Assembly began to lessen about 3 years ago. In 1969 at Mobile we came closer to electing a conservative moderator than we had for more than 20 years. Last year at Memphis, W. A. Fifield of First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, who was supported by most conservative commissioners, lost the election by only 5 votes.

At Memphis we were able to block temporarily the liberal move to restructure synods. Despite the efforts of a former moderator to break a 13-13 deadlock, the Standing Committee was forced to present the resolution to the Assembly without recommendation. Then three recent moderators fought strongly for the resolution on the Assembly floor but the Assembly rejected the report and sent it back to the Restructuring Committee for further study.

At Memphis the resolution asking that the Board of Education be instructed to withdraw from its sponsorship in publishing the obscene *Colloquy* Magazine lost by only 9 votes. So definite progress is being made.

I do not anticipate that control of the 1971 Assembly will be in conservative hands. But I do believe that the liberal control of our Church's highest court has passed its peak. Presbyteries which have been dominated by the liberals in recent years are rejecting their Nominating Committees' slates for Commissioners to the 1971 Assembly, electing solid slates of conservatives from the floor. Other presbyteries which have been sending mixed delegations to the Assembly have this year elected only conservative Commissioners to represent them.

IV. THE LIBERAL GOALS.

Our liberal brethren have three principal objectives:

a. **Organic union with UPUSA as the first step toward union with the COCU super-"Church of Christ Uniting."**

b. **Watering down the Westminster Confession of Faith to make it conform to their higher critical views on the Bible.**

c. **Taking control of local church property out of the hands of congregations, vesting it in the presbyteries.**

The steadily mounting opposition to these three things is giving the liberals real concern. In January, 1970, Dr. J. Randolph Taylor, chairman of our Committee on Union, and Dr. Robert Lamar, chairman of the UPUSA Committee, invited all past moderators of our Church to meet with them in Atlanta to discuss ways and means of accomplishing the union. I am informed that the majority of these men favored union but that they were almost unanimous in advising the joint chairmen that our Church would not vote for merger at the present time.

Our Constitution requires approval of 3/4ths of the presbyteries to unite with other ecclesiastical bodies or to change our Confession of Faith. The liberals want this reduced to 2/3rds but in my opinion the events of recent months have shown them that they could not accomplish these objectives even with a 2/3rds vote.

A plan that *could* enable the liberals to force their minority will upon our Church would be through restructuring the synods with the synods then restructuring the presbyteries. When the Restructuring Committee presented its plan to the Memphis Assembly it insisted that political considerations did not enter into their planning. But the plan they presented unquestionably involved many changes which would have taken voting power away from conservative areas. For instance: the conservative Synod of South Carolina has 8 presbyteries which gives it 8 votes on union and confession changes. The liberal Synods of Missouri and Kentucky have a total of 7 votes. The restructuring proposal cut South Carolina down to three presbyteries — three votes — and left Missouri and Kentucky with all 7 votes despite the fact that South Carolina has 25% more members than the two border synods combined.

Kanawha Presbytery (W. Va.) has overtured the Assembly to change our voting method to a unit system which would shift control of the Church to the larger presbyteries. Under this scheme the single presbytery of Atlanta would have more votes than any one of 9 entire synods. Mecklenburg Presbytery (N.C.) could outvote any of the 9 synods. Brazos Presbytery alone could outvote 8 of the 9 synods.

The liberals' latest move is to try to take control of local church property out of the hands of congregations and vest it in the presbytery. This could give liberal presbyteries an effective club over individual churches, forcing the Sessions to comply with their programs. Overtures asking this are in the hands of Assembly's Permanent Judicial Commission and will probably be voted on by the 1971 Assembly in June.

V. THE DETERMINATION OF THOSE IN CONTROL.

What we are facing today is not simply a continuation of the liberal trends. We are confronted by a determined effort on the part of the liberals to first submerge our Church in the much larger and more liberal United Presbyterian Church and then to liquidate the Presbyterian system entirely by merger with the COCU super-"Church of Christ Uniting." To accomplish their purposes those in control are resorting to methods that you and I would not countenance in a business or professional organization. They have repeatedly violated the Constitution of our Church which they vowed to uphold, and they have at times deliberately misled courts of our Church. I realize that these are serious charges. Many examples could be cited. Time will permit only three:

