

*"The Only Infallible Rule
of Faith and Practice"*

The Concerned Presbyterian

*True to God's Word and Loyal to Historic
Presbyterian Doctrine and Polity*

BULLETIN NUMBER 34

PAGE ONE

AN ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

by Dr. C. Gregg Singer

The recent announcement that the General Executive Board has decided that 1975 is a year in which evangelism will be emphasized is, at first glance, a heartening decision and might possibly indicate a change of thinking in what could well be called the Presbyterian G. E. B. ruling hierarchy. But the idea that a special year should be set aside for evangelism indicates that the General Executive Board does not really understand the true mission of the church. True evangelism cannot be made the focal point of interest and activity in one month of the year or in selected years in the experience of the church. Evangelism is not, and cannot be, one emphasis among many. It is the very life and purpose of the church and must be the dominant theme in every month in every year in the life of a denomination.

Neither can evangelism be one among competing interests and it most certainly cannot be carried on in the midst of a theological or an ecclesiastical climate which does not nourish true evangelism or is hostile to it. But this seems to be the situation in the Presbyterian Church today. The recently published definition of what the General Executive Board means by evangelism is quite good and while we cannot judge the spiritual state and hearts of those who framed it, we must confess that we would be much more impressed with this statement if the thinking and activities of the GEB were totally evangelical and evangelistic in their tone. Certainly the recent history of the GEB has given no indication of any great commitment to historic Presbyterian evangelism, and it is very difficult to see how the theological climate in the higher echelons of the Presbyterian Church U. S. can be thinking in terms of a true evangelistic awakening.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this recently announced emphasis on evangelism does not rise out of great theological convictions but rather has it been caused by a loss in membership throughout the General Assembly. As yet no one knows what the total loss will be, but we can expect that the report given to this next General Assembly will reveal a much greater loss than the one reported to the Louisville General Assembly in 1974.

We are glad to see an emphasis upon evangelism, but we would be much more impressed with this apparent change of thought in the GEB if it will recommend to the 1975 General Assembly to set in motion these following changes.

First of all, we would call upon the 1975 General Assembly to reaffirm the historic Southern Presbyterian doctrine of the purity of the church as it was so grandly enunciated by James Henley Thornwell, Robert L. Dabney, Benjamin M. Palmer and those other stalwart leaders who brought the Southern Presbyterian Church into being and who took their stand on certain basic principles in regard to the nature and the mission of the church. By the spirituality of the church they meant, and we mean, that the church and its ministry should no longer be involved in secular affairs, condemning wars and entering into political problems such as the amnesty problem, and other questions which are strictly Political. Beginning in the late 1930's the Presbyterian Church U. S. began to forsake this basic principle and since 1941, when it rejoined the Federal Council of Churches, it has become increasingly trapped in a network of political, social, economic and international issues which have no place in the life of the church. This entanglement has seriously muted the voice of the pulpit to such an extent that many ministers can hardly tell the difference between the Scriptures and sociology, Freud and even Marx. Instead of increasing the influence of the Presbyterian Church U. S. in the lives of the people, this kind of involvement has resulted in the loss of respect and confidence on the part of many who look to it for spiritual strength and guidance and who receive instead only sociological and psychological nostrums as the cure for consciences burdened with a guilt of sin.

This increasing involvement in secular affairs has led the Presbyterian Church U. S. into the active support of numerous radical causes both at home and abroad. Much has been written about the financial support given by the General Executive Board for the promotion of abortion and still this agency refuses to answer serious questions concerning its role in this unbiblical cause.

As early as 1943, the Assembly of that year approved six resolutions outlining what kind of peace should follow World War II and declared that the plan for peace would have to provide for a postwar United Nations. In 1953 the General Assembly of that year took a very important step away from the biblical standard of ethics when it virtually accepted the idea that Jesus Christ was wrong in His teachings on marriage and divorce and that ministers should be allowed to decide this issue in the light of present conditions rather than the light of His explicit teachings.

In 1966 the trend away from the doctrine of the spirituality of the church received a new impetus from two papers which were accepted by the General Assembly of that year. These documents sought to give a theological justification for the further involvement of the church in secular affairs. The third paper, which was not adopted but received as information, indicated that the General Assembly was now opposed to the continuance of capital punishment.

