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Gospel, the faith which was once for
all delivered unto the saints.*

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Basic Principles Of Presbyterian-Episcopal Union

By Rev. William Childs Robinson, D.D.

On June 24th the basic principles for the merger of the Protestant Episcopal and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. were released. This statement is of serious concern to us since we are now negotiating with the USA Church looking toward union, and since if we consummate union with the USA Church we will be taken into this or any other merger that body sees fit to consummate. Without attempting a full discussion we wish to call attention to several items in these basic principles.

First, the principles provide that the Apostles' or the Nicene Creed shall be included in the service of the Holy Communion "as a symbol of the Faith and Unity of the Church." The revival of paganism in Europe drove the Confessional Church to the great creeds. The Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds are accepted by the World Conference on Faith and Order as expressive of the Christian faith revealed in the Scriptures. In 1938 I found a rising appreciation of the creeds all over Europe. If it takes a flirtation with the Episcopal Church to teach Presbyterians that we are not a Campbellite or a "liberal" but a great credal church some good will have come from the flirtation.

The Apostles delivered a pattern of doctrine, a good form of sound words to their churches (Rom. 6:17; 2 Tim. 1:13), and there are many brief credal statements in the Word. Indeed the Bible is the rule of truth in the large, the Creed the same rule of faith in its compressed form. In a day when educators are making a religion out of Dewey's progressive democratic experimentalism, it would be a good thing for every congregation to repeat one of these creeds every Sunday. Both Knox and Calvin used the Apostles' Creed in their Sunday services.

It is very misleading to say, "We are not saved by creeds we are saved by Christ." These two creeds are more richly filled with the things of Christ than are most of our sermons, Bible School lessons, prayers or hymns. The word creed comes from the Latin, *credo*, I believe. In the Creeds we confess the Christ who saves us: in the Nicene, Christ in His person, in the Apostles', Christ in His work.

Creeds are useful to clear our principles from calumnies and mistakes, to own the Gospel, to show that we glory in the doctrines of grace, to preserve purity of doctrine from contagious heresies, to test the orthodoxy of ministers, to provide the people with a summary of the Christian faith adapted to their capacities and so establish them in the present truth, to transmit our testimony to the Gospel of the grace of God to our posterity.

The Creed is a Symbol "of the unity of the church". The Thirty-nine Articles and the historic Prayer Book express the same truth of the Reformation as do the Westminster Standards. And even where we have detailed differences, as between Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism, a Calvinist has more in common with Wesley's artists than with the average "liberal" Methodist preacher or professor. Our Assembly has petitioned the Federal Council to place itself upon the credal basis of the World Council in order to stop the "liberal" radio preachers of the Federal Council from further attacking the most precious things in the Christian faith, such as, the Triune God and the Divine Christ. These ancient creeds are "a

symbol of the Faith." The ancient church under the leadership of the Apostles' Creed marched to victory against the entrenched paganism of Rome. The Creed is the symbol of the Christian Faith as truly as Old Glory is the symbol of the United States. Those whom God has counted faithful putting them into His ministry owe as much honor to the Symbol of the Faith as an American officer gives to the symbol of his nation.

These two creeds state most of the things which our General Assemblies have unanimously declared involved in our ordination vows, namely, the Deity and humanity of Christ, His Virgin Birth, His bodily Resurrection, His Return to judge the living and the dead. Moreover, the repeated emphasis in the Apostles' Creed upon His death accords with our declaration that He offered Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God. And that brings up this question: If it is proper for the Episcopal Church to insist as a condition of union that the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. use one or the other of these creeds in every Communion Service, why is it not proper for the Presbyterian Church, U.S. to insist as a condition of union upon the adoption by the united church of the interpretation of our ordination vows unanimously made by several of our General Assemblies and phrased wholly in terms of the Westminster Standards which both Presbyterian Churches accept? We shall not make better testimony to our Saviour by uniting with a larger church on a basis that compromises our witness to the whole Christ. Secondly, what becomes of the Presbyterian deacons and elders in the proposed Presbyterian-Episcopal merger? Now our Southern Presbyterian Church magnifies both of these offices more than does the USA Church. A Canadian studying our two Presbyterian bodies said that the chief practical difference between the two was the larger place we gave the deacon. In the USA Church the deacon is subordinate to the trustee. The trustee manages the business of the Church and the deacon only handles a small fund for the poor. Often there are no deacons in USA congregations. This tendency to depreciate the Presbyterian deacon is carried further in the merger, in fact the Presbyterian deacon is obliterated. The word deacon is used in the Episcopal sense to describe a licentiate.