1. On the Book of Church Order amendment to allow union presbyteries, our Permanent Judicial Commission advised the Assembly that to be strictly constitutional the amendment would need to have the approval of 3/4ths of the presbyteries. The Assembly ignored that advice of their own Judicial Committee and sent the amendment down for a simple majority vote. When the vote was recorded the liberals were shocked to learn that the amendment had been defeated by a majority of one vote. Then three presbyteries, we think improperly, reversed their votes. Two liberally controlled synods upheld the reversals. The final official vote was 38 approving to 37 rejecting the amendment. Then without waiting for the appeals to be acted on, the General Assembly put its final approval on the amendment. For the Assembly to approve the amendment before the appeals were decided was, we believe, another unconstitutional act.

2. A resolution to approve conscientious objection to a particular war was presented at the Mobile Assembly. A liberal Commissioner made an impassioned plea for the passage of the resolution stating that he had lost his only son in Vietnam. His impassioned plea carried the day and the resolution was approved. The action was widely publicized in the Church and secular press. After the Assembly adjourned it was discovered that the Commissioner had lied to the Assembly. It was his wife's nephew, not his son, and he did not meet his death in Vietnam but died in an auto accident at McDill Field in Florida. When confronted with the facts the Commissioner admitted his guilt. He excused himself by saying that he had "allowed his emotions to carry him away."

3. When the amendment to allow synods to unite and divide presbyteries reached the Assembly floor Commissioners were told that the amendment was simply for the purpose of clarification — that the Assembly already had this power. Believing what they were told by the committee chairman, conservative Commissioners voted for the amendment only to learn later that they had been misled. Then these same tactics were followed in the presbyteries. Many strongly conservative presbyteries voted for the amendment, discovering later that they had been tricked. A ruling elder who spoke against the amendment in one presbytery was rebuked by the liberal minister-moderator who told him he just didn't know what he was talking about.

I am sure you will agree that methods like these should have no place in Church courts which are supposed to be composed of men committed to Christian principles. But that these unethical tactics are being employed simply cannot be denied. Apparently some of our liberal brethren, realizing

that efforts to liquidate our Church are about to be defeated, have decided that any tactic is justified if it will help them to accomplish what they are so determined to do.

VI. THE LIBERALS' TIMETABLE.

There is general agreement that the paramount issue which will decide the future of our Church is union with the United Presbyterian Church. The timetable was announced at the Memphis Assembly last June.

1. The Joint Committee will present its proposed plan for union to the 1971 Assemblies, recommending that it be sent to the churches for study.

2. They anticipate that 1972 Assemblies will approve the final draft of the plan and send it to the presbyteries, stipulating that all presbyteries vote on the plan in January, 1973.

3. If the required number of presbyteries approve the plan the 1973 Assemblies will give their final approval and the denominations will unite immediately following this final approval.

In an effort to make the plan acceptable to conservatives, the latest draft contains a provision which will allow individual churches in *both* denominations to remain outside the united church retaining their local church property. The plan of union which our Church rejected in 1954 contained such an escape clause for our churches but did not grant this same privilege to the PCUSA and United Presbyterian churches. The present draft also provides that presbyteries may elect not to unite, dividing presbytery-owned properties between those who elect to unite and those who refrain.

If the plan in the last draft which we have seen is approved, individual churches and presbyteries would be free to remain outside the united church and could retain their properties. But regardless of the number of churches electing to remain outside the union, all synod and Assembly assets would go to the united church.

Over the years much of the money which has built these buildings and created the trust funds has come from conservatives. It would, therefore, be manifestly unfair to turn them over lock, stock and barrel to a united church in which hundreds of our churches would have no part.

Not only would it be unfair but the on-going work of the Kingdom could be very seriously hampered if this were done. Without the financial support from conservatives the united church could not possibly provide the funds needed to maintain these institutions and carry on their programs. Many of them would have to be closed for lack of funds. The damage to the cause of Christ would be irreparable. We must, therefore, insist that the final plan provide for an equitable distribution of synod and Assembly assets.

There are many who feel that the most objectionable feature of the latest draft of the plan which we have seen is that the UPUSA Book of Confessions of 1967 is to be incorporated with our Westminster Confession and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as the doctrinal standards of the united church and that after the union takes place a committee will start work drafting a new Confession of Faith. In other words, the doctrinal standards of the United church will not be formulated until the union has been consummated.