Increasingly throughout the decade the General Assembly gave its blessing in one way or another to the various liberal social causes of the day, sometimes in guarded language and sometimes in open statements, in very clear terminology, all of which were to varying degrees, unbiblical and which most certainly obscured the evangelistic message.

The history of the past thirty-five years reveals not only the surrender of the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, but it also indicates that accompanying this departure was a willingness to embrace social, political and economic radicalism. In the case of its treatment of the black Manifesto of 1969 the General Assembly was very reluctant to denounce it for what it was, a Communist document, and was concerned with finding a way to cooperate with its demands.

We would thus call upon this next General Assembly to give a very clear and strongly affirmative statement that as part of this new emphasis on evangelism in the year 1975 it will support it with a determined effort to return to the historic doctrine of the spirituality of the church which must undergird a truly biblical evangelism.

Concerned Presbyterians would further call upon the General Executive Board and the General Assembly of 1975 to repudiate and refuse to adopt the changes recently proposed by the Ad Interim Committee on the More Effective Use of the Ministry which can only have the effect of creating a more powerful hierarchy which will greatly diminish the rightful powers of presbyteries and sessions, and create an even stronger hierarchy in the Presbyterian Church U. S. which would rival that of the Church of Rome in its sweeping powers and could well be the envy of those churches which have traditionally held to an episcopal form of government. Such a hierarchy, and true biblical evangelism cannot very well exist together in the same ecclesiastical structure.

Concerned Presbyterians would also call upon the 1975 General Assembly to set in motion action to rescind those changes in the Book of

Church Order which make provision for the election of women as deacons and elders and provide for their ordination to the ministry. These recent changes are in keeping with the spirit of the times, but the spirit of our day is apostate and the Church of Jesus Christ cannot allow contemporary social trends and pressures to hold sway in determining either its government or doctrine. There is no biblical foundation for these recent innovations, and the return to a biblical concept of church government is a necessary step for the church if it is to recover its spiritual vigor.

Concerned Presbyterians would further call upon this General Assembly to withdraw from membership in the National and World Councils of Churches and to stop all financial support to both these Councils and all their agencies. Membership in these two Councils brings the Presbyterian church U. S. into formal relationship with those who under the cloak of the church are seeking to overthrow the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In these Councils humanism and communism rule the day and the forces of unbelief are in the saddle driving furiously from one project to another with one end in view--the creation of a radical, secular totalitarianism in which only the social gospel would have a voice. To hold membership in these Councils means that the Presbyterian Church U. S. is in league with the enemies of the Gospel and the protests of the liberals in our church that this is not the case are a mockery. The evidence is at hand and it is overwhelmingly against those who believe that the ecumenical movement is truly concerned with the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Wherever the social gospel gains an upper hand, its first victim is the historic Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. In the ecumenical movement the Scriptures are relegated to a secondary importance at best and are replaced by the latest psychological and sociological theories, the end of which is the degrading and lethal psychology of B. F. Skinner, which Skinner himself has aptly characterized as being beyond freedom and dignity. For theological liberalism, the death of God has been quickly followed by death of man.

Concerned Presbyterian would also call upon the General Assembly of 1975 to promptly repudiate the plan of union with the United Presbyterian Church U. S. A. and to promptly rescind all of its resolutions in favor of COCU. The liberalism and radicalism in the hierarchy of this Northern Presbyterian Church has been too well proved to be denied, and the testimony of the evangelicals who are still in that denomination and who are seeking to leave it cannot be gainsaid by anyone in his right ecclesiastical mind. It is well known that the Northern Church insisted upon the omission of the escape clause because its leaders were afraid that too many of their own churches would use it to leave their denomination. Those leaders in the Southern Church who still insist that the union of these two denominations will bring a more forceful Presbyterian witness to this country are deluding themselves and the membership of our denomi-

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nation. Such a union is not intended to produce a stronger Presbyterian witness, but rather it is intended to strangle what evangelical witness remains in each of these denominations. To unite with the Northern Church is to jump on the deck of a sinking ship and pretend that the disturbance felt on the deck is only the result of the launching of a new Presbyterian ship.

