

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHMEN UNITED

Contact

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CALL FOR REALIGNMENT

Members of the executive committee of Presbyterian Churchmen United have added their voice to the call for a realignment of American Presbyterianism. In a joint statement with the governing bodies of Concerned Presbyterians and the Presbyterian Journal, the PCU leaders urged creation of "a fervently evangelistic church, faithful to the Bible, the Reformed faith, and Presbyterian polity." The statement opposes present plans for union of the Presbyterian Church US with the United Presbyterian Church USA and the proposed Church of Christ Uniting (COCU). The complete text follows:

In this time of crisis and decision in the Presbyterian Church in the United States, there is a need for clear direction and commitment. We make this candid statement of our position on the current issues of church union. We, the governing bodies of the undersigned organizations, do hereby adopt and approve this statement.

We reaffirm our commitment to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

We hope and pray for the restoration and preservation of our church as a truly Reformed and evangelical body.

We are opposed to any action that would destroy the historic witness of our church to the true message and mission of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are, therefore, opposed to and will resist the present plans for union of our church with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and with the proposed Church of Christ Uniting (COCU).

Recognizing the doctrinal divergencies within the Presbyterian Church in the United States and other denominations holding the Reformed faith, we would pray and work toward the realignment of present church structures to the ultimate end that for those who desire it, there will be in America a fervently evangelistic church, faithful to the Bible, the Reformed faith, and Presbyterian polity.

Therefore, we seek an open, complete and constitutional realignment of those denominations willing to participate either under a plan of union embodying necessary changes in the present plan, or under some special commission appointed by the General Assembly to accomplish this objective (**true** realignment), through proper constitutional process.

STATUS CONFSSIONIS

No, the Presbyterian Churchmen United are not in rebellion. Rather we have taken a stance, a position, a posture in support of our Confession. Thus standing in our confession, **in statu confessionis**, we are in love protesting those things which are being said and done in our Church contrary to the standards to which our ordination vows obligate us.

The commitment of the ministers in the Presbyterian Churchman United, the resolutions of the several presbyteries, and of the many sessions are positive affirmations of our endeavor to be consistent with our profession.

In this confession we protest such things as the use on the young peoples' program of the so-called hymn **FRI-DAY MORNING** with its line, "To hell with Jehovah," because that statement is contrary to our confessional interpretation of the first petition in the Lord's Prayer and of the Third Commandment.

In a confessional stance, Atlanta Presbytery has asked the Assembly to reverse its endorsement of **Colloquy** because articles therein are counter to the life and teaching of our Lord and of His Apostles and of the confessional interpretation of the seventh commandment.

In like confessional posture, Harmony Presbytery is objecting to the Women's Work-book for 1970-71 because it minimizes and describes as "narrow" the conception of salvation as deliverance from the judgment and wrath of God—though that is the teaching of Romans and of our Standards.

Many are protesting the action of a presbytery in ordaining a minister who reportedly was unable to affirm the reality of the resurrection of Christ, and symbolically pledging their support to him in his contra-confessional, contrabiblical position.

Finally, standing to the truth of our confession we are offering overtures to the 1971 Assembly to direct its Board of National Ministries to bring its practice of dealing with problem pregnancies in line with our confessional doctrine of the authority of Holy Scripture. The brochure entitled **Therapeutic Abortion**, recently circulated by that Board, reads like a purely business program with no reference to God, to Christ, to faith, to Scripture, to prayer or to the Holy Spirit—which are the life of our Confession.

We humbly pray that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may use our imperfect selves and inadequate testimonies to bring our beloved Church back from secular humanism to the faith which is in Christ Jesus and by His Spirit make her again a body bearing witness to HIM.

—Wm. C. Robinson.

GOD AND UNBORN CHILDREN

According to His Word, how does God regard abortion?

(NOTE: The following Bible Study on this most timely subject was prepared by Dr. William C. Robinson, member of the College of Scholars of Presbyterian Churchmen United, and Professor Emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary.)

I. GOD IS THE CREATOR OF HUMAN LIFE, MADE IN HIS OWN IMAGE, Gen. 1:26-27.

According to the Psalms, "It is He that hath made us, not we ourselves," 100:3. "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit and they are created," 104:30. "Forsake not the works of thine own hands," 138:8. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," 119:73. "Thou didst form my inward parts,

and didst cover me (knit me together) in my mother's womb," 139:13. "Children are a heritage of the Lord," 127:3.