VII. THE PROTEST RESOLUTIONS.

Following the Memphis Assembly it was felt that the time had come for conservative presbyteries to let the higher courts know just how they stand in regard to the three most critical issues. We knew that a large number of presbyteries — possibly even a majority of them — are not willing to merge with the UPUSA under *any* plan. We felt that much time, energy and money could be saved if the Church realized now that there would be a very sizable segment of our Church which would not unite with the UPUSA.

At their fall meetings eleven presbyteries adopted resolutions making it clear that they are opposed to union with the UPUSA, that they will not consent to watering down

our Confession of Faith and that they will not allow control of local church property to be taken away from congregations. The Sessions of many individual churches have passed similar resolutions. The exact wording varied but the following is fairly typical:

WE, THE PRESBYTERY OF _____, being loyal to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and holding in high esteem the great heritage of our denomination, express deep concern over the widespread unrest in our Church. We are constrained by our consciences in obedience to our ordination vows to take an affirmative stand on behalf of the continuation of a Presbyterian Church loyal to Scripture and to the Reformed Faith.

In order that our position on certain critical issues might be well defined for all concerned, we do hereby declare that we stand for the historic doctrine and form of government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. To be very specific:

1. The Presbytery of _____ will oppose and will not be party to organic union with the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., which union, we believe, would inevitably result in merger with the proposed COCU-“Church of Christ Uniting” — a merger now forbidden by the Constitution of our Church.

2. The Presbytery of _____ will oppose and cannot accept any dilution or demeaning of the Confession of Faith or any change in ordination vows which would no longer bind church officers to adhere to the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as now constituted.

3. The Constitution of our Church which we have sworn to uphold vests the right to buy, sell, mortgage or otherwise encumber local church property in our congregations. The Presbytery of _____ believes that no court of the Church has a moral or legal right to take this power away from congregations now existing and through all legal means available will oppose any change in the Book of Church Order which would take control of presently owned local church property from our congregations.

During January three additional presbyteries adopted strong resolutions of this type. Two of these — St. Andrew (North Mississippi) and Augusta-Macon (Georgia) — have been under the control of the liberals in recent years. Other presbyteries are expected to pass similar resolutions in the months immediately ahead.

We believe that many of the liberal leaders realize now that they are not going to be able to muster the necessary presbytery votes to approve the plan of union presently drafted even though it includes an escape clause for churches which prefer to remain outside the merger. We believe that a plan which could win the approval of the required number of presbyteries would be a plan — not for organic union — but for peaceful division within our two existing denominations.

Let the liberal churches and presbyteries which no longer desire to be a part of the Presbyterian Church U.S. leave our fellowship and unite with the United Presbyterian Church, taking their properties with them. Let conservative churches in the UPUSA which prefer to continue in a church true to historic Presbyterian doctrine and polity leave the United Presbyterian Church and join our fellowship, bringing their properties with them.

Under such a division we would end up with two large Presbyterian denominations in the United States, each serving the Lord in the way it believes it can best serve Him. This plan would bring an end to the present strife in both churches and enable all of us once again to devote our energies and efforts to the mission of the Church as our respective denominations conceive that mission to be. This idea has been suggested to the members of the Joint Committee and we hope and pray that they will ultimately see the wisdom of

coming up with such a plan.

VIII. REASONS FOR OPPOSING UNION WITH THE U.P.U.S.A.

We are very rapidly approaching the day when every congregation will have to decide whether they wish to remain Presbyterian in doctrine and form of government or whether they want to unite with the UPUSA and become a part of the COCU super-“Church of Christ Uniting.” We believe that the time has come for the ruling elders in every session in our Church to study carefully and prayerfully the pros and the cons of this union which our liberal brethren are trying so hard to bring about.

There are many reasons why we feel that it would be a tragedy for our Church to unite with the United Presbyterian Church. There are many fine conservative congregations in the UPUSA — many dedicated ministers, missionaries and church officers who are just as concerned about the situation they face in their denomination as we are about the situation we face in ours. Many of these men have told us that we would have little to gain and very much to lose if we unite with them.