Concerned Presbyterians would also suggest that if the various committees that are charged with looking into the causes of unrest in the church are really concerned with the causes of this unrest they can easily find the answer. In addition to the issues which we have already discussed there is one other which is crying for immediate attention; therefore, we Concerned Presbyterians are calling upon the General Assembly of 1975 to immediately rescind its action in regard to the Proposed Declaration of Faith and simply admit that it was a very serious error to send it down to the presbyteries for study and declare it of no effect. There is no doubt that this proposed Confession is a heretical document at best and apostate at worst. It casts serious doubts upon the deity of Jesus Christ, it passes over the doctrine of the atonement, justification by faith and other great treasures of Reformed Theology. It promotes the idea that the Scriptures are of human origin that are somehow so good that a Sovereign God decided that He could use them to inform men about Himself.

There is a swelling tide of criticism of this document and it cannot be defended as a creed of the church. It is actually a confession that the Presbyterian Church U. S. has been overwhelmed by the tides of liberalism and its testimony to the faith once delivered to the saints has been all but muted.

These are the true concerns of Concerned Presbyterians. If the General Assembly would listen to our concerns, the growing dissension and the swel-

JOY-RIDE TO DISASTER



ling tide of those who are leaving would be reduced to a mere whisper and trickle. In voicing these concerns we want to be constructive but in being constructive we are, by the very nature of the case, forced to be negative. We have pointed out our concerns in the prayerful hope that the General Executive Board and the General Assembly and their various allies, will listen and will cease from their mad folly of liquidating a once great and mighty voice of reformed theology.

WARNINGS

1. Churches contemplating withdrawal at any time in the near future should not be lulled into inaction by reports that some presbyteries are rejecting the proposed change in the Book of Church Order which would prohibit presbyteries from dismissing them. It should be assumed that this Amendment will pass in spite of some unexpected opposition to it.

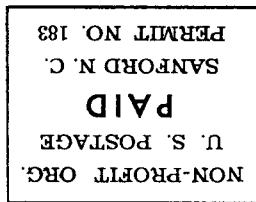
Futhermore, it should also be remembered that there is no Escape Clause in the proposed plan of union. Once union takes place, there will be no possibility of withdrawing.

2. It has come to the attention of the editors of the Bulletin that certain presbyteries which have drawn up guide lines for the orderly dismissal of churches by presbytery action have not lived up to their own guide lines and have taken action against churches which have faithfully followed these guide lines. One presbytery has violated its own guide lines on at least two different occasions.

We would advise churches contemplating withdrawal to do so by first incorporating under the laws of the state in which they are located and putting their property in the hands of trustees.

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Doctor Albert Winn
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Dear Dr. Winn:

I have studied the new "Book of Confessions", and I thought you might be interested in a layman's viewpoint on it. I am a Presbyterian by heritage. I have been an elder for many years in both the Northern and Southern branches of the Presbyterian Church. I am a research chemist and hold the degrees of B. S., M. S., and Ph. D.

I am proud of the fact that, since the founding of our country, Presbyterian theologians have been outstanding leaders who have given our nation a strong, Bible-based theology.

Because of my beliefs and the pride I feel in our church's role in our national life, I feel very disappointed and let down over the new "Declaration". It seems that "the world is too much with" those who propounded it and that they got lost in the jungle of science and psychology.

I have the uneasy feeling that it has been greatly influenced by Humanism and Universalism which are completely outside the bounds of Presbyterian theology.

As I read the "Declaration", we are to achieve Utopia by telling the story of man's being created--not in the image of God--but brother to all other soul-less animals.

At the center of the story stands Jesus Christ, who was born of a woman like any other human baby--no virgin Mary involved.

I quote: "This story tells us what we are and what we are to do. To retell it is to declare what we believe. We struggle to understand the presence of evil in a good world."

The story never explains what sin or evil is--never mentions the Devil or Heaven or Hell. It ignores "original sin" and glosses over the Last Judgment.

The theology presented in this "Declaration" will, in my opinion, empty our churches. You must be aware that the liberal churches in our country are rapidly declining, while the conservative are growing. A good presentation of statistics on these trends was presented by Dr. Wil Herberg, religious philosopher and author, in his U. S. News and World Report article beginning on page 54 of the issue of June 4, 1973.

I have learned that your committee hopes to reach more young people by liberalizing our theology. According to Dr. Herberg, the young people are the main ones that are "tuned off" by liberalism in the church.

I am making a strong plea that we, as a church, shelve this "Declaration" indefinitely.

Sincerely,
 Gould H. Cloud
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Jan. 8, 1975