According to Job: "Thy hands have formed me and fashioned me," 10:8. "Did not He that made me in the womb make him, and did He not fashion us in the womb?" 31:15.

Individuals are the gifts of God in their conception and birth, for example: Cain, Gen. 4:1; Isaac, Gen. 29:31-35; 30:17, 22-23; Obed, Ruth, 4:13; Samuel, I Sam. 1:6, 11, 17, 19-20, "ask of the Lord."

That God made man in His own image and that He remakes him into the image of Christ, Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24, witness to his worth and dignity both before and after birth.

"All that borrows life from Thee,
Is ever in Thy care."

II. THE GOD OF THE COVENANT IS THE GOD OF OUR SEED, THAT IS THEY ARE HIS CHILDREN. IN THE COVENANT SENSE—HOLY.

Gen. 17:7 God covenanted with Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed. Acts 2:39 "The promise is to you and to your children," applies the covenant to Christian believers and their seed.

I Cor. 6:15-7:14 teaches that even one believing parent sanctifies the union so that our children are holy, that is, they are God's children. The same passage teaches that we are not our own but are bought with a price so that we are to glorify God with our bodies, which are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit. I Tim. 2:15, "A woman shall be saved through having children, if she perseveres in faith and love and holiness with modesty" (T. E. V.) Christ is Lord of God's children both before and after birth.

III. EVEN PRIOR TO THEIR BIRTH GOD PERSONALLY RELATES HIMSELF TO UNBORN BABES AS PERSONS, CHILDREN, SONS.

Jacob and Esau, "The children (sons) not having been born . . . Jacob have I loved," Gen. 25:22; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:10-13. Samson, Judges 13:3, 5, 7. Jeremiah "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet to the nations," Jer. 1:5; Cf 20:14-18. John the Baptist, The babe leaped for joy in the womb of Elizabeth when she heard the voice of Mary, the mother of her Lord, Lk. 1: 41, 44. Matt. 1:18 describes Mary as "with child" and Lk. 2:5, 21 as "great with child." Job 3:3; Psa. 51:5. Those elect in Christ were chosen before the foundation of the world, Eph. 1:3-6. Paul declares that God "had set me apart before I was born," Gal. 1:15 (RSV).

IV. THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH CONDEMNED PAGAN ABORTIONS.

Four documents prior to 200 A. D. bear this testimony, namely,

The Epistle of Barnabas, XX;

The Didache, or The Teaching of the Twelve, ii VII, XI Athenagoras, Plea for the Christians, XXXV

Tertullian, Apology, IX

V. OUR PRESBYTERIAN CATECHISMS PROTECT THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE, AND OUR CONFESSION COMMITS US TO OBEY THE LAWFUL COMMANDS OF CIVIL MAGISTRATES, as does Romans 13, I Peter 2, Titus 3.

VI. CONSIDER ANY PROPOSED ABORTION CORAM DEO, Prov. 3:6; Psa. 119:105. WITH HIM THERE IS FORGIVENESS, Psalm 130; John 8:11; I Cor. 6:9-11.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

(NOTE: The following article is by Dr. Morton Smith, member of the College of Scholars of Presbyterian Churchmen United and Professor at Reformed Theological Seminary).

Among those things for which Presbyterian Churchmen United stand is historic Presbyterian polity. We stand for this type of polity because we believe it to be the Biblical form. In order to refresh our thinking on this subject, let us examine the basic principles regarding church government as they are found in the Bible.

First, we find the office bearers in the Apostolic church were chosen by the people. This is seen at the outset with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26). It should be observed that Peter did not presume to make this appointment by himself. Also, the selection was made by the 120, and not just by the apostles themselves. This is seen even more clearly in Acts 6, with the selection of the first deacons. The Apostles simply set for the necessary qualifications and tasks to be performed, but left the choice up to the people (Acts 6:1-6). The Apostles thus set the pattern of the selection of office bearers by the people. This thus becomes the norm for the Christian church. It is one of those things which Presbyterian polity has preserved.