Here are eleven reasons why we are so opposed to this merger:

1. In spite of all the unrest our Church is still doing a far better job for the cause of Christ if statistics mean anything. UPUSA church membership dropped almost 30,000 in 1968 and over 50,000 in 1969. We had a slight gain in 1968 and lost only 4,256 members in 1969 — the first net loss reported in 48 years. UPUSA Sunday School attendance dropped 170,000 in 1967 and 1968 and over 104,000 in 1969. Our church school attendance dropped only 25,000 in 1967 and 1968 but it dropped 57,841 in 1969. Year after year our members give far more per capita to benevolences than UPUSA members give.

2. The UPUSA has 3,200,000 members. We have about 950,000. We would therefore have little voice in determining the policies and programs of a united church. They would be set by the liberal leaders who control the United Presbyterian Church. We would be outnumbered more than 3 to 1.

3. In our Church, planning, staffing and financing are usually determined and controlled by the Presbytery. Most decisions are made at the presbytery level. In the United Presbyterian Church control of planning, program and staff tends to flow from the Assembly and Synod down to the Presbytery. This is important because the UPUSA church is dominated and controlled by men of liberal persuasion. Their control is so absolute that there seems little likelihood that the leadership can ever be returned to conservative hands. In our Church recent votes indicate that the liberals do *not* control a majority of the presbyteries.

4. Departures from established doctrine are far more prevalent in the UPUSA. Not many ministers in our denomination dare to stand in their pulpits and openly deny the Virgin Birth and the validity of Christ's death on the cross. The UPUSA Church has not only condoned men who have done this but it has elected to its highest offices men who have publicly disavowed some of Christianity's cardinal doctrines.

5. Social action plays a much more dominant role in the teaching and preaching of the UPUSA church than it does in our Church. The UPUSA moderator of New York City Presbytery said recently, “I see the ministry in terms of social action, not in terms of preaching or the rest of the *nonsense* we went through years ago. In our day we are concerned about men, not God. God can take care of himself.” A minister in our Church who openly voiced his belief that preaching the Gospel is “nonsense” would soon find himself at odds with the majority of his church members.

6. In our Church local congregations control their property. In the UPUSA a church cannot buy, sell or mortgage

its property without the written consent of its presbytery. (Sec. 62-12). These rights are inherent in property ownership. We feel strongly that these rights should not be taken away from our congregations.

7. The UPUSA church gives hundreds of thousands of dollars every year to causes which many Christians disapprove and feel that they cannot in good conscience support. In a recent 30-month period the UPUSA gave \$481,000. to the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) which organized the National Black Economic Development Conference which spawned James Forman's Black Manifesto demanding reparations from white congregations.

8. To many the most urgent reason for opposing union with the UPUSA is the effect this union could have on the faith and morals of our young people. To expose our children and grandchildren to what the UPUSA is saying in their publications and what they are promoting in some of their youth camps and conferences would undermine the faith of our boys and girls in God and country and weaken their moral fibre. This is a serious charge but we are prepared to document it.

a. The UPUSA church published a monthly paper for its Senior-Hi Youth called HI-WAY. Vol. 6, No. 11 had a 2-page article urging every boy and girl to read James Baldwin's filthy book *Another Country* in which he describes in the most lurid and intimate detail the performance of the sexual act by a negro man and a white woman at a cocktail party.

b. In cooperation with the Episcopal Church the UPUSA publishes a magazine called *Trends*. We feel that we must refrain from quoting some of the obscene language this magazine has printed in recent issues, but if you will write our Miami office we will send you the information.

Here is the concluding paragraph from the lead article in the October, 1970, issue entitled, "Thoughts on Being a Woman" —

It's being sweet, bitchy, long suffering, demanding, independent, clinging, material, sexy — all depending on the situation and what kind of mood you're in. It's thumbing your nose at convention for convention's sake, but playing the game to the hilt when it suits you. It's giving of yourself freely and to whom you choose. It's being warm and open and free. In short, being a woman is a beautiful thing — it's being human!

One issue of *Trends* contained an article telling how to counsel draft-card burning and to help young men to get to Canada to avoid the draft.

c. In cooperation with the United Church of Christ the UPUSA also publishes *Colloquy* (they call it "a monthly educational leadership magazine"). Here again we must refrain from quoting from the profane and blasphemous articles which have appeared from time to time but if you will ask our Miami office to send you a copy of the resolution presented at our own Memphis Assembly last June you will be shocked to read what *Colloquy* is saying.

