



*“The Only Infallible Rule
of Faith and Practice”*

THE CONCERNED PRESBYTERIAN

Dedicated to the Formation of a Continuing Church

True to God's Word and Loyal to Historic

Presbyterian Doctrine and Polity

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GREETINGS TO ALL CONCERNED PRESBYTERIANS

from THE PRESIDENT

With great humility and a deep sense of the trust committed to us, we the new officers of Concerned Presbyterians assume the responsibility of leading this organization created nine years ago for the preservation of the faith once committed to the saints and for the testimony of the Southern Presbyterian Church to this faith.

We gratefully acknowledge the debt we owe to Kenneth Keyes, Roy LeCraw and Jack Williamson who so ably and devotedly led the conservatives of the Southern Church into a greater awareness of the issues confronting them and resulted in the formation of a new and yet continuing denomination founded upon those great Biblical truths and principles which James Henley Thornwell, Robert L. Dabney and B. M. Palmer set forth in another critical hour in the history of American Presbyterianism.

It is our prayer that we too shall be found faithful in this task committed to us in continuing the defense of historic Presbyterianism and in aiding those of like mind and spirit to find a new and yet old ecclesiastical home in the National Presbyterian Church.

It had been our hope when Concerned Presbyterians was founded that we could recall our beloved Southern Church back to its historic testimony to the faith but when it became obvious

that the hierarchy of our church had hardened its heart to any such appeal and was determined to replace the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the message of a social and economic gospel of some kind, a message being trumpeted by the GEB as that which is relevant to the needs of the late twentieth century, we have been led to work for the creation of a denomination true to the Word of God.

This new gospel, created by humanistic sociologists, psychologists and their colleagues in the ministry of our church, has been carefully designed to change the entire structure and message of the Presbyterian Church US and the creation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy for the realization of this radical theology in the life of the church and the nation. This is the real goal which lies behind the efforts to bring about a reunion with the Presbyterian Church UPUSA, although this purpose is generally concealed behind pious appeals to John 17. The liberals are determined to bring this union about so that the resulting organization can plunge more fully and effectively into the arena of secular political and social action in order to bring about the triumph of radicalism in American life. Theological orthodoxy must first be destroyed so that political and social orthodoxy will topple of its own weight. More will be said about this in later bulletins.

PLANS FOR CENTRALIZATION

In this first bulletin of your new leaders, attention will be centered on the growth of a centralized power in the Presbyterian Church US and what this development means for you and your congregation. In the first place, it is important to notice that in the revised plan of union to be presented to the 1974 General Assembly, the “escape clause” has been dropped. Once this plan of union has been adopted and the union is consummated, conservative churches will not be allowed to withdraw from the unified denomination and retain title to their property. The escape clause was an a-

nathema to the liberals who rightly feared that many congregations in the Northern Church would take advantage of its provision. However, the omission of this clause is not the only indication of future developments. In 1973 the Ad Interim Committee on the Church's Use of Her Ministry (created by the General Assembly in 1972) gave to the Assembly of 1973 a report which grew out of a Consultation on the Ministry held at Montreat early in March, 1973. In turn, the Assembly sent it to the churches for further study, but there is little

doubt that it will be adopted with little or no essential modification. This report makes many suggestions concerning the future of the ministry in the Presbyterian Church US and their acceptance would mean a vast restructuring which in turn would make the denomination unrecognizable as a Presbyterian Church.

In regard to salaries they recommend a minimum of \$13,200 (a salary of \$7,200 with an additional \$2,400 for housing and another \$3,600 for expenses, \$1,500 for the maintenance of an automobile, \$400 for professional growth, \$960 for an annuity and \$340 for social security.)

We would certainly agree that the minister is worthy of his hire, but this is not the issue. This proposal has far wider implications than this. Congregations unable to meet this minimum schedule would have the difference paid by a synod-wide support pool. Needless to say, there are many smaller churches which are unable to meet this salary schedule and the synodical support pool would have the effect of placing these churches on a synodical home mission basis. At this point the presbytery itself is to be by-passed in favor of the synod. Obviously, conservative churches in this situation would face a very difficult problem. Here the liberal strategy becomes quite obvious. There are very few small churches in the Presbyterian Church US which are not conservative. As I have preached in many of them in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Mississippi particularly, I have found that they are nearly all conservative in outlook. This salary requirement, however reasonable it may appear on the surface, is actually an attempt to secure control of these vital sources of evangelical fervor and conservatism.

FORSAKING OUR HERITAGE

These recommendations and suggestions thus far considered indicate very clearly the direction in which the GEB and the General Assembly have decided the church must go. But this direction means that the church must forsake its heritage of doctrine and government and head for the creation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy which will rival that of the frankly hierarchial denominations or even surpass them in its centralizing tendencies. The report also at one point virtually admits this. In a section dealing with the theology of the ministry a suggestion involving the creation of an episcopacy was couched in the form of a question: "Should the doctrine of ordination clearly articulate any understanding of episcopal authority and its implementation by ordained persons in order to indicate a theology and authority?" This question indicates that a positive response is both necessary and desired. Conservatives still in the Southern

Church should take note of what is being planned for them and seek to enter into the National Presbyterian Church either through congregational action or by individual transfer before they find themselves in the grip of a devouring ecclesiastical hierarchy.

PLANS FOR A CLOSER CONTROL OVER MINISTERS

The report also suggests that there be a closer supervision of pastors through the Commission on the Minister and His Work. In this connection it is very important to note that the word *commission* is used rather than the word *committee*. This is no accident but clearly indicates the judicial nature of this proposed supervision. It suggests that these commissions use their authority "to evaluate the minister's salary and performance, enabling him to receive adequate remuneration." But suppose these commissions decide that conservative ministers are not performing adequately. The answer is obvious. This is a sinister suggestion. Stripped of its superficial benevolence and concern for the welfare of the pastor, the suggestion, if adopted, would give the presbytery through the use of a commission, broad investigative powers into the life of every congregation and pastor. The pastor who does not use Presbyterian educational literature and who does not endorse the fanciful and often unbiblical projects of the General Assembly will face an uncertain future in such a denominational structure. This proposal would virtually destroy the Presbyterian system of government under the guise of making it more effective.

The report also recommended the possibility of retirement for ministers at the age of 55 with actuarially reduced benefits and recommended that the General Assembly consider a mandatory retirement for all ministers at the age of 65, beginning in 1980.

In an apparent, but not actual contradiction given to some other proposals the report recommended that opportunity be given to the development of a denominational strategy to provide a full ministry for churches of less than 200 members. In order to provide such a service it recommended that a pool of ministers of diverse skills be set up. Underlying this suggestion is the assumption that these churches do not receive the kind of pastoral attention common to the large churches and are somehow deprived of necessary services. What this suggestion is really calling for is something quite different from what appears on the surface. Again, the target is the small, conservative congregation with its dedicated minister of the Gospel. The real goal is to expose these congregations to the liberal influences involved in such pools.

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INTERPRETATION OR VIOLATION?

We have been told that the only difference between the Liberal and Conservative view of Scripture, is merely a difference in Interpretation.

Thou shalt not kill (murder)

Thou shalt not commit adultery

How can these be ignored simply by a different interpretation? There is "No Way". who.

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