The question of what officers are to be continued in the church is also answered in the Bible. In Ephesians 4:11 Paul says, "And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." In addition to these offices there are references to bishops (Acts 20:28, I Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:7, Philippians 1:1); elders (Acts 14:23, 20:17, I Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5); deacons (I Timothy 3:8, Philippians 1:1). An examination of these passages reveals that the names "elders" and "bishops" are used of the same office. In Acts 20:17 Paul calls for the elders of Ephesus to come to him. Then in verse 28 he addresses them under the title of bishops. In I Timothy 3 he gives the qualifications for the offices of bishop and deacons whereas in Titus 1:5, 7 he refers to the office of elder which he identifies with that of bishop. A further study of the references reveals that the elders or bishops have a twofold function, namely, to rule and to teach. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching" (I Timothy 5:17). On the basis of this, we may conclude that the function of "pastors and teachers" of Ephesians 4:11 are included under the office of elder. We also see in this verse that there may be a distinction between those who just ruled, and those who add to their ruling the function of teaching. Thus there are two classes of elders, ruling and teaching. It should be observed that this is not to suggest that there is any difference in rank—both are elders. The teaching elder simply has the additional task of teaching. His rule in the church is along with the other elders, not over them.

It is striking to observe that the New Testament gives the church direction for the perpetuation for only the offices of elder and deacon. Thus we may conclude that the offices of apostle, prophet, and evangelist were extraordinary offices for the founding period of the church. The apostles were personally appointed by Christ from

among the witnesses of his resurrection. The prophets were those upon whom the Spirit came with special revelations prior to the writing of the New Testament. Once the New Testament was completed such revelations have ceased (Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 22:18). The office of evangelist was a temporary office assisting the apostles in the first century to establish the church, and to deal with particular problems in the church. Such an office continues to be used today on the mission field, and to assist the regular ministration of the word, but evangelists are not a permanent office for an established church.

The third biblical principle is seen in the fact that each apostolic church had a plurality of elders or bishops. This practice was simply borrowed from the synagogue form of government. The congregation thus was not under a one-man rule, but rather under a college of elders or a presbytery, whom the people themselves elected. That such was the case may be seen in Acts 14:23, "and when they had appointed for them elders in every church . . ." Again Acts 20:17 speaks of the elders of the church of Ephesus. Titus was to "appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Paul in his salutation to the church at Philippi addresses the bishops there (Philippians 1:1). Nowhere does a single bishop or elder appear in the New Testament as in charge of a single congregation, much less over a group of churches. This principle has been the basis of Presbyterian government, in that we have a body of elders ruling a particular congregation, and then at other levels the ruling body is always made up of elders.

The fourth principle is to be found in the Bible is that the act of ordination was performed by a body of elders or presbytery. Ordinarily the act of ordination included three external acts—fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands. Laying on of hands was used to confer a gift. In some cases it included the conferring of miraculous gifts, but it was also used in simply the appointing to office, when no miraculous gift was bestowed (Acts 6:3, 13:1-3, I Timothy 4:14, 5:22). Our Lord himself ordained his apostles to their office, and that the apostles on occasion appointed evangelists as their personal representatives with powers that were extraordinary. For example, in Titus 1:5 Paul speaks of having left Titus with the power to "set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge." As we have already noted above this would be the special of evangelist, in carrying with it extraordinary powers. Again as the church sends out evangelists today into mission fields, where there would be no presbytery to assist him in establishing new churches, evangelists are given similar powers. Once the church is established, however, the powers of ordination are delegated to presbyteries of the church.

That presbyteries were used for ordination may be seen in the New Testament. First, in I Timothy 4:14, we have the ordination of Timothy. Paul speaks of Timothy having come to office by prophecy, which probably refers to the fact that men with prophetic powers had designated Timothy as a suitable minister, and by the laying on of hands of the presbytery. In Timothy's case, therefore, it was not the apostle who ordained, or the special office of prophets, but the elders or presbytery who laid hands upon him and thus set him aside for office. In

Acts 13:1-3 there is the special setting aside of Barnabas and Saul for the mission to which the Holy Spirit called them. This was done by a group of prophets and teachers, who no doubt were elders and would constitute a presbytery. A similar case is that of the apostles acting as a Presbytery in Acts 6:6, which reads, "whom they set forth before the apostles: and when they had prayed they laid their hands upon them."

As we examine all of these passages, we see that it was possible for an apostle or an evangelist to ordain singly. When it was convenient to do so as a body of elders, however, this was the preferred practice. Thus the apostles themselves acted as a presbytery in Acts 6. From this we have derived the principle that ordination is a proper function of a presbytery.