Colloquy's November, 1968, issue devoted 5 pages to a review of the salacious film "The Graduate." Reproduced were 6 lurid sex scenes from the film. The March, 1970, issue had a full-page picture showing naked men and women at a Rock festival and the editors reproduced this picture in stylized form on the front cover. In this same issue a Philadelphia school teacher relates this about a 16-year-old girl —

"Jamie found out about sex. This time for real. She found out that what her parents had told her wasn't true at all. Sex was really a beautiful thing . . . And she had no feelings of guilt. In fact she felt great! A friend introduced Jamie to marijuana, and Jamie turned it on. It was the nicest thing she had ever done, and she felt fine about it."

The writer concludes with the words: "So now whenever I see Jamie all I can say to her is, I know what's happening

inside you, and we both know it is a good thing. So just don't lose your cool!"

It is hard to believe that a Board of Christian Education of any Church would actually recommend indecent films and tell its people where to rent them, but the UPUSA Board in *Colloquy's* January, 1969, issue did exactly that.

In 1969 our own Board of Christian Education joined forces with the UPUSA and the United Church of Christ in publishing this obscene magazine. At our Memphis Assembly members of our Board defended their sponsorship by saying that *Colloquy* is published for the *guidance* of our ministers and youth leaders — that they need to know what our boys and girls are doing and saying today. But one fails to find in *Colloquy* or *Trends* any statement to the effect that these articles do not reflect the position of the Christian Church on these matters.

9. The 1970 UPUSA Assembly received a report from its Council on Church and Society entitled "Sexuality and the Human Community." The chairman of the committee which drafted the report is a professor in a UPUSA theological seminary. The report recommended:

(1) Removal of all restrictions against unmarried adults who wish to live together.

(2) Wide-open abortion laws.

(3) Acceptance without stigma of practicing homosexuals.

(4) Adultery in "exceptional circumstances."

Discussing "Courtship and Marriage," the report says, "In place of the simple, but ineffective and widely disregarded standard of premarital virginity, we would prefer to hear our church speak in favor of the more significant standard of responsibly appropriate behavior . . . If . . . a couple has taken a responsible decision to engage in premarital intercourse, the church should not convey to them the impression that their decision is in conflict with their status as members of the body of Christ."

"On adultery, for example, heretofore absolutely unpermissible in the eyes of the Church, we recognize that there may be exceptional circumstances where extramarital activity may not be contrary to the interests of a faithful concern for the well-being of the marriage partner."

Such a report urging the Church to take a position directly opposed to the clear teaching of God's Word on fornication and adultery should have been summarily rejected, but the UPUSA General Assembly did not reject it but ordered the report sent down to its churches for study.

Seeking to soften the impact of this decision on the Church membership-at-large the Assembly was then asked to adopt this statement:

"We affirm our adherence to the moral law of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments that adultery, prostitution and homosexuality are sinful."

347 Commissioners — almost half of the delegate body — voted against approving this resolution. That the resolution passed by only 9 votes indicates that a large number of UPUSA leaders reject the clear teachings of the Bible on fornication, adultery and homosexuality, are unwilling to oppose the permissiveness which is rearing its ugly head today, and are in favor of replacing God's moral standards with man-made rules for human behavior. For us to unite with a denomination the leadership of which will not take an unequivocal stand on these moral issues would have a tragic effect on our young people.

10. Before a minister, ruling elder or deacon is ordained in the Presbyterian Church U.S. (our Church) he is required to take a solemn vow that he sincerely receives and adopts the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures and that if at any time he finds himself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of

doctrine he will make known to his Presbytery (in the case of ministers) or Session (in the case of Ruling Elders and Deacons) the change which has taken place in his views.

Prior to 1967 ministers, ruling elders and deacons in the United Presbyterian Church USA were required to take a somewhat similar vow. But when that church adopted its Book of Confessions in 1967, this requirement was eliminated. We think this distinction is very important. A Church in which the ministers and officers no longer subscribe to a confession has ceased to be a confessional Church.

11. Union with the UPUSA would be but the first step toward merger into the super-"Church of Christ Uniting," for the UPUSA leadership is deeply committed to the super-church. The United Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church initiated this idea of the super-Church when they formulated the "Blake-Pike" plan. The plan for the COCU Church is now in the hands of your session for study. It provides for a Church to be ruled by bishops under the episcopal system. It takes from your congregation the right to choose your own pastor, elect your own officers, control your own finances and hold and manage your own property. All these things would be done by a parish council composed of the ministers from all the churches in a parish with at least one layman from each church. This council will dictate the program of your local church; it will have power to discipline your church if it does not carry out the program; and it will control where your church's money will go. The office of ruling elder will be entirely eliminated. Ownership and control of your church property will be taken away from your congregation and vested in the parish.