Our Southern Presbyterian Polity follows Thornwell and Peck in regarding the ruling elder as the presbyter of Scripture, and ruling as the fundamental task of the Scriptural presbyter. The USA Book to some extent follows Hodge who held that only the preacher was the presbyter of Scripture and that the ruling elder was without authority from Scripture or from God, but was only the delegate of the people. The present difference between our two views can be seen in the fact that the USA Church does not require the presence of a ruling elder to make a quorum of Presbytery, we do; they do not allow the elder to lay on hands in the ordination of a minister, we do; they do not ordain an elder with the laying on of the hands of the session (the parochial presbytery), we do. In the merger this depreciation of the ruling elder goes further. He is in no sense the equal of the minister. The minister alone is the presbyter, which is further described in the ordination plans as the priest. And now the ruling

elder is to be ordained not by the session, but by the **presbyter**. This degradation of the ruling elder is made despite the fact that modern scholarship has generally sided with Thornwell's as against Hodge's interpretation of the presbyter of Scripture. Thus, Purves of the USA Church says, "the eldership was not primarily a teaching office. Its functions were chiefly disciplinary and executive" (The Apostolic Age, p. 94); and B. S. Easton of the Episcopal Church says that the Christian presbyter like the Jewish presbyter was ordained to rule (The Churchman, May 2, 1931, pp. 10-11). According to the Bible presbyter and priest are two different officers, the presbyter rules, the priest offers sacrifices for sin. But in the "Catholic" tradition these two become the same office, presbyter is only priest writ large. Are our Presbyterian elders and deacons ready to enter a union that will deprive them of all right to assert Divine and Biblical sanction for their offices?

Thirdly, the merger provides that there shall be freedom in forms of worship due to the distinctive traditions on this subject. Perhaps, the most distinctive difference between the three branches of the conservative Reformation is right here. The Lutherans retained everything in the mediaeval cultus that was not condemned by Scripture; under Queen Elizabeth the Episcopalians insisted that the Church had the right to introduce whatever it saw fit into the worship; the Reformed and Presbyterians held that nothing ought to be introduced into the worship of God but that which the Word of God authorized. Thus, our fathers distinguished between legitimate and will worship. They sought to tread the courts of God's holy presence only in the ways of His ordering. This Presbyterian doctrine, that Christ as King has given to the Church oracles of ordinances in which He has ordained His system of worship in Scripture, to which He commands that nothing be added and naught taken away (B.C.O. 10), is amply set forth in the Westminster Confession, Catechisms and our Book of Church Order. The merger means the surrender of this great Presbyterian doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture for worship. It means that in the united church there will be services of worship that differ by only a hair's breadth from the ritual and ceremonial of Rome. This is the surrender of the position of Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, and the Scottish Covenanters.

Now in our Presbyterian Church there is room for much freedom or variation in details of worship. A minister may be gowned or not, a choir may or may not be robed. The service may begin with a call to worship, a doxology or a hymn. It may or may not include the gloria, the creed, responsive readings, response after the offering, or after the prayers, a general confession, etc. With the wealth of material in the psalms and in the New Testament prayers and doxologies there is no need for the minister to limit himself to his own improvised prayers. Indeed, for Calvin prayer is chiefly pleading the promises of God.

However, our Presbyterian Standards do offer some principles for Presbyterian worship. Among these are: (1). "Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and to Him alone, not to angels, saints or any other creature". This rules out Ave Marias. (2). Since the fall worship is "not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone." The covenant of grace was administered under the old dispensation by promises, prophecies, sacrifices . . . and other types foreshadowing Christ. Under

the gospel dispensation this covenant of grace is administered by "the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper." (C.o.F. VII.v.vi). As the throne of David typified Christ reigning at the right hand of God (B.C.O.8), so the Tabernacle and the Temple foreshadowed His High Priesthood in the heavenly Tabernacle that God pitched, not man. When the antitype has come the types pass away. Hence it is no more proper to re-build an Old Testament typical ritual than it is to re-establish a Jewish throne of David. The Scottish Covenants explicitly condemn the consecration of earthly altars. According to Presbyterian Worship the altar is in heaven where the High Priest offered His one sacrifice for our sins to the Father and where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. According to Romanism the Eucharist is a sacrifice for sins, according to Protestantism it is the supper of our Lord; according to the former it is celebrated on an altar in a church building, according to the latter the supper is served from the Table of the Lord; according to the former the Priest offers this sacrifice, according to the latter a minister serves a Table. For us the Communion is not a sacrifice administered at an altar by a Priest, but a sacrificial meal, based on the one sacrifice for sins made once for all by the High Priest of our profession, celebrated at the Table of the Lord, ministered to the priesthood of all believers by teaching and ruling presbyters. Loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ calls on us to oppose any plan which diminishes His sole and sovereign glory as Prophet, as Priest and as King.

(3) We worship and pray by the help of the Holy Spirit. Thus, worship moves from the Godward pole to the Godward pole by the way of Christ. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Presbyterians seek to worship the true God in the new and living way Christ hath opened for us. (4). "The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures" (C.o.F. XXI.i). As Barth points out in the Gifford Lectures, a religious masterpiece is one thing, perhaps the Jesuits have wrought out the most magnificent masterpieces of religious worship that the human mind has ever produced; but the obedience of the Christian faith is a different thing. Under the Episcopal merger we shall be saying that every visible representation that the highest Anglo-Catholic can devise may be used in our worship: altars, chalices, candles, incense, holy water, reservation and adoration of the sacrament, genuflections and invocations to the Virgin, prayers for the dead, et al.