A fifth principle is to be found in the 15th chapter of the book of Acts. The problem of whether a man had to be circumcised before he became a Christian had been raised by a sect of the Pharisees. This problem vexed the church at Antioch, and so they decided that they would appoint Paul and Barnabas and certain others to go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders there, and to lay the question before them. As one reads the account in Acts 15 he finds that they did just this. In verse 4 they went up and were received of the church, and the apostles and the elders. In verse 6 and following there was an assembly of apostles and elders, gathered for the purpose of hearing the matter. Peter set forth his case, followed by Barnabas and Paul, and then the body reached a decision which was expressed by James. It is of interest to note that they found the norm for making their decision in the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. They then set forth their decision in a letter addressed to the other churches. This was sent out by the official delegation. In chapter 16, verse 4 we find that Paul and Silas went with this decree, "which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem." The principle that we may deduce from this is that in the apostolic period when a matter of dispute arose within a congregation, there was the right of appeal to a body of elders gathered from men outside of the congregation in which the dispute arose. It is to be observed that though an inspired apostles could have given God's answer to this matter, the apostles chose to act within an assembly of elders. This then gives us the principle of having church courts which are above the local level. This principle may be stated in these words: the New Testament teaches that privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders, and the right of government exercised by them in their corporate character.

A final principle, which is the most important of all, is that the New Testament church always saw Christ as the Head. There was no idea of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority on any other basis than that of Christ's Headship. Paul sets the example in Galatians 1:1, where he says, "Paul an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead)." The elders were enjoined not to be lords over God's heritage but examples to the flock, "tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the

flock" (I Peter 5:2, 3).

This is to say that the power of the church, which is only spiritual, comes only from Christ. There are several passages which speak explicitly to this effect: Ephesians 1:20-23; "Which he (God) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and **gave him to be head over all things to the church**, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Ephesians 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even **as Christ is the head of the church**; and he is the saviour of the body." Colossians 1:18: "And he (Christ) **is the head of the body, the church**; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.)

As the sole Head of the church, Christ has given to us his own rule by which the church is to govern herself, namely, the Scriptures. This means then that the church must always seek to act in accord with the Scriptures. The members of the church are subject to the church, when it is in accord with the Word of God. It is the responsibility of church courts always to act in accord with the Word of Christ. When this is not done, then only confusion results.

We believe that these are the basic principles set down in the Scripture for church government. Let us summarize them in five tabulated statements:

1. The office bearers were chosen by the people.
2. The office of bishop and elder was identical.
3. There was a plurality of elders in each church.
4. Ordination was the act of a presbytery—, that is of a plurality of elders.
5. There was the privilege of appeal to the assembly of elders; and the power of government was exercised by them in their associate capacity.
6. The only Head of the church was the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Word or the Scriptures is the only Law-book in Zion. (To be continued in next issue).

RALLIES

Many rallies have been held by PCU men and other conservative leaders throughout the South. This is usually done by local leaders, and local people sometimes invite outside speakers. The PCU Executive Secretary has, by invitation, participated during the past month in rallies in Albany, Ga.; Pensacola, Fla.; Panama City, Fla.; Tallahassee, Fla.; Gainesville, Fla.; Tampa, Fla.; Orlando, Fla.; and Roanoke, Va. These rallies have been attended by groups ranging in size from 100 to 500. It's great to see the laymen in the church come alive again (since in many Presbyteries "Men's Work" has been dead for years). Many of the church's problems can be rightly solved if our laymen become informed and active.

Several additional rallies are planned for forthcoming weeks. Have your leaders attended one?

CORRECTION

Several months ago we printed an article entitled "Crisis in Missions . . . the Discussion Continues." Since writing the article the author discovered an error regarding one matter discussed.

The article indicated that the Board of World Missions voted to allow Taejon College (PCUS) in Korea to merge with Soonsil College (UPUSA) without the Korean Mission voting on it. It has since been discovered that though the Korean Mission did not have opportunity to vote on the merger, the Ad-Interim Committee of the Mission did vote for it. (The Ad-Interim Committee has authority to make binding decisions for the Mission between Mission meetings.) It has also been determined that the Board of Taejon College, which included five of our missionaries, and the Taejon Mission Station endorsed the merger unanimously. One of the two Korean mission representatives to the Board of World Missions meeting in October is reported to have supported the merger.

We are pleased to make this correction since it is not our intent or desire to distort the facts.

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