We cannot believe that intelligent Presbyterians, if they know what they are doing, will ever consent to become a part of such a Church. We urge you to write our Miami office for a copy of the plan, enclosing 25¢ in coin. Better still, order enough copies for the members of your session. Study the plan carefully.

IX. THE PLAN OF UNION.

I have outlined for you 11 reasons why we think it would be a tragic mistake for our Church to unite with the UPUSA.

The proposed Plan of Union is to be presented to the 1971 General Assemblies of our two denominations. It is expected that the Plan will be sent down to the churches for study and that the final Plan with any revisions will be voted on by the 1972 or 1973 Assemblies. If the Assemblies approve the Plan it will go to the presbyteries for a vote in January, 1973, or January, 1974.

The Plan as presently drafted contains a provision which will allow individual churches to remain outside the union and retain their properties. It allows dissenting churches in presbyteries and synods to petition for the division of presbytery and synod properties, allowing these units "to convey to such dissenting churches a proportional interest in such properties not greater than the proportion of the membership of such congregations bears to the total membership."

These provisions could be changed in the final draft but we do not believe they will be changed because our liberal brethren realize that they simply cannot muster the necessary votes to have 3/4ths of the presbyteries approve the Plan if it does not contain an "escape" clause.

The Plan makes no provision for a fair and equitable division of Assembly assets. This is a very serious defect. The conservative churches have contributed very substantially over the years to build Assembly buildings and to create the trust and endowment funds and they will be loath to have these assets taken over in their entirety by a new Church in which they will have no part.

We anticipate that as many as 2,000 of our PCUS churches will refuse to unite with the UPUSA. We feel confident that conservatives have the voting strength today to defeat the Plan. And there is every reason to believe that the present

opposition to union will increase considerably as more and more church officers and members become informed during the next two years regarding what this merger will do to our Church.

If the 1972 or 1973 Assemblies approve the Plan, those who stand for a Church loyal to the Word of God and to Presbyterian Doctrine and polity will have to decide whether to reject the Plan and defeat the union or to approve the Plan, taking advantage of its "escape clause" and form a new conservative Church.

If we defeat the Plan by a decisive vote, some of those who favor union will probably decide to leave our Church. If enough of the more radical liberals leave, it would not take very long to change the present leadership of our boards, agencies and important committees. If the vote to reject the Plan is fairly close, these men could decide to remain in the Church and continue their fight to merge our two denominations. In this event the struggle we are presently having will continue.

If the conservatives decide to approve the Plan to take advantage of its "escape clause" and the Plan is approved by 3/4ths of the presbyteries, every individual church congregation will have to decide whether it will enter the new united Church or whether it will join with the hundreds of churches which are expected to refrain from uniting. This decision will have to be made in the spring of 1973 or 1974. Every member of every church needs to be informed regarding the crucial issues which are at stake before this important vote is taken.

We have recently seen a copy of a folder which the Joint Committees on Union plan to issue giving their reasons for forming a new united Church. Its main thrust is that we should be united because Jesus prayed "that they all may be one; even as thou Father art in me and I in thee (John 17:21). Most commentators interpret this to mean the oneness that all true believers have in Christ — not the organic union of denominations. We feel that our liberal brethren distort the true meaning when they try to make it mean that we should all worship in the same way in one Church.

The folder says, "Presbyterian Union offers a new mandate to provide for fuller participation and representation of minorities in the life and leadership of the church." In recent years conservatives have been largely ignored in the courts of both denominations. The directorates of boards and agencies have been stacked with liberal leaders. It is folly to believe that the merger of the two denominations will give conservatives a greater voice. Past history would indicate that conservatives will have *less* to say about programs and policies in the united church than they have today.

Another paragraph reads, "Presbyterian Union will strengthen and make more compelling the special contributions which Reformed theology makes to the whole of Christian faith." How can our brethren make such a statement when their leaders are planning to abandon Reformed theology entirely in the COCU super-"Church of Christ Uniting"?