I love the old Episcopal Prayer Book, one of the great monuments of the Reformation. And I have many dear friends and relatives in the Episcopal Communion. However, Queen Elizabeth's position that the Church may introduce into the worship whatever she wishes has brought the Roman Catholic cult into the Church of England and will bring it into our Presbyterian fold under the proposed merger. The old Prayer Book speaks not of an altar, but of the Table of the Lord. The first church built in this country, the Church at Jamestown, had a walnut table. But the High Church is modifying the Prayer Book and even more the ritual until the worship is often only a step from Rome. Are Presbyterians ready to surrender the Reformed Reformation and the Scot-

tish Covenants by bringing into our Church the Anglo-Catholic worship that has the priest, sacrifice and altar of the Roman Catholic rather than the minister, supper and table of the Presbyterian?

The highest function of the Church is to worship God and the higher purposes ought to control the lower. Why then ought one to bring fundamentally divergent forms of worship into a governmental, structural uniformity or into an external organizational unification? Is such an effort not an inversion of values, a treating of the lower as more important than the higher, a placing of the visible above the invisible, the horizontal above the vertical, the manward above the godward? After all Presbyterians may be expected to remember the Presbyterian doctrine of the unity of the Church. According to our official statements the Church is one invisibly and one visibly, and this visible unity is not destroyed by either congregational or denominational divisions. The invisible

unity is maintained by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the visible unity is marked by the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. We recognize the Episcopalians as truly one with us in the Body of Christ by the presence of the Holy Spirit in their communion, we accept them as truly one with us in the visible manifestation of the Body of Christ by inviting them to preach the Word from our pulpits and to commune with us at the Table of the Lord. These are the Divinely ordained expressions of Christian unity. We also rejoice in the essential unity of interpretation found in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopal Church and in the Westminster Confession and in our agreement with these brethren in the acceptance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. However, in view of our differences from them as to orders and as to Anglo-Catholic worship it is an anomaly to set up a governmental uniformity or an organizational unification.

Running On Our Reserve

By Rev. Samuel McPheeters Glasgow, D.D.

A church can not run indefinitely on its reserve. It must constantly build a new supply or face decadence.

Our Church today is moving on the momentum of other days, on its accumulated reserve. That reserve has been born of essentially humble and sincerely simple godliness: godliness in heart, in home, and in life.

There are certain elements that have contributed to this reserve which we may helpfully review. First, there is a sincere faith in the thoroughgoing integrity of the Holy Scriptures. A reverent approach to the Revelation as the single and only infallible and final rule for life, inspired by God.

Further, there has been an humble acceptance of God's estimate of the tragedy and power of Sin. Its devastation can not be over-estimated: its power to destroy spiritual interests in human life is primary. Thus a constant emphasis is clearly found throughout the Scripture.

There has been also a sincere belief, without apology, in the Bible estimate of the Blood. The Blood, which is the life, marked the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. This sacrifice in which our Lord yielded Himself up as the victim, is fundamental to our receiving forgiveness and being accepted at the hands of a holy God.

Our Church has long held an intelligent and positive approval of the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the rock foundation of our hope. We are not speaking of some theory of the atonement, but rather of the Bible-supported and Bible-declared fact of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross for sin. Repeated and inescapable reference throughout the Scripture to this cardinal belief, bulwarks every believer's heart and mind. So central has this Bible fact, of the vicarious atonement, been in our Church throughout its high history that our greatest minds and clearest and strongest theologians have been its humblest and most devoted proponents. They have proclaimed it with united voice to each recurring generation. So fundamental and controlling has it been in our system of thought that all refinements of Christian belief

and practical applications of Christian living must wait upon its acceptance and operation in the human heart.

This passion and practice still holds in our Church. Much of our leadership is clear and devoted therein. Its emphasis, however, is being watered down. The view that it must be constantly in the center of our faith, is paling.

We must recapture the primacy of this doctrine of the Vicarious Saviour. If we in any fashion adjourn this cardinal and controlling Word of God our people will suffer tragic loss. Whatever we may give them in its place will be inadequate and they will gradually and certainly perish.

Possibly this picture will make manifest the poignant necessity of Christ's vicarious atonement for lost men. High in the mountain lands there is a full-flowing abundant spring of clear, pure water. Pipe lines carry this water down to the inhabitants living and toiling in the valley below. The fathers of the valley were wont to plan and build and maintain, as a prime obligation for the life that looked to them for leadership, these pipe lines. They brought the life-giving water from the hills to the people. The community grows, the fathers have been caught with the movement to equip every house with more than one spigot, with better bathing facilities, and with many refinements of gadgets and appliances connected therewith. The pipe lines, however, have not been increased with the population. Some of the older lines have become worn and useless. The flow of water has been gradually diminishing. What value is there in multiplied and perfected gadgets and appliances in every house if the connections made with the spring are failing? If their number and capacity is inadequate?

What the people need, yes, what they must have in the valley, is water. And in soul values what man needs is the Water of Life, that indispensable essential.

That there shall be refinement in the application of Christ to life, is to be expected and devoutly desired. That there shall be improvements and definite changes in methods and means, is also to