The folder also says, "Presbyterian Union would fulfill a widespread desire for union in both churches which has grown throughout many years." "A widespread desire for union" has not been growing in our Presbyterian Church U.S. — indeed there is *less* desire for union today than there was several years ago as more and more church officers and members become informed regarding the plans of those who seek to liquidate our Church. We heartily agree with the folder's concluding paragraph: "Let our debates be free and hearty, but let our fundamental concern be an openness to the leading of God's holy spirit in these wondrous days which He has given us." Most liberal ministers have refused to allow the views of conservative ministers and lay leaders to be presented to the people in their churches. If they will now permit the issues to be openly debated and discussed we have little doubt

about what the outcome will be. We say "Amen" to the holding of "free and hearty debates."

We recommend that every church member prayerfully consider the reasons for uniting advanced in their folder with our reasons for not uniting. Urge your Session to call a congregational meeting at which someone who favors the merger and someone who opposes it are asked to present the "pros and con." Presbyterians are intelligent people, well able to decide matters like this for themselves when they know the facts.

Our present moderator has been traveling over the Church castigating the organizations which are striving to maintain a Church true to our historic Reformed Faith. If there are any good reasons for merging with the UPUSA and the COCU super-"Church of Christ Uniting" it's time that he start stressing them instead of attacking us.

X. CONCLUSION.

May I close by telling you that we are much encouraged over recent developments. With every passing month more and more Presbyterians are becoming informed regarding the plans of the liberals to liquidate our Church, to abandon historic Presbyterianism and its evangelical testimony. Conservative voices are being heard as they have not been heard in many years in the lower courts of our Church.

The so-called border states of Missouri, Texas and Kentucky have long been the most vocal in pressing for union with UPUSA. To the surprise and dismay of the liberals, the influential presbytery of Southeast Missouri voted last fall against forming a union presbytery with their UPUSA counterpart. The liberals brought up the matter again on January 23rd and again it was voted down. The influential Presbytery of Northeast Texas has turned down the idea of forming a union presbytery. On February 9th Brazos Presbytery (Texas) — the third largest presbytery in our Church — rejected the formation of a union presbytery with their UPUSA counterpart. Presbyteries which have already united are beginning to encounter serious problems.

In our public rallies one question is asked time and time again — *what can I do individually to help save our Church?* Let me suggest these seven ways of helping:

1. If you are in accord with our efforts to preserve the Presbyterian Church U.S. and have not yet enrolled as a member of Concerned Presbyterians, Inc., notify our Miami

office by letter or postcard that you want to be a member. You may have received some of our literature at the request of a friend but unless you enroll you will not receive all the information that we send only to enrolled members.

2. Encourage your fellow church members to enroll. Write for a supply of this message, our Bulletins or other literature and distribute it to your fellow-members.

3. Do all you can to insure that conservatives are elected to your Session and Diaconate.

4. Send us the names, addresses and zip codes of the officers in your church (and those of any other church in your neighborhood where you can obtain a list. We will put them on our list to receive our Bulletin "The Concerned Presbyterian.")

5. Encourage your Session to pass a strong resolution stating that it is opposed to union with the UPUSA, opposed to any watering down of our Confession of Faith, opposed to any change in the Book of Church Order which would take control of your local church property away from your congregation.

6. Help to undergird our work with financial gifts as you are able. It is costing \$120,000. a year to do what we are doing and every check helps. Encourage your Session to put us in your church's budget. All gifts are tax deductible.

7. Finally, pray daily for our Church. When your presbytery, synod and the General Assembly are meeting invite a group of friends to come to your home to pray that the actions taken may be in accord with God's will. Pray for us daily. Nothing encourages us more than to know that thousands of dedicated Christians all over the Church are remembering us in prayer.

The tide, we believe, is turning. It is generally agreed by both sides that ultimate division in our Church is inevitable. There is just no way to reconcile the views of those who seek to liquidate our Church and destroy Presbyterianism and those who seek to preserve our Church and its evangelical testimony. The outcome is in God's hands — not in ours — but of one thing we are sure — regardless of what happens there is going to be a continuing Church loyal to the Word of God and faithful to historic Presbyterian doctrine and polity.

Additional copies of this folder may be obtained from: Concerned Presbyterians, Inc., 100 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, Fla., 33132 — 10 copies for 40¢; 30 copies for \$1; 100 for \$2.